

# COUNSEL



**JESUS HIMSELF DREW NEAR**

**DANGERS IN ASSEMBLY LEADERSHIP**

**GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY**

**CHRIST – INDIVISIBLE GOD**

**BELIEVERS BAPTISM**

**STILL WILL I TRUST**

**TWIN RIVERS**

*July — August 2008*

# Jesus Himself Drew Near

The case was of such importance that even the most faithful of servants could not be entrusted with it. The Lord Himself would come. This is the circumstance recorded for us in one of the many post resurrection scenes of our Lord. Scenes that would prefigure His future care for His own.

The account in Luke 24, recorded only by Luke with the exception of a brief summary in Mark 16, is full of encouragement for troubled believers. Not only do we rejoice in seeing the burden of these ancient believers lifted, but it gives us hope as we see that this event is not an isolated one of the past. There is hope for sorrowing saints today!

These two unnamed believers reveal the cause of their sadness: *“But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel”* (Luke 24:21). Proverbs chapter thirteen verse twelve describes their experience, *“hope deferred maketh the heart sick.”* They had trusted in the Lord and were now sick with disappointment. Those who followed the Lord took a stand with Him. Their desire was for righteousness and redemption. They had rejected the corrupt religious leaders of Israel and claimed this One was God’s promised Messiah. Their stand for Christ may have cost them materially in wealth and employment. They may have been cut off from family and friends. And now everything seems to have turned against them.

This experience is not unique nor even exceptional. The testing of faith is part of normal and mature Christian experience. Even though it may cause distress and even pain

it is part of a vital process. There are many believers who in standing for truth have faced an albeit temporary disappointment.

But we wish to notice three reasons why “Jesus Himself drew near.”

## He drew near because He loved them

This is evident in His tender and patient approach to them. Before He revealed Himself to them in His Person, He pointed out the truth of the scripture. Had they paid attention to *“all that the prophets have spoken,”* not just some of what the prophets had spoken, they may have been less quick to be in despair. But despite their ignorance of the scripture, He patiently points out that all this had been anticipated by God and proclaimed by the prophets. They had no need to fear. The Lord was in control and in fact the very thing that caused them to lose hope was at the centre of God’s plan.

Their faithlessness however did not diminish His love and care for them. The Lord knew their situation and personally undertook to minister to them. He still loves and cares for us. He too knows our circumstances and He still draws near to those in distress.

## He drew near because He died for them

Their complaint was they had pinned their hopes on Him as the redeemer. But did they think redemption could take place without death? The death of Christ towers over scripture as the unarguable evidence and assurance of our salvation. But not only that, Paul reasons that *“He*

*that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”* (Rom. 8:32). In other words if God was willing to give His Son for us in His death at the cross to secure salvation, it follows that He will *“freely give us all things.”* Our greatest need was salvation! He willingly and abundantly met that need. He will meet your need today.

## He drew near because He wanted them to see Him

It is interesting to notice that their hearts “burned” within them, not when they saw Him for who He is, but *“while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures?”* They saw Him with their mortal eyes. It must have thrilled their hearts. But it was the truth of the scriptures that really touched their hearts. He has gone to heaven and one day we too will see Him in His glorified body and from ours. But in the meantime we too can see Him in the scriptures and it can have a burning effect in our hearts. We too can know fellowship with Him and by faith see Him. Are we feeding on the word of God? Are we taking (or should I say making) time to meditate in the scriptures? This busy life militates against it and we need to fight back. Take time in the word and see Him.

Yes, “Jesus Himself drew near” and likewise He will draw near to us. It may be because of distressing circumstances, but if we learn to know this fellowship with Him it will be worth it.

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**Brian Gunning**  
St. Catharines, Ontario



# COUNSEL

TIMELY TRUTHS FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Volume 38 • Number 4

**Postmaster:**

Please send address changes to:  
COUNSEL P. O. Box 427  
St. Catharines ON L2R 6V9

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and new readers:**

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**Purpose:**

To present truth in words easy to be understood; to bring the Word of God to bear on the confusion of thought that exists in many places today regarding the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, His assembly, His purposes, His people, their privileges and responsibilities Godward and manward. To give a variety of ministry by edification, exhortation, and comfort (1 Cor. 14:3).

**Price:**

COUNSEL is supported by those who appreciate the aims and ministry of this work. It is sent freely on request, as the Lord enables. All funds received are used entirely to produce and mail the magazine. No salaries, gifts, honorariums, nor expenses are paid to any of the committee or contributing writers. We are thankful to those who feel their responsibility in this ministry and express their appreciation by practical support.

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*Printed in Canada*

**Canadian &  
overseas donors:**

COUNSEL  
P. O. Box 427  
St. Catharines,  
ON Canada  
L2R 6V9

**U. S. donors:**

Counsel Magazine  
P. O. Box 176  
Palos Park, IL  
60464-0176  
USA

**U. K. and Ireland donors:**

COUNSEL  
c/o Roy Hill  
The Glebe House  
Stanton Drew  
Bristol BS39 4EH  
Cheques from U.K. donors  
make payable to 'Counsel Magazine'

## CONTENTS

**Jesus Himself Drew Near.....2**

*Editorial*

**Twin Rivers.....4**

*W. Ross Rainey*

**Dangers in  
Assembly Leadership.....6**

*Stephen Hulshizer*

**Still Will I Trust.....11**

*Albert Simpson Reitz*

**Believers Baptism.....12**

*Milo Vande Krol*

**Christ—Indivisible God.....14**

*Doug Kazen*

**God's Soverienty &  
Man's Responsibility.....17**

*Malcolm C. Davis*

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# Twin Rivers

**“Grace be unto you,  
and peace, from God  
our Father, and from the  
Lord Jesus Christ”  
(Phil. 1:2).**

This verse, which records for us the usual and familiar greeting of the Apostle Paul, combines the Gentile “*grace*” with the Hebrew “*peace*.” Bishop Wilson Cash has suggested that Paul “combines the Jewish ‘*peace*’ and Gentile ‘*grace*’ in one salutation as a pledge of unity between East and West, between Jew and Gentile, in the one Saviour, who unites all in the one fellowship of His body.”

