

Articles

Paul's Prayer for the Philippians	1
Mercy and Faithfulness	3
Men Who could say "No"	4
Feast of Trumpets	6
The Church at Antioch; Autonomy	7
Faith or Fanaticism?	9

Paul's Prayer for the Philippians

George Duncan, (dec), Cleveland, Ohio
Philippians 1:8-11

It is interesting to notice how often the Apostle prays for those to whom he writes. The book of Philippians is sometimes spoken of as the "book of Christian experience." This is true, for in every chapter the Lord Jesus is brought before us in a special way.

In the first chapter the Lord Jesus is seen as the governing principle in the life of a Christian. In verse 21 he says, "For me to live is Christ." That is quite different from saying, "Christ is the life of a Christian." That is true, for every Christian, having Christ, has life. "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12). But here Christ is the governing principle before us.

In the second chapter, the Lord Jesus is brought before us in His humiliation as an example for all believers to imitate (verse 5). "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Then follow those seven steps from "the throne eternal down to Calvary's depths of woe."

In the third chapter, Christ is set before us as the goal and prize of the Christian. "From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 20).

In the closing chapter, He is known by experience as the strength of the believer. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (verse 13).

Paul acknowledges a gift sent from the Philippian saints to him in prison. These gifts must be carried by the hand of some man and it sometimes took weeks and months through the heat of summer and the cold of winter, through perils by sea and land and perils of robbers. The man whom the saints at Philippi chose to send with the message and fellowship in the gospel was a man called "Epaphroditus." You remember he was sick nigh unto death because of the hardships of the way, that he might supply what they had entrusted to him for the Apostle Paul. This man was sorry when those saints knew

of his sickness. How different today is the Spirit that prevails.

In verse 8 he manifests his longing for them. "How greatly I long after you all." I am homesick to see you. What a wonderful heart of love he must have had for these saints. His heart went out in deep affection when he could use such language.

Then comes his earnest prayer for them. It was composed of five different petitions, brief, but weighty, and the outcome of these petitions, if fulfilled in Philippi and in Assemblies today, would be wonderful.

1. "That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." I don't know of any Assembly that manifested more love to the Apostle Paul than the saints at Philippi. When he left that Assembly and went into Thessalonica they sent twice in that short stay, perhaps two or three weeks. For he says, "No church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only." Again when the Apostle Paul was in Corinth, he speaks, "I robbed other churches taking wages of them, to do you service, and when I was present with you and wanted, I was chargeable to no man, for that which was lacking to me, the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied." It was the saints at Philippi that sent along a gift to further the work in Corinth. And now when at Rome, a prisoner, they send a gift by the hand of Epaphroditus. So far as the riches in this world was concerned, they were quite poor for we read, "that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality" (2 Corinthians 8:2).

Now the Apostle prays that their love may abound more and more. Here is something for which there is no limit; something we cannot charge ourselves with overdoing. But notice how he qualifies it: "in all knowledge and judgment" or "good sense." We have come to the Word of God in order to learn how to love our brethren and sisters in Christ and we must enter into the presence of God to ask wisdom from above to manifest that love. It is possible to do the right thing in the wrong way. In these days there is a great deal said about love and what they mean by love is simply wink at sin: say nothing whatever about it. But that is not love according to truth. The love of God is righteous love. God didn't save us merely because he had pity on us. God has had ample satisfaction for all our sins. God's righteous character has been vindicated by the death of Christ and now God would have us so acquainted with the Word of God that we will have wisdom given us in manifesting our love to one another. "By this we know that we love the children of God,

when we love God and keep His commandments" (1 John 5:2). There is no use of my talking of loving my brethren in Christ if I don't point out that the pathway in which they are treading is not in accordance with the Word of God.

2. "That ye may approve things that are excellent." I understand the word means, "to try the things that differ" in much the same way as a man going out prospecting for gold. He comes to a certain part of the country and finds quartz. He gathers a quantity of this rock together and sends it to an assayer who puts it to the test. and if he finds gold sufficient to warrant operations then he can go to work. That is the meaning here, "prove that which is excellent." Put it to the test. That means we should prove all we hear by the Word of God. It is no use to say, "so and so is a good man and what he says must be alright." The best of men sometimes fall into error. Let us test all we hear, all we read, by the Word of God. How true today is the word, "Of

making of books there is no end," therefore how careful we ought to be to test what we read by the unalterable standard of God's Word and if it won't stand the test to seek by the grace of God to refuse it.

