



## Pastor's Page

### Arresting Circumstances

It was nearly midnight as I drove back to my parent's house. Less than a mile from my destination and half way up a relatively steep hill my vehicle decided to splutter to a standstill! A couple of unfamiliar red lights lit up my dashboard as I noticed the fuel gauge indicating 'extremely empty!' I'd taken one too many risks. I knew I was very low on petrol but I thought I'd make it to the house. I decided I'd better try and push my car over to the pavement rather than abandon it in the middle of the road! So out I got and tried in vain to shove the vehicle forwards. Just then I heard the sound of a gang of male revellers heading my way. As they got nearer I discovered that they were a gang of two and that they were also, (what we Baptists call) "three hymn sheets to the wind!" As they staggered up to me they said "Do you want some help mate?" Not wanting to upset them in any way I said "yes, thanks" So now the three of us began to try and push the car. I was the only one who didn't fall over! And I was the only one who didn't find the whole experience hysterically funny!! Just then a police car came round the corner. "Ah, great" I thought "now I can get some proper help" The young police officer jumped out of his car and said "hello, hello, hello, (well there were three of us!) what's going on here then?" I explained that my car had run out of petrol and that these two guys were helping me push it to safety. He looked at these two fellows and said " Oh no, not you two again, get into the police car!" They responded by pushing and shoving him around causing a minor melee ending with the PC taking out a truncheon and forcing all three of us into the police car!!! We were then whizzed off to Chadderton Police Station where we were held in custody for an hour under suspicion of stealing a vehicle!!

That happened in 1973 and it's the one and only time I've been arrested (honest!) I was held for only a short time but it was pretty darn nerve wracking. Last Wednesday a proposal to extend pre-charge detentions for terror suspects to a maximum of 42 days was passed through the Commons by a margin of nine votes. Shadow home secretary David Davis resigned as an MP, promising to fight to regain his seat on a platform of defending "British liberties". Now I'm fairly naive about these things but surely it cannot be right for police to be able to hold a 'suspect' for up to six weeks without a charge? However keen we are to defeat terrorism it cannot be right to bend justice to achieve that end. Baptists have a history of fighting to defend people's liberties and through our forefathers' efforts both social reform and religious freedom have been won. As David Davies said last Thursday, "*Yesterday this house decided to allow the state to lock up potentially innocent British citizens for up to six weeks without charge..... I feel that today it's incumbent on me to take a stand.*" I applaud Mr Davies for this stand and for putting 'principle' (his beliefs) before 'position' (his job)

Back on that dark night in 1973 I was wrongly "arrested" on suspicion of a crime that hadn't even taken place. Back on an even darker night in AD 30 Jesus of Nazareth was falsely accused, wrongly arrested, illegally tried and unjustly condemned for a crime he never committed. The authorities killed an innocent man. It was the greatest injustice of all time. Yet through this death came the possibility of freedom from sin and death for all mankind - and this is the greatest liberty on earth.

22<sup>nd</sup> June 2008