Somehow I think of these two great words as two great rivers, such as I saw so often in years past flying in and out of St. Louis, Missouri, where the mighty Mississippi and Missouri rivers have their confluence. Paul, through the gospel message, takes these words of then common greeting and transforms them into uncommon meaning and beauty.

## GRACE

The word ‘*grace*’ is found over 160 times in the Bible, and of these, 128 are in the New Testament. The three Persons of the Godhead are intimately linked with grace: God the Father having a monopoly on it, for He is “*the God of all grace*” (1 Pet. 5:10); the Lord Jesus Christ is described as being “*full of grace*” (Jn. 1:14); and the Holy Spirit is called “*the Spirit of grace*” (Heb. 10:29).

What is grace? In a sense, it defies definition by mere words, but here are a few helpful attempts:

“Grace is God’s love in action.”

“Grace is love displayed to unworthy objects. God is love; but when He bestows that love on guilty, unclean, rebellious sinners, then it is grace.”

“Grace is seen in God giving heaven’s Best to save earth’s worst.”

“Love that looks up is adoration. Love on its own level is affection. Love that descends is grace.”

“Grace is God showing nothing

but love and mercy when we deserved nothing but wrath and judgment. It is God bending toward us in infinite love.”

Grace is:

God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

John Newton (1725-1807) is a classic illustration of God's condescending grace. Newton was raised in a Christian home; orphaned at seven; lived with and was persecuted by an unbelieving relative; ran away and joined the British navy; deserted and ran away to Africa—“to sin his full.” He joined a Portuguese slave trader, but was cruelly treated by the man's wife. He fled and made his way to the coast; lit a signal fire; and was picked up by a slave ship on its way to England. Because he knew some navigation he was made ship's mate, but Newton lost his position by breaking into the ship's rum store and distributing it to the crew, in turn making them drunk. In a stupor he fell into the sea and by an officer was speared with a harpoon to save him from drowning. Near the end of the voyage off Scotland a severe storm struck and Newton was sent to the hold of the ship to help man the pumps for days. God spoke to him, as he recalled verses he had been taught as a child, and he was born again. He became a great preacher and teacher of God's Word, especially of the theme of God's grace, and it was he who wrote the words of the well-known and more recently popularized hymn, “Amazing Grace.”

We will never really know or understand anything about God's matchless, marvelous grace unless we realize, as did John Newton, that grace is unmerited, something we did not deserve. God has acted graciously toward us in Christ,

completely apart from human merit. And His grace is not just a shallow stream. It is a mighty river; it is abounding grace (Rom. 5:20).

## PEACE

Our Lord's other mighty river is His peace which flows as a result of His glorious river of grace. In the Bible we always find grace first, then peace; never peace before grace. The reason for this is that salvation might be entirely of God.

## **We will never really know or understand anything about God's matchless ... grace unless we realize ... that grace is ... something we did not deserve.**

Just as grace has a deeper meaning in Paul's use of it, so also does his use of peace, or shalom. In his thinking is the river of peace that comes from grace, peace obtained through the blood of the cross of Christ (Col. 1:20).

Have you noticed the significant moments in Christ's life where God's promise of peace occurs? (See Luke 2:14; John 14:27; 20:19.)

Somehow I cannot help but feel that the very first words we as believers shall hear from the lips of Christ when we arrive in heaven will be those of John 20:19 & 26, “Peace be unto you.”

While the Apostle Paul would most assuredly have in his heart and mind thoughts of salvation through grace and peace from God, still he was writing to Christians. This being the case, uppermost in his heart and mind, as he penned this greeting, would have been the daily supply of grace and peace which the

believer needs in his worship, walk, witness, and warfare. Paul himself was a choice example of both sides of these blessed realities of grace on the one hand (see Eph. 2:8-9 with 2 Cor. 8:9; 9:8; 12:9; 1 Cor. 15:10), and peace on the other hand (see Rom. 5:1 with Phil. 4: 6-7, 9).

God the Father is revealed in our text of Philippians 1:2 as the Source of these blessed realities, while the Lord Jesus Christ is the Medium through which they come (see Col. 2:9-10).

On the basis of God's grace, how good to be able to sing Francis R. Havergal's familiar words:

Like a river glorious  
Is God's perfect peace,  
Over all victorious  
In its bright increase;

Perfect, yet it floweth  
Fuller ev'ry day,  
Perfect, yet it groweth  
Deeper all the way.

And then the refrain:

Stayed upon Jehovah,  
Hearts are fully blest—  
Finding, as He promised,  
Perfect peace and rest.

---

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# DANGERS

## in Assembly Leadership

In my travel among the assemblies it is evident that the general spiritual condition of many of them is poor. Attendance is often a small portion of those who would claim to be in fellowship. Worldliness has made inroads and it is manifested in a lack of commitment to the local assembly and by a strong commitment to careers, hobbies, sports, and recreation.

Another very evident need is for godly oversight. Men who are committed to caring for the Lord's people even though it means great personal sacrifice. In many assemblies there is no identifiable leadership and the Lord's people go from week to week like sheep without a shepherd. In other gatherings there are those who have been identified as elders, but who do little or none of the work involved in shepherding the Lord's people. Thankfully, there are those assemblies with identifiable and godly overseers who with personal sacrifice care for the saints.

