

Lord, I Deserve Thy Deepest Wrath

Basil Manly (1825–1892)

Lord, I deserve Thy deepest wrath,
Ungrateful, faithless I have been;
No terrors have my soul deterred,
Nor goodness wooed me from my sin.

My heart is vile, my mind depraved,
My flesh rebels against Thy will;
I am polluted in Thy sight,
Yet, Lord, have mercy on me still!

Without defense to Thee I look,
To Thee the only Savior fly;
Without a hope, without a friend,
In deep distress to Thee I cry.

Speak peace to me, my sins forgive,
Dwell Thou within my heart, O God;
The guilt and pow'r of sin remove,
And fit me for Thy blest abode.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

In Praise of Ordinary Men, Part Seven: F. Beach Whitson

Kevin T. Bauder

(NOTE: This essay first appeared in August of 2016 under a different title. It is reprinted here because of the contribution it makes to the topic.)

Every once in a while, God sends a person into our lives whom He uses as a means of grace. A person like that is more than an acquaintance, more than a friend. By their mere presence such individuals show us that God is working in our behalf. They spur us toward greater sanctification and service. They change us, often without our even realizing it. Later on we can look back on such acquaintances and see ways in which God specifically used them.

Beach Whitson was that kind of person in my life. Actually, Beach was his middle name. His first name was Fred, but during the time I was his pastor I never heard anybody call him that. Beach and his wife Chloye were sent into my life at a challenging moment. I was, as it were, sojourning in Egypt, held captive in Babylon, doubting whether I would ever return to vocational ministry. In a very black moment, Beach was the one who said, “Brother Bauder, if you ever decide to start a church, would you please let us know?”

Not long after, the church that we were both attending simply disintegrated. I was left pondering what to do next. In the absence of any alternatives, I decided that the Lord wanted me to plant a church—and that is when I remembered Beach’s request. I could not possibly have envisioned then what the Lord was about to do.

Beach was in his seventies when I met him, and he had lived a colorful life. During the Second World War he had served in the Pacific, where he commanded a tank recovery crew. He also had a hand in raising the Zeros that had been shot down over Pearl Harbor.

At the time of the war, Beach was already a believer. He saw his military mission as more than combat. He used his tanks to transport chaplains to minister in the interior of the Pacific islands, especially New Guinea. Once, when he was reminiscing, Beach told me how a lone sniper began firing at his tank from a palm tree. Perhaps naively, I asked, “What did you do?” Beach replied, “We used the .50 caliber to coax him down.”



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Unlike some Texans, from the moment I met him Beach welcomed me. I once asked Beach how he, as a Southern gentleman, could be so cordial to a Northern boy. He replied, “Well, I met a few Yankees when I was in the army. Some of them were alright.”

Because of his responsibilities, Beach came out of the war with a very high security clearance. His expertise gained him a job with Texas Instruments in Dallas. There he held multiple job titles, but his real responsibility was to courier papers and small parts to military installations around the world. He could never tell his family when or where he was going—he might leave for work one morning, then not return for days or even weeks. The one constant in his life was the orange-brown Samsonite brief case in which he carried his materiel. Decades after his retirement from TI, the FBI would still show up at his door. Beach remarked, “They just want to be sure I’m not losing my mind and blabbing any secrets.” He never did.

Among his other interests, Beach was a pilot. In fact, one of the perks of working at TI was that he could take off from work in a Cessna 150, then fly to his home in rural Wylie. He would land on the gravel road, enjoy lunch with his wife, and fly back to work. Beach flew bigger planes, too. He once landed a Convair 240 in Buffalo during the winter. The snow was piled higher than the plane on both sides of the runway. Beach commented, “It was like landing in a canyon.”

I never quite knew what story Beach might hint at. One day at an airshow we were standing in the cargo bay of a C-5 Galaxy. Marveling at the size of the thing, I remarked, “You could drive a truck through here.” Beach replied, “Well, I once had to turn a truck around in one of these things.” For a moment I thought I was listening to Hap Shaughnessy, but Beach was serious. I never did get the story, though.

When he retired from TI, Beach was far from finished with work. He bought a combine and a fleet of semis. His crew would start on the Mexican border and follow the harvest north into Canada. When I got to know him, he had retired a second time and was just selling off the last of his equipment.

Beach and Chloye were present for the second Sunday of what became Faith Baptist Church in Sachse, Texas. The little fellowship started out in northeast Dallas, then quickly moved to Garland. We met in homes for a few weeks, then in a community center for a couple of months. We finally found a small, vacant bank building in Garland. The owners were asking far more than we could afford, but Beach said, “Make them an offer.” We did, and they took it. The vault made a great nursery.

From the beginning, one of our concerns was to have a building of our own. Beach and Chloye donated ten acres in rural Wylie, which we were able to barter for five acres in the (then) small town of Sachse. The church moved into a strip mall in Sachse for a couple of years, then began to put up a

church house. Beach was active in the project, swinging a hammer with the rest of us. His Dodge Ram with its Cummins diesel proved invaluable more than once. Beach personally towed the construction trailer to the building site. He even built a platform on the back of the pickup and we stood on it to put the first rows of shingles on the roof.

It was about this time that Beach started to experience heart trouble, which eventuated in bypass surgery. Through the whole process, he was a model of equanimity. That was typical. When crises came, whether in church or in his personal life, Beach was prepared to face them with endurance, faith, and hope. His trust in God had already been tested, and he knew that God was going to do what was best. That is why I knew I could always count on Beach—he was a godly, faithful man.

Two years ago, Beach Whitson went home to heaven. I don’t begrudge it a bit. That heart surgery was twenty years ago. He lived for two decades more than we thought he might. Beach was well into his nineties and ready to go home. He lived a long and colorful life. More than that, he lived what could be called a sacramental life. It was a life that ministered the grace of God to others. God used Beach to lead me into church planting, and I am grateful beyond words.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
