

## Courage in Death and Hope in Resurrection

*Isaac Watts (1674–1748)*

When God is nigh, my faith is strong,  
His arm is my almighty prop:  
Be glad my heart; rejoice my tongue,  
My dying flesh shall rest in hope.

Though in the dust I lay my head,  
Yet, gracious God, thou wilt not leave  
My soul forever with the dead,  
Nor lose thy children in the grave.

My flesh shall thy first call obey,  
Shake off the dust, and rise on high;  
Then shalt thou lead the wond'rous way  
Up to thy throne above the sky.

There streams of endless pleasure flow;  
And full discoveries of thy grace  
(Which we but tasted here below)  
Spread heav'nly joys through all the place.

## ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

### *In the Nick of Time*

#### Until the Lord Shouts

*Kevin T. Bauder*

It is my sad duty to report that Caleb Counterman, a Doctor of Ministry student at Central Seminary, died suddenly on Sunday morning. He was driving his wife Jessica to church when his car hit a patch of ice. In the ensuing crash, Jessica's life was preserved, but Caleb was thrown out of the car and into the arms of Jesus.

A graduate of Maranatha Baptist University, Caleb received his seminary training at Calvary Baptist Seminary in Lansdale, Pennsylvania. After years of pastoring, he enrolled in the D.Min. program at Central Seminary. He was a straight-ahead kind of guy. He knew what he thought and was convinced of what was right. He set clear goals for himself. He rarely deviated from these guiding lights.

While Caleb was a thinker, he was even more of a "doer." He was a hard charger. His ministry could not be confined to a church building. He was active in his public school system, where he stood as a consistent Christian witness. He was elected to serve on the county board for Grundy County, Illinois. While working on his D.Min. at Central Seminary, he also completed a master's degree in apologetics from another institution. These are not the actions of an idle man.

Guided by his principles, Caleb was a man to make difficult decisions and to lead in unpopular directions. Some years back, I attended a meeting of a national association of fundamentalist churches where he was present. Attendees were buzzing about a decision that the organization's executive body had recently made. Many people opposed the decision, but nobody seemed willing to confront it. Even though it was his first meeting, Caleb stood up in the business session and moved that the decision be rescinded. After considerable debate, his motion was adopted. Some who opposed the motion saw Caleb as a troublemaker. I saw him as a man of conviction who had the courage to do what he (and I) thought was the right thing.

Most of what I saw of Caleb was either his public persona or his classroom presence. I knew him as a student who loved to explore and debate ideas. I do not recall, however, that I ever saw him in action as a pastor or a family



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man. Others are better suited to address those parts of his life, and I am sure that many will.

In addition to his wife Jessica, Caleb is survived by two sons, Levi and Jared. His two brothers, Luke and Simeon, are also pastors. His father and mother, Andrew and Jo Ellen, are also still active. Andrew, who is also a Central Seminary alumnus, serves as associate pastor alongside Simeon.

Caleb's death is one of those events in which we are forced to recognize that a wise, benevolent, and gracious Providence may also be severe. Caleb would not have chosen the events of last Sunday morning. Neither would his wife, his sons, his brothers, or his parents. Yet these events surely fall under the purview of an infinitely wise, loving, and powerful God. Difficult as Caleb's death is for his friends and loved ones, it was planned and permitted by a God who is both fully sovereign and infinitely good.

The truth is that sometimes God's love allows us to be hurt—particularly since we still live in a world that endures the effects of sin. Our very mortality is the result of sin. Death is an intruder and an enemy, never a friend. Those who pass through the valley of the shadow of death (as Caleb's loved ones are now doing) do really feel the bitter sting of that enemy. But even in that dark valley we remember that the sting of death has been pulled. Death will not be allowed the final or decisive word. Death's victory is only a fading mirage. It has already been nullified by the resurrection of our Lord (1 Cor 15), who Himself passed through the gates of death and came forth again. Thus, those who are in the valley of the shadow of death need fear no evil. The God who permitted this calamity intends it all for good, and one day the weight of crushing sorrow will be transmuted into the exuberance of joy bursting into exultation. Every tear will be replaced with a far more exceeding weight of glory.

Meanwhile, we still sorrow, though not as those who have no hope. We recognize that God claims us as His own, and He uses us as He will. Sometimes He uses us up, as He did with Caleb last Sunday morning. Even so, He knows what He is doing, and insists that we must trust Him.

Caleb surely did trust himself to the Living God and to Christ Jesus the Lord. Here is something that he wrote a couple of years ago.

We need to emphasize what it means to find identity in Christ. He created us for a purpose. He loved and will always love us. We find our affirmation and value in Him. He will provide strength through this life as we follow Him. We can have victory over temptation because of His promised help and work. There is a promise of a glorified body and spirit because of Christ.

Caleb Counterman found his confidence and his identity in Christ. Because of Christ, because of Christ's cross-work, and because of Christ's resurrec-

tion, we also have confidence that all will be well. When the Lord returns, when He shouts that cry of command, then our sadness will forever end. For now, we cling to hope in the midst of our tears, but we hope with confidence, because Christ is our life. We shall hold fast to our confidence until the Lord shouts.



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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.

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