### Self-Neglect

When he was about to leave the Ephesian elders for the last time Paul exhorted them, *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28). One danger that a shepherd faces is that of neglecting himself. While expending himself

may be commendable, but he has left his *"first love"* (Rev. 2:1-4).

In addition to taking heed to himself, the shepherd must be on guard for those grievous wolves who come from without with the desire to destroy the local testimony (Acts 20:29). This requires discernment as they will often come in sheep's clothing, speaking softly and acting graciously (Rom. 16:18). Shepherds must also

**The adversary of the sheep and of the Chief Shepherd is constantly on the prowl, using his many methods in an attempt to have the shepherds fall, leaving the sheep unguarded.**

for the Lord's people he neglects his own spiritual condition. In a similar way one can get so involved in the Lord's work, that the Lord Himself is set aside. Like those at Ephesus, one's works, labour, and patience

be on the alert for those who arise from within the local fellowship who would desire to gain a following.

It is evident that those in oversight are subject to many dangers. The adversary of the sheep and of

the Chief Shepherd is constantly on the prowl, using his many methods in an attempt to have the shepherds fall, leaving the sheep unguarded.

We will take a brief look at some of the dangers those in oversight are subject to by looking at the experience of leaders in the Scriptures. We should always learn from experience, and if possible from the experience of others—it is far less expensive!

### Timidity

In the beginning of 1 Samuel 10, Saul is privately anointed by Samuel to be the king of Israel. Later in that same chapter Samuel calls the people together to publicly present Saul to the nation. After Samuel works his way through the tribes and families Saul is selected, but when the time came for him to be set before the people *“he could not be found”* (1 Sam. 10:21). How sad that after the Lord had clearly marked him out that Saul would hide himself *“among the stuff.”*

At first glance one might mistakenly see this as humility, but in reality it was fear—timidity. In a similar way it is possible for one who the Holy Spirit has clearly marked out as an overseer (Acts 20:28)—and only the Holy Spirit can do so—to hide himself *“among the stuff.”*

Could it be that many in oversight who are failing to do the work lack conviction that the Lord has raised them up to do this important work? Such a lack of conviction will surely lead to being fearful and ineffective. If one believes he has been raised up for this valuable work then he should move forward with a holy boldness to act accordingly.

When the apostle Paul was called to be an apostle there was no hesi-

tancy. He clearly identifies himself as *“an apostle by the will of God.”* He clearly understands his calling to be the apostle to the Gentiles. Peter likewise understands his calling and identifies himself as an elder (1 Pet. 5:1). He in turn exhorts other shepherds to *“feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind”* (1 Pet. 5:2). He encourages not hesitancy, but definite action.

David, the shepherd, when coming upon the battle scene and beholding Goliath taunting God’s people, did not exhibit timidity. As a true shepherd he moved forward, knowing the battle was the Lord’s.

It was Paul who exhorted Timothy to stir up his gift and reminded him

It may also be a lack of trust in the Lord to enable those who He calls.

### Power

Amazingly, the same one who was hiding *“among the stuff”* when he was to be introduced to the nation of Israel as its new king, is later found exercising the power of his position to the point of ignoring God’s Word. The prophet Samuel had clearly conveyed the message of the Lord to Saul. *“Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.”* It could not be more clearly stated.

When Saul failed to do as the Lord commanded the prophet Samuel reminds him, *“When thou wast little in*

## **May we seek the Lord to provide those godly overseers who lead by example and who serve in humility, not seeking the preeminence.**

that *“God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”* (2 Tim. 1:7).

Now to have a definite conviction of one’s call to shepherd the Lord’s people also requires humility. There is such a thing as holy boldness with humility. The same Paul who clearly knew his unique calling also referred to himself as the *“chief of sinners,”* *“the least of all the apostles,”* and *“less than the least of all saints.”*

Certainly one danger for those in oversight is timidity—timidity that comes from a lack of a conviction that the Holy Spirit has raised them up to shepherd the Lord’s people.

*thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?”* The one who was taken from among the smallest of tribes and least of the families was now taking things into his own hands, and thereby rejecting the Word of the Lord.

Saul offered the explanation that the animals which were not killed were kept in order to offer them to the Lord. Samuel responds with those words that have rung down through the centuries, *“Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey*

is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22). The great lesson here is that obedience to God's Word is better than good intentions!

So while one danger is that of timidity, another danger is that of power. The overseer can, perhaps with good intentions, take things

there and Paul writes, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Paul also states that the saints were not to concentrate on themselves. He writes, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:3-4).

the Lord to provide those godly overseers who lead by example and who serve in humility, not seeking the preeminence.

### **Self-confidence (Pride)**

Too often men are recognized as elders because they are successful leaders in the secular world. If this is the sole or primary reason for their recognition it will most likely lead to failure in spiritual leadership. Success in the business world is not a qualification for spiritual leadership. This is not to say that one who is successful in worldly terms is not qualified to lead the assembly, but he must be recognized only for his spiritual work in caring for the saints.

Success can lead to self-confidence. It is after the victory that we are most open to the adversary's counter attack. Joshua and the children of Israel are excellent examples of this truth. The Lord had instructed the children of Israel to march around Jericho once a day for six days and then seven times on the seventh day. At the completion of this march they were to shout at the sound of the trumpets. Having done as the Lord commanded the mighty walls came crashing down. Victory had been gained.

The next obstacle to their occupying the land was the small city of Ai. So small that Joshua felt no need to consult with the Lord concerning it, and, with confidence gained from their victory at Jericho, Joshua decided to send only a few to take the city of Ai.

