

Jesus, My Strength, My Hope*Charles Wesley (1707–1788)*

Jesus, my strength, my hope,
 On thee I cast my care,
 With humble confidence look up,
 And know thou hearest prayer.
 Give me on thee to wait,
 Till I can all things do,
 On thee, almighty to create,
 Almighty to renew.

I want a sober mind,
 A self-renouncing will,
 That tramples down and casts behind
 The baits of pleasing ill;
 A soul inured to pain,
 To hardship, grief and loss,
 Bold to take up, firm to sustain,
 The consecrated cross.

I want a godly fear,
 A quick-discerning eye,
 That looks to thee when sin is near,
 And sees the tempter fly;
 A spirit still prepared
 And armed with jealous care,
 For ever standing on its guard,
 And watching unto prayer.

I rest upon thy word;
 The promise is for me;
 My succour and salvation, Lord,
 Shall surely come from thee.
 But let me still abide,
 Nor from my hope remove,
 Till thou my patient spirit guide
 Into thy perfect love.



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ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ*In the Nick of Time***On Hope***Kevin T. Bauder*

The story that I'm about to tell is not about me, but to understand it you need to know that I am a chaplain in the Civil Air Patrol (the USAF Auxiliary). You also need to know that one of the three missions of Civil Air Patrol is cadet programs. Cadets are like the youth group of CAP. Young people ages 12 through 21 learn about aerospace, train to assist with emergency services, and learn military customs and courtesies.

On July 2, I received a communication from the Wing Chaplain that one of our cadets had been killed. The death was not connected with any CAP activity: the cadet was riding his bicycle when he was struck by a driver who (according to reports) had been drinking. The driver was subsequently charged with criminal vehicular homicide.

Even though the death was not connected with any CAP activity, all cadets are important members of the CAP program. Chaplains have a particular concern for their wellbeing. Consequently, the Wing Chaplain was requesting that all chaplains make themselves available for a ministry of presence at the deceased cadet's squadron that Tuesday evening. About five chaplains were able to attend, myself included.

Until that point, no information about the cadet himself had been released. At the squadron meeting I learned his name (which I will not publish) and his age (15). I also learned that a visitation had been scheduled for a week from that Wednesday, with the funeral to follow on the next day. One thing that interested me was that the visitation and funeral were to be held at Prior Lake Baptist Church, a congregation that is known for its proclamation of the gospel and its commitment to the truth of God's Word.

On the following Wednesday I attended the first hour of the visitation (pastoral commitments kept me from staying through the whole four hours). There I met the cadet's family, who are members at Prior Lake Baptist Church. They had received permission from CAP to bury their son in his uniform. An honor guard consisting of other CAP cadets was posted at his casket. Around twenty cadets were participating in this responsibility. These young people stood proudly in the uniform of the United States Air Force. In many cases, however, tears were clearly visible on their cheeks.

The following day the honor guard was again posted. Around three hundred people attended the funeral, of whom about fifty were CAP personnel. Both cadets and senior members were present, including members of the cadet's own squadron, members from other squadrons, high-ranking individuals from the Minnesota Wing and even some from the North Central Region. Again, multiple chaplains were present, and even though CAP chaplains come from diverse religious backgrounds, in this case every chaplain who attended understood and was prepared to share the gospel.

What does one say at the funeral of a teenager who is suddenly taken through no fault of his own? In this case, the clear focus of the service from beginning to end was on the way of salvation and on the assurance that this cadet was in the presence of his Lord. One of the cadet's grade-school teachers talked for several minutes about leading him to the Lord after class one day, and about how he had subsequently begun to live out his Christianity.

Then the cadet's mother stood to address the assembly. I confess that I cringed inwardly: I am not a believer in family members doing memorials at funeral services. In this case, however, I was touched by her grace and poise. She had something important to say, and she refused to allow her emotions to get in the way of her saying it.

She told the story of how her son had been the first member of their family to trust Christ as Savior. She and her husband had seen the genuineness of his faith, and it was this witness of his that eventually led to their trusting Christ. She explained what salvation meant, why people needed to be saved, what Christ had done so that they could be saved, and how they could receive the salvation that Christ offered. She expressed confidence at her son's destiny, and she told of a recent episode in which he had reminded her that death simply meant going to be with the Lord.

This mother was in the middle of a shattering experience—perhaps the worst experience that any parent can endure. When her son failed to return from his bicycle ride, she went looking for him. According to published reports, she came on the crash scene herself. From an earthbound, human perspective, she had plenty of reason to be overwhelmed with the circumstances and to feel bitterness and resentment.

Yet the message that she delivered was overwhelmingly one of hope—not the kind of hope that babbles about sentimental vacuities, but the kind of hope that is grounded in the work and character of God. This hope is an expectation that grows out the substitutionary death and bodily resurrection of Jesus. It is more than wishful thinking. It is anticipation, and this biblical anticipation bases itself upon the certainty of Jesus' return and the resurrection of the body.

This message of good news was elaborated later in the service by Pastor Sam Choi. Pastor Choi did an exceptional job of articulating the qualifica-

tions of Christ as Savior. Pastor Choi invited people to faith in Christ—an invitation that he later repeated at the committal. He provided clarity and specificity for the invitation to believe. Nevertheless, the moral weight behind that message came from the calm words, deliberately chosen, spoken by a sorrowing mother who, in the midst of deep grief, found hope in the gospel.

There is nothing Pollyannish about this hope. It acknowledges that Providence sometimes puts on a dark face. It fully recognizes that life in a world under sin will bring moments of utter blackness. In the middle of those moments, however, it clings to the teaching of Scripture, the promise of God, the work of Christ, and the truth of the gospel. When circumstances change for the very worst, it lays ahold of the promise that cannot change, and it refuses to let go.

Paul teaches that trials like this one produce endurance, which in turn produces experience, which in its turn produces hope (Rom 5:3–5). The trials can be hard—and a hardship like this one does not end when everybody walks away from the funeral. Yet the hope that comes from the trial will certainly be fulfilled. In the meanwhile, we can glory in the trial itself, knowing that God is using it to produce something in us that we could never gain in any other way.



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.
