

Hark! Ten Thousand Harps and Voices

Thomas Kelly (1769–1855)

Hark! ten thousand harps and voices
 Sound the note of praise above;
 Jesus reigns and heav'n rejoices,
 Jesus reigns, the God of love.
 See, He sits on yonder throne;
 Jesus rules the world alone.
 Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Amen.

Sing how Jesus came from heaven,
 How He bore the cross below,
 How all pow'r to Him is given,
 How He reigns in glory now.
 'Tis a great and endless theme—
 O, 'tis sweet to sing of Him.
 Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Amen.

King of glory, reign forever!
 Thine an everlasting crown.
 Nothing from Thy love shall sever
 Those who Thou hast made Thine own:
 Happy objects of Thy grace,
 Destined to behold Thy face.
 Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Amen.

Savior, hasten Thine appearing;
 Bring, O bring the glorious day,
 When, the awful summons hearing,
 Heav'n and earth shall pass away.
 Then, with golden harps, we'll sing,
 "Glory, glory, to our King!"
 Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Amen.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

In Praise of Ordinary Men, Part Eight: Paul Greene

Kevin T. Bauder

Paul Greene was already into his mid-eighties before I met him. Our relationship remained distant and casual until I began to plant a church near Dallas, Texas. To my surprise Paul and his wife Mildred quickly identified with that small congregation, later becoming charter members of and pillars within the resulting church.

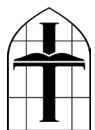
They had been married for nearly six decades. The two of them courted during the Great Depression, with Mildred working in Denver while Paul still lived in Texas. On Friday he would hop a freight train in Dallas, hobo his way to Denver, spend a day with Mildred, then hop another train back to Dallas to be home in time for work on Monday.

After marriage, both Greenes went into education. Mildred taught elementary school for forty years. Paul became a high school football coach, then eventually a principal. God gave them three children, one of whom became a pastor and evangelist.

The Greenes had a gift for encouraging people. I don't mean simply that they encouraged their pastor, though they certainly did that. They were concerned for people whom they knew to be experiencing trials or who they knew had needs. Paul and Mildred could be counted on to seek these people out, to offer kind words and (as needed) tangible help, and to bolster sagging spirits.

That was partly because Paul was one of the most persistent and determined men I have ever known. I don't mean that he was stubborn. The word *stubborn* connotes unreasonableness. Paul was an intelligent, thoughtful man who was always open to persuasion, but he was not a man who would allow obstacles to stand in his way. Once he decided that a thing was worth doing, he would keep after that thing until it was done. He simply did not quit, and he expected the same endurance from those around him. No circumstances, however bleak, could discourage him.

That mindset made him an irreplaceable member of the church planting team. After visiting our little congregation and becoming convinced that a new church was worth planting, he gave himself to the task. Sometimes the



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congregation lacked a meeting place. Sometimes it lacked resources. Sometimes it faced opposition or even betrayal. Whatever the challenge, Paul Greene would be part of the solution. He made it his mission to permit no discouragement within the church.

Paul also loved to fish, but given his age Mildred refused to let him take the boat out alone. Occasionally he would phone in an evening and ask, “Pastor, do you want to go fishing in the morning?” I always made it a point to accept. Fishing with Paul was an adventure. He knew every old *bois d’arc* snag in every lake around Dallas. We’d drop the boat in the water at dawn, then he’d be off from one drowned tree to the next. He didn’t just fish, he *hunted* the fish. And he caught them—enough of them that every year he would host the entire church to a fish fry, complete with his own hush puppies.

Those fishing trips were times when I got to know Paul, to hear his spiritual heartbeat. He would reminisce about the past. He would discuss the challenges of the present, whether for his family, himself, or his church. He would open his heart about his hopes and fears for the future. Those future concerns included his children and grandchildren. One son had a benign but debilitating brain tumor. The other had a proclivity to chase eccentric ideas and wild financial schemes—and that concerned Paul.

It also concerned me. That son was in ministry, and he exercised some influence over members of our church. At one point he tried to get us involved in the “unregistered church” movement, essentially a group of tax protesters. Another time he tried to get our church to “invest” its missions and building funds with a business that was doing arbitrage through offshore banks. Yet another time he encouraged us to donate our surplus budget to an outfit that was minting its own gold coins, assuring us that the mint would donate more than double the amount back to us within six months.

In every one of these connivances, Paul would seek me out and warn me against the scheme. He made it clear that he loved his son, but that he thought no good could come of such hare-brained stratagems. He worried that eventually these maneuvers would cause serious trouble.

That’s why a turn of conversation caught me by surprise one evening. Paul and I had been visiting about other things, when out of the blue he remarked that he had given his son five thousand dollars to invest in his latest obsession. To me, that was a huge sum. Astonished, I asked, “Do you think this one’s going to work?”

Paul replied, “No.”

“They why did you give him the money?” I asked.

“Well, he’s lost most of his own money on schemes like this, and it’s never taught him a thing. But I know he loves me. He’d never do anything that he

thought would hurt me. I figure that if he loses my money—and lots of it—it might shake him up enough so he won’t listen to people like this anymore.”

Paul never told me what the result was. I do remember walking away thinking that this was an unusual demonstration of parental love. Here was a father who knew that his child was wrong, but who was willing to let himself bear the hurt so that his child could be made right. I’ve never forgotten it.

The last time I saw Paul and Mildred was when my wife and I stopped in to visit with them on our way through Dallas. We had been warned that he had Alzheimer’s, so we were prepared for the worst. Surprisingly, Paul knew who we were, even if what he said did not always make the best sense. Mildred was trying to protect him by carrying the conversation herself, but she needn’t have bothered. All we wanted was to offer encouragement to them as they had to us. We hoped to be a blessing even if only for a moment. To us, the time was not wasted.

Now they both are in heaven, and we will not see them again until death or the Rapture. Yet decades later, I still bear the marks of knowing Paul Greene. He was the man who showed me just how determined love can be.



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.