The result was absolute failure. The men sent by Joshua were soundly defeated and sent running like rabbits. Scripture foretold this result: "Pride goeth before destruc-

## **No where do we find that Christ was driven by man's opinion and desires, but rather He would say, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34).**

into his own hands and neglect the Word of the Chief Shepherd. He may even act as a lord over "God's heritage." Many have failed when placed into a position of leadership because they could not control their power and authority. Sadly, down through the years many saints have been "driven" rather than "led." May the assemblies be spared the misuse of power by those who provide oversight.

### **Preeminence**

Scripture clearly informs us that Diotrephes "loveth to have the preeminence" (3 Jn. 9). He left no room for others, even to the point of not receiving the apostle John. It is often true in leadership that there is one who seeks to have the chief seat among the brethren, at times even to the point of shutting out all others.

Paul addresses this competitive spirit in his Epistle to the Philippians. Apparently there was a spirit of competition among the saints

Now it is in this context that Paul brings in the ultimate example of the Lord Jesus. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." What was the mind of the Lord Jesus? The One who was very God did not concentrate on Himself. He was "others minded," and being so He came from the heights of glory and took on humanity and the form of a servant. He took the low place, even to the point of the cross, with the good of others in view.

We see this clearly as we view Him in the upper room washing the feet of His disciples. It was a ministry that needed to be done and since none of the disciples had the mind to do it, He did! How beautiful that mind and how much we need to think upon it that it may in turn become ours.

We find in Scripture that overseeing the Lord's sheep is to be done by "servant leaders." The Lord Himself said He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." May we seek

tion" (Prov. 16:18). Now there were several things which lead to this failure. There was sin in the camp. There was the dividing of the Lord's people, with only a few felt to be necessary for the battle. There was self-confidence and pride as a result of their victory at Jericho.

When it comes to assembly oversight, self-confidence and pride in previous accomplishments, whether in the world or in the assembly, are the prescription for failure. The apostle Paul warned of this when he wrote concerning those desiring the oversight, "*Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.*" Those in oversight were not to be novices—newly planted trees which were not rooted by godly experience. Experience manifests the weakness of the flesh and the necessity of dependence upon God. Experience causes one to look away from success, ability, education, wealth, etc., and to depend solely upon the Lord.

### Popularity

No one likes to be disliked and thus acceptance by others can often lead us to do things simply to please the people. Throughout Scripture we find those who were driven by "*the people.*" In 1 Samuel 15 we find Saul trying to justify his disobedience and several times he speaks of "*the people.*" "*But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep*" (v. 9). "*And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep....*" (v. 15). "*But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal*" (v. 21).

We find a similar thing with Aaron. Moses had gone up to the Mount and when he did not return for sometime Aaron built the golden calf. Moses returns and asks, "*What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?*" Aaron replies, "*Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us*" (Ex. 32:21–23). Once again a leader is persuaded by the sentiment of the people.

In contrast to this we read concerning Paul, "*...do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ*" (Gal. 1:10). Writing to the Thessalonians he says, "*But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.*" Paul was not driven by acceptance by the people, but by obedience to the Lord, which to him was of utmost importance.

No where do we find that Christ

when their mind is different from the mind of the Lord.

### Frustration

Often those in leadership are the objects of the people's rage. Moses is an excellent example. The nation of Israel had come to a point where there was no water and so "*they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!*" (Num. 20:2-3). It is not uncommon that when things are going well those in leadership are unappreciated, but when hard times come the blame is immediately placed on those in leadership. So it was with Moses and Aaron.

No doubt Moses and Aaron were frustrated as a result of the people's constant murmuring and they "*went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces.*"

## **How different is the Lord Jesus. Many times His disciples were dull in hearing and yet He continued to deal graciously with them—as with us!**

was driven by man's opinion and desires, but rather He would say, "*My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work*" (John 4:34). May it be so with those who seek to shepherd His sheep. May they seek to please the Chief Shepherd above all else. May the Lord provide the needed grace to obey His Word and absorb the reproach of the people

The Lord instructed Moses to take the rod, and gather the people and to speak to the rock before his eyes and it would provide the needed water for the people.

Moses did as instructed, except in frustration he struck the rock with the rod. His frustration with the people was evident in his language. "*Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you*

*water out of this rock?"* (Num. 20:10). His frustration led to anger and his anger to disobedience.

How different is the Lord Jesus. Many times His disciples were dull in hearing and yet He continued to deal graciously with them—as with us! In one case, after just feeding the five thousand, He desires to feed four thousand people and the disciples ask, “*Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?*” (Matt.

had been deceived by Satan, and now he must decide whether to follow her or to obey God. His choice may well exemplify the magnitude of the influence which relatives can have on those in leadership.

Sarah, Rebecca, and Jezebel, and many other relatives recorded in Scriptures had an influence on those in leadership. David and Absalom would be another example. As is often the case, David could see no wrong in Absalom. He overlooked

information to themselves. If they should fail, it can be disastrous!

May the Lord enable those in oversight to be faithful to His will and keep them from the influence of relatives that so easily brings failure in leadership.

#### **Prayer Needed**

These are but a few of the dangers which those in assembly oversight face. May we pray for them often and ask the Lord to keep them from

**May those in oversight be aware of such dangers  
and seek to serve the Chief Shepherd faithfully,  
avoiding the pitfalls of timidity, power, preeminence,  
self-confidence, popularity, frustration, relatives,  
and the many other dangers that the adversary  
may place in their path.**

15:33). We, like His disciples, are so dull at times and yet He graciously leads us on.

May the Lord encourage the hearts of those in oversight, particularly when they are dealing with a murmuring people. May they be enabled to be gracious in situations which normally promote frustration.

#### **Relatives**

There are many accounts in Scripture where leaders failed because their relatives were involved. At the very beginning the adversary used Eve to bring about the downfall of Adam. This was a difficult situation for Adam. The only one of his kind on earth with whom he could communicate and enjoy a relationship

Absalom’s slaying of Amnon and even after Absalom had rebelled and attempted to overthrow him and become King of Israel, David still saw no wrong in him.

A great danger for leaders is to treat relatives differently than other saints. The failures of their children or other relatives are swept under the carpet while others are openly rebuked or disciplined for their failure.

Those in assembly oversight must also be careful what information they share with loved ones. Most information known to those in leadership should be kept confidential. Often the failure to do so has brought relatives into the situation. This puts great and unneeded pressure on family members to keep this

falling as they serve Him and care for His sheep. May those in oversight be aware of such dangers and seek to serve the Chief Shepherd faithfully, avoiding the pitfalls of timidity, power, preeminence, self-confidence, popularity, frustration, relatives, and the many other dangers that the adversary may place in their path.

---

**Stephen Hulshizer**

York, PA

# *Still Will I Trust*

*Isaiah 41:10*

Still will I trust, though all my hopes lie shattered  
In broken fragments at my feet;  
Though all my plans, like driven leaves, are scattered  
By winds of darkness and defeat.  
For in my need I hear my Saviour saying,  
In answer to my pleading and my praying,  
"I am thy God, be not afraid,  
I will be near; be not dismayed."

Yea, in the deepest shadows of death's valley,  
Where sorrows circle me around;  
When all the powers of darkness seem to rally,  
And scarce a ray of light is found;  
Then will I trust in Christ with great rejoicing,  
In Him who once again His love is voicing-  
"I am thy God, be not afraid,  
I will be near; be not dismayed."

So will I walk with Christ, in faith believing,  
With child-like trust, whate'er betide;  
And from His hand His strength and love receiving,  
As in His presence I abide.  
Thus shall I journey on to His glad morrow,  
Where I shall hear Him say, "Lay down thy sorrow,  
Come dwell with Me in realms above,  
Where all is light, and life, and love."

*-Albert Simpson Reitz*

# BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

**The believer then going into the waters of baptism, beautifully sets forth the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Not only so, but he gives an outward expression of his own identification with Christ in His death and resurrection.**

There are different kinds of baptisms mentioned in the Scriptures, such as the baptism in the Spirit, John's baptism, and Christian baptism. For our present purpose we will limit ourselves to a few thoughts on water baptism for Christians.

The subject is very important, not only because it is taught in the Bible but because of what it means and because of the errors that many have fallen into in relation to it.

Like the Lord's Supper, it symbolizes the death of Christ and puts equal emphasis on the fact of His resurrection; but unlike the Lord's Supper, which is weekly, it is a once-and-for-all act and symbolizes the believer's death, burial, and resurrection with Christ.

## THE METHOD

This must, of necessity, be by immersion in water if it is going to portray the true meaning. The Lord Jesus Christ went all the way into death; He was buried and raised again. No other form of baptism can picture this except immersion. There are some who immerse the person three times, once for each Person of the Trinity. This is wrong, first, be-

cause it divides the Godhead, and second, because it spoils the picture. Our Lord Jesus Christ died once, not three times. Sprinkling also spoils the picture.

The believer then going into the waters of baptism, beautifully sets forth the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Not only so, but he gives an outward expression of his own identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. Every truly saved person, at his conversion, has already become dead with Christ unto sin and is alive with Him in resurrection. We do not die with Christ when we are baptized. We only give outward expression to the fact that we are already dead and risen with Him.

Baptism then must be by immersion;

- (1) Because of what it pictures,
- (2) Because of every example in Scripture,
- (3) Because of the meaning of the word "baptize" which is: to die, to dye, to immerse.

## WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

Three things are required:

(1) The person to be baptized must be sure that he is saved, and thus already dead with Christ. If he is not saved, his baptism is meaningless; the water is absolutely without merit. See Acts 8:37; 2:41; 10:44-48; 16:14, 32-34. Simon is an example of one who was baptized and yet he was not saved. Baptism did not change his heart (8:13-23).

(2) One must be old enough to be intelligent about it. Philip baptized "men and women." We have no direct statement that children were never baptized. That does not mean that we are to set a particular age. Romans 6:3 simply says "know ye not," which means that they should be old enough to understand something of the meaning of bap-

tism, as well as the fact that it is expected of them. I have seen cases of children being baptized who were too young to have an exercise or a serious thought about what they were doing.

(3) The person being baptized should realize that he is testifying to the fact that he is dead to sin. Otherwise his act will only be a lie. His life should be consistent with what he has testified to in his baptism.

### WHY SHOULD ONE BE BAPTIZED?

(1) It is a command (Acts 10:38). It is no little request that we can do with as we wish. Our Lord said, *"If ye love Me, keep My commandments,"* and *"His commandments are not grievous."*

(2) It is a testimony. We publicly take our stand for and with Christ. It is for others to see.

(3) It is an identification. We are saying in effect that just as the Lord Jesus died to sin and is alive in resurrection power, so are we. We are not only testifying to the world but to the Lord as well that we are willing to be identified with Him, the rejected Christ.

Baptism is a burial, and you only bury what is dead. The believer is dead (Gal. 2:20), unto sin (Rom. 6:2); the old man (Rom. 6:6), the law (Rom. 7:4), and the world (Gal. 6:14).

As an ordinance, it may be accepted with little power or meaning. As a command, it may be obeyed

with little knowledge of its meaning. As a likeness, it is too practical for Satan to leave unattacked. He has gone all out to desecrate it, either with false teaching concerning it, wrong methods in practicing it, or else with wrong thoughts and motives in doing it.

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# CHRIST—INDIVISIBLE GOD

**The Father  
has expressed  
and confirmed  
His absolute  
satisfaction with  
His Son.**

**T**he personal attributes of our Lord and Saviour are sublime. The written Word gives us enough rich information about Him to enable us to marvel at Him, to enjoy Him thoroughly, and to appreciate

Him above all others. Whenever a person, who may be engaged in public ministry, takes out the “ministerial scalpel” and begins to carve up the Person of Christ into neat little separate pieces, that person is on dangerous ground indeed. It requires monumental arrogance, and remarkable spiritual ignorance, for anyone to suggest that our Lord and Saviour was, or is, in anyway less than absolutely perfect, or to suggest that His human ministry during His time on earth was somehow a personal learning experience.

The Word clearly tells us that our Savior was God. Hebrews 1 confirms

this, as the Father says to Him, *“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.”* This statement alone confirms that He was eternally and changelessly Almighty God. Furthermore, He became God manifest in flesh. His manifestation to mankind in fleshly form did nothing to compromise either His status as God or His perfect quality. John tells us that, *“In the beginning was the Word, and Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* It was the Son of God who created. It was the Son of God who came into the world. It was the Son of God who died at Calvary. It was the Son of God who rose again. It is God

who saves us eternally.

Moreover, the satisfaction of God the Father with God the Son is repeatedly affirmed in Scripture. The Holy Mount whereupon was heard the divine declaration, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," leaves no room for equivocation about Him. The Father has expressed and confirmed His absolute satisfaction with His Son. If that Son had, at any time or in any sense, fallen off the pedestal of Godhood, and in so doing had become vulnerable to the vicissitudes of human flesh, the Father's satisfaction with Him would have ended. It did not. From heaven, to the manger, to the cross, and back to the throne of glory, God the Son is eternally satisfactory to God the Father.

Peter, Paul, and John join in testimony of His absolute perfection. These great apostles were human. They saw sin in themselves. Paul could direct criticism at himself by saying, "Oh wretched man that I am" (Rom. 7:24). But, these three authoritative Christians declare to us that in God the Son there was no sin, He did no sin, and He knew (was personally associated with) no sin. The marvel of the absolute perfection of Christ pours from the pens of the inspired writers.

Inasmuch as we are taught that we are "in Christ," it is our privilege to examine the wonders of His person, and enjoy those wonders insofar as we can understand them and sense their application to us. We who minister the Word of God are nowhere asked to explain God in human terms. Our responsibility is to believe God. Our responsibility and privilege is to exhort all Christians to embrace the perfect character and work of Christ in a manner that brings joy and confidence to us.

Scripture makes us aware that, in His divine character, He is changeless. He is the same yesterday and today and forever. Only He could identify Himself as I AM THAT I AM. What He was from eternity He continued to be on earth, and continues to be in heaven today. Any suggestion of a change in His

es towards the velocity of light, time slows; until at the speed of light, time stands still. These delightful facts take us to the edge of eternity. For where time has stopped (or is no more) yesterday, and today, and tomorrow are all one. Each is now. Our Lord is from eternity. He identifies with infinity, for He tells us that

## Scripture gives us some simple, but absolutely profound ways in which to extol and enjoy our Savior.

character or attributes at any stage of His existence would undermine our confidence in Him as Lord and Saviour, eternally.

Scripture gives us some simple, but absolutely profound ways in which to extol and enjoy our Savior.

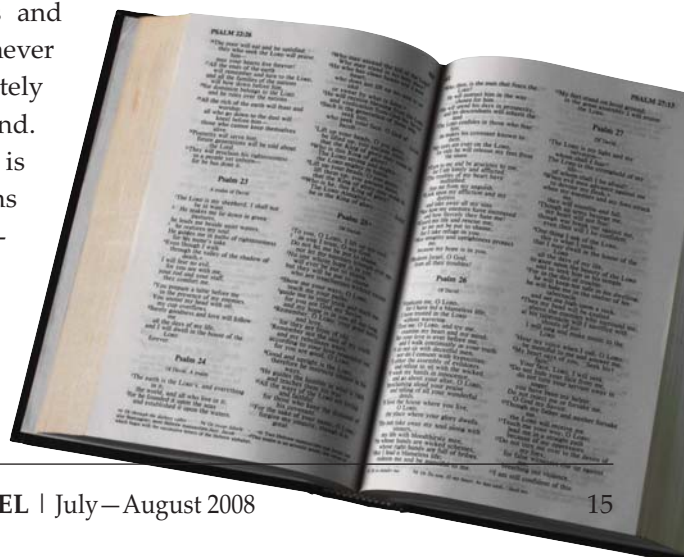
### He is Light

God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all (1 Jn. 1:5). As humans, we know a bit about light. God bestowed His light upon earth, and then created two great lights to control the amount of illumination earth would enjoy both day and night. We now know that light, to varying intensities, is found everywhere in God's universe. Light shines in heaven continuously, for there is no night there. Light is composed of waves and photons. Its velocity never varies from approximately 186,000 miles per second. That unvarying speed is the fastest rate humans can measure to date; beyond that speed lies infinity, to us immeasurable and unknowable. Yet, as speed increas-

He is the same yesterday and today and forever (Heb. 13:8). Therefore, He introduced Himself to Moses as the I AM THAT I AM (Ex. 3). That introduction confirms to us the reality of His changeless eternity. Wherever He appears He is the same; changeless in His every characteristic. He was as perfect when He was on earth as He ever was in eternity, for He could not change.

### He is the Word

Let us explore Him further: He is the Word. God's Word is the exercise of His mandated will and purpose. By the word He has created; making substance out of nothing. His eternal purposes are achieved simply through the expression of His Word. He needs





**He is the quickening Word, sharper than any sword; sustaining all things by the word of His power. By Him all things consist. If He ever compromised that position, all things would fall apart.**

no other tools to achieve His every desire. But God's Word is not simply His tool—He IS the Word. Almighty God, the I AM of eternity, can never be separated from His Word, for He is one in it. But John, in his first epis-

tle, takes us a remarkable step further, teaching us that mere humans have seen, looked upon (analyzed and comprehended), and even personally handled the Word of Life. Therefore, man has been enabled to

become acquainted with One who is the very substance of universal power. He is the quickening Word, sharper than any sword; sustaining all things by the word of His power. By Him all things consist. If He ever compromised that position, all things would fall apart.

### **He is Life**

But there is yet more treasure to be found in Him. For in Him was life (John 1:4). That essential, without which we would be no more radiant than a stone; that characteristic, which we can neither precisely locate in ourselves, nor define; has its fountain in Him. It is by life that we are irrevocably linked to Him who is the fountain of life itself. It is He who has the power and right to give human life and to take it away. No other being rightfully shares that power. Yet by enlightening man, He who is the Light and is the Word of all power shines upon spiritually dead and darkened souls the light of the gospel. And upon those who respond He bestows eternal life. By the Word such know that they have that life. By the power of His Word they know they cannot lose that life. They are placed in Christ where His light, His word, and His life abide as one in Him for eternity. That changeless reality is the foundation of our eternal hope, peace, and security.

Our hearts join with the hymn writer to exclaim:

Worthy Oh Lamb of God,  
art Thou,  
that every knee  
to Thee should bow.

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**Doug Kazen**  
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# God's SOVEREIGNTY & Man's RESPONSIBILITY

## 1. The Paradox of the Twin Truths Demonstrated From Scripture

The twin truths of God's absolute sovereignty and man's inescapable responsibility to Him are set in Scripture side by side without any attempt at a logical explanation as to how they can both be true at one and the same time. God is infinite, eternal, and transcendent, whilst we are finite, mortal because of sin, and very insignificant beside Him. That is probably why we cannot understand the paradox, but are evidently expected to accept it by faith and act fully upon both truths. In the illustrative passages which follow note that God's sovereignty always precedes man's responsibility, but never overrides it.

The paradox is well illustrated in two adjacent chapters, namely Romans 9 and 10. Romans 9 is a classic exposition of God's sovereignty, but is immediately, and without logical link, followed by the well-known chapter 10 on the "word of faith", that is, the confession of faith in Christ in verse 9, and the wonderful promise of verse 13 that, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved", thus confirming man's responsibility in the matter of salvation.

Again, in two adjacent verses, John 6:39-40, the same two truths are similarly placed side by side

without logical explanation, with sovereignty preceding, but not eclipsing, responsibility. For in verse 39 the Lord Jesus states that it is His Father's will "that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing,

**The true emphasis lies in stressing both extremes equally, and so maintaining balance in doctrine and conduct.**

but should raise it up again at the last day", which clearly relates to God's sovereign electing purpose and choice. But immediately afterwards, in verse 40, He balances this truth with man's responsibility, when He states further that the Father's will is "that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day". Which is really the Father's will, verse 39 or verse 40? Both are equally, in a way, beyond our comprehension, but not beyond our ability to act upon.

Even within the compass of single

sentences we find the same two truths set side by side. In 2 Thessalonians 2 verse 13, for example, Paul thanks God that He has chosen the Thessalonian saints to salvation "through sanctification of the Spirit [that is, God's sovereignty] and belief of the truth [that is, man's responsibility]."

Finally, we see this paradox stated most poignantly by Peter on the Day of Pentecost concerning the crucifixion of Christ in Acts 2:23, when he charges the Jews with their terrible crime. He boldly says, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain". Here we have the two truths juxtaposed concerning the central act and fact of history and eternity. We bow baffled, but in awesome wonder at God's overruling power and wisdom as it is demonstrated in the death of His Incarnate Son. For worship, not human wisdom, is required here in the presence of the inexplicable truth.

## 2. The Importance of Maintaining the Balance Between Them

Both in Christian doctrine and in the Christian life it is of crucial importance to maintain the principle of a wholesome balance between various possible extremes of belief and behaviour. This principle of balance

is well illustrated by the present discussion of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. For the history of the professing Christian church, not to say even the true Christian

only with sovereignly-bestowed promises to the believer, but also with many practical exhortations to action in the Christian life. Yes, we have a responsibility to respond

calling in the matter, or suppose that the Lord's coming for the church depends entirely upon our fulfilling the Great Commission, and that we must organize evangelism to the furthest parts of the earth before the Rapture can occur. No, we have the Great Commission, certainly [man's responsibility], but, paradoxically, it is still true that God will decide when to send Christ back to receive His bride [God's sovereignty]. The true emphasis lies in stressing both extremes equally, and so maintaining balance in doctrine and conduct.

## **Healthy Christian assurance of salvation is not presumption, but well-founded trust in God's promises to the believer.**

church, is full of examples of well-meaning believers who have veered to one extreme or the other in this perennial paradox of sovereignty and responsibility, or freewill. One church leader, such as Calvin, or Whitfield, has thought it right to try to explain everything in terms of God's sovereignty, while another church leader, such as Arminius, or the Wesleys, has preferred to try to explain it all in terms of man's responsibility and freewill. Heated debates and acrimonious divisions have unfortunately resulted from these different emphases. But what we must always realize is that the way of unity, harmony, and healthy balance lies directly between these two extremes by, paradoxically, observing the exact balance of Scripture alone on the subject, and so believing and acting upon both equally.

Let us, then, illustrate the dangers of stressing either truth at the expense of the other. For example, if we stress God's sovereignty at the expense of human responsibility, we will probably become unduly passive in our Christian lives, thinking that God must do everything, while we do nothing. For this is the reasoning behind the advice, "Let go, and let God". It is half true, but only half true. For Scripture abounds not

to them actively, whilst still relying upon the Lord to work in and through us sovereignly. A contradiction? Logically, perhaps so; but not in practical Christian experience and daily living. Rather, this is the essence of the life of true and simple faith in God and His Word.

Again, if we stress man's responsibility and freewill at the expense of God's sovereignty, we will probably be in perpetual doubt and despair about our eternal security as believers, thinking that our salvation depends entirely upon ourselves and our faithfulness, or otherwise, in the Christian life. But Scripture contains many assurances that those who have once trusted Christ are eternally secure in both His hand and His Father's hand (John 10:27-30). Healthy Christian assurance of salvation is not presumption, but well-founded trust in God's promises to the believer.

Our obedience to the Lord's command to evangelize the whole world may be neglected if we think that "God will save the heathen in His own time", overstressing God's sovereign electing grace. On the other hand, if we overstress man's responsibility and freewill, we may think that evangelism depends entirely upon ourselves, and neglect the necessity of waiting for the Lord's sovereign

### **3. 'In Thy Service is Perfect Freedom' - Practicing Christian Liberty**

Man was never intended to live independently of God his Creator; yet God has never harshly imposed His will upon mankind, but always given us freedom to choose whether to obey Him or not. We are then responsible to accept the consequences of our choice, for good or ill. For God desires a fellowship with His creature man which is mutually pleasurable and beneficial, just like the fellowship which He enjoys within the circle of the Persons of the Godhead. So "there are no conscripts in heaven", no "pressed-men" in His service, but willing subjects and joyful doers of His will. Christian liberty is both subject to God's perfect will for us as revealed in His Word and exercised with a fair degree of freedom of choice in its expression. We shall now illustrate this from examples in Scripture relating to various aspects of our lives, as follows:

#### **i) In Personal Life and Relationships**

In 1 Corinthians 7, Christian liberty is clearly illustrated in the cases of a Christian slave who has the opportunity to become free, Christian

virgins [single men and women] contemplating a first marriage, and a Christian widow considering remarriage. All are allowed a genuine choice in the matter, but limited by the implications of the Lord's will as found in Scripture. They are all advised to consider the consequences of their choice, but not compelled in any way. The overriding consideration must always be, "What will most glorify the Lord?" And the Christian widow is told that, whoever she remarries, the relationship must be "in the Lord"; that is, her husband must be a Christian who, like herself, fully acknowledges the Lordship of Christ in his life. So there are some possible relationships which a Christian can never rightly enter into. But God still allows us an element of genuine choice in these personal matters.

### *ii) In Local Assembly Life and Service*

Even in Old Testament days Israel had a measure of liberty in their spiritual lives, although it was somewhat limited by the requirements of the Levitical law. Individual Israelites could choose to bring to the Lord whatever freewill offerings they felt exercised to devote to Him, and they could at any time choose to take the Nazirite vow. But they had to obey the detailed instructions for these sacrifices and vows very carefully, or they would not be accepted. Today, in the age of God's grace in Christ, Christians have much greater liberty and freedom of speech before God, not being bound by the requirements of the law, although our present greater privilege still needs to be exercised in a godly manner and in accordance with the Scriptures. Now we are all believer-priests encouraged to offer unlimited spiritual sacrifices of wor-

ship and gifts to God without the restricting requirements of the law.

In Christian service, too, there is a measure of liberty allowed to the Lord's servants, although He initiates their original call sovereignly. Paul was allowed to be exercised concerning the timing and destination of his second missionary journey into Asia Minor, but was then guided sovereignly by the Holy Spirit to enter Europe with the gospel. So there is freedom in Christian service, although it is always subject to the Holy Spirit's control, and in accordance with Scripture.

### *iii) In Eternity*

Revelation 22:3 reveals that in eternity "*His servants* [God's bond-servants] *shall serve Him* [render God priestly service]". But in these

Lord, although He afterwards informs us that, in fact, He chose us to be His own, rather than we Him (John 15:16). This is a paradox, seemingly contradictory, yet quite true in practice. But we must always remember that we shall be held responsible for all our choices by the Lord Himself at the Judgment Seat, where we shall be rewarded for them, or else suffer loss. How, then, are we choosing to spend the allotted years of our life on earth? For the Lord, or for ourselves? And how fully are we using our sovereignly-given spiritual talents? Will we gain no extra talents, or double the value of those we have been given? May we all one day hear the Lord Jesus say to us, "*Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*". For we shall then know that

**Man was never intended to live independently of God his Creator; yet God has never harshly imposed His will upon mankind, but always given us freedom to choose whether to obey Him or not.**

perfect conditions our bond-service will be rendered willingly, joyfully, without a taint of sin or self-seeking, and in an atmosphere of perfect divine love. It will not be difficult to serve our Lord and Master, but a sheer delight and most fulfilling. We shall then know with assurance and gratitude that in God's service lie perfect freedom and truest peace and happiness.

So there is a real choice to be made, whether or not to serve the

God's service is true liberty, and also fulfill God's original purpose for us, namely, full and intimate fellowship with Himself.

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## The Future

I know not what the future holds,  
No, not one single hour.  
But I know One who knoweth well,  
And has it in His power.  
The universe is all His own  
For all eternity  
He fashioned all its laws in love,  
By grace He shares with me.

Now He who all the future holds  
Knows what will be today,  
So I can place my hand in His  
And walk with Him, His way.  
The things confronting all the world  
Are dark as blackest night;  
Yet in the Christ who is the way  
There is a shining light.

I thank my God that by His grace  
There is no need to fear,  
For, howsoever dark the way,  
My Lord is always near.  
Because I trusted in the Blood  
Poured out on Calvary,  
In Him my future is secure  
For all eternity.

—Edward Cane