A number of years ago in going from Washington to Maryland, I placed four silver dollars on the counter to pay my fare. To my surprise, the ticket agent refused to accept one, saying it was counterfeit. Later I spoke to a storekeeper and asked him if he could tell me whether it was genuine or not. He threw it down and said he didn't think it sounded very good. That was no proof that my dollar was counterfeit. I took it to a bank and asked the teller, "Is this dollar genuine or not?" He threw it down on the counter and said he thought it was too heavy. At the next bank they informed me they thought it was too light. You see, all three had a different idea. Finally one banker said, "We will soon see," and taking it back into the other room he put it to the test and returned saying, "It is genuine. It is the right size, the right weight and stands the test in every way." I couldn't help but think if we just brought all the books and things we have access to and all the preaching we hear from the platform to the standard of God's Word it would help us immensely to get hold of the Word, to make it our own. If I am testing what I hear by the Word of God, I'll make that ministry my very own and it will be from God through the channel of that brother who spoke or wrote it. Test all you hear so that you might "prove that which is excellent."

"That ye may be sincere." This word "sincere" does not mean "a man is sincere in what he does." This word occurs five times in the New Testament and means "judged in the sunlight," or "without wax." In olden times marble statues became cracked, sold by men who were not scrupulous in their dealings. They simply filled up that crack with a waxy substance. A stonecutter, well experienced in that art, one day noticed people looking at a peculiar stone in a building, making comments on it, "how wonderful." This aroused his curiosity and to his amazement he found that there had been a flaw in that stone, perhaps caused in shipment and it had been filled in with wax in the shape of a star. Persons looking at it were amazed at the design. A statue flawless, hence "without wax," was said to be "sincere."

If I am to test all I hear and all I read by the Word of God, it follows I must test myself, "Is this for God's glory?" "Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all for the glory of God." That would settle the question oftentimes when we are perplexed as to what we should do and where we should go.

"And without offense" or occasion of stumbling. This is taken from that little trigger that we find on an animal's trap. You touch it and the trap is sprung. "Occasion of stumbling till the day of Jesus Christ." How careful we should be not to stumble ourselves. If a soldier stumbles along the march the men behind will follow suit. So be careful also not to stumble the child of God. Younger Christians are not so well grounded and they watch our behavior. How careful we should be not to stumble them. In John 15 we find fruit and more fruit

"Truths for our Day"

A monthly publication that is freely available on the Internet and is intended to help believers who appreciate the timeless truths of God's Word and who recognize the unchanging principles of God's will for His people. It is primarily intended to strengthen those who enjoy fellowship in local assemblies of believers who are gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Editors: Joel Portman & Jim Brown

Publisher: Joel Portman

1200 Forest Glen Ct. SE,
Cedar Rapids, IA, 52403

All Correspondence to: mail@truthsforourday.com

All issues of "Truths for our Day" are available by clicking on the link below. This will take you to the index for Truths For Our Day

Please read this notice:

We permit and encourage you to reprint any issue of "Truths for our Day" that you desire, either for yourself, or to share with other believers. However, if you wish to copy an individual article, we will forward your request to the copyright owner of the article to request his permission. For this reason, the format of the publication is locked to prevent unauthorized publication of articles that the author would prefer to reserve. Please do not copy them in any other way. We want to respect the ownership of all those who have written articles.

We also hope you will let others know about "Truths for our Day" and encourage them to subscribe as well. They may do so by simply sending an e-mail to this email address:

mail@truthsforourday.com

Thank you

and the way in which that fruit can be borne is by purging the branch. In this same chapter Christ says, "Abide in me, and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." We are grafted to Christ the living Vine.

There are five different kinds of fruit:

1. Fruit in conversions. (Experienced by individuals as well as by preachers).
2. Fruit of the Spirit, as in Galatians 5:22. Love, joy, peace—Godward.
long-suffering, gentleness, goodness—Manward.
faith, meekness, temperance—Selfward.
3. Fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name (Hebrews 13:15).
4. Sealed fruit, ministering to the need of the poor. (Romans 15:28).
5. Fellowship in the Gospel. (Philippians 4:17).

These five different kinds of fruit every child of God has the privilege to bear.

If this prayer was fulfilled in the Lord's people in this generation, what consistent lives we would live and God would be honored. How quickly they will notice an inconsistent walk, a turning away from the truth we profess to believe.

"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." If these first four things are true; if my love abounds more and more; if I am testing all I hear and read by the standard of the Word of God; judging myself in God's sunlight: if I am seeking to be careful not to stumble anyone, a saint or sinner, then this last thing will be the result, "filled with the fruits of righteousness."

In this epistle it is the "fruits of righteousness," and in Ephesians and Galatians it is the fruit of the Spirit. In John 15:16 we read, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." That is the reason why we have been chosen and if no fruit is seen in our life then we may well ask, "Have I eternal life at all?"

That blessed thing which the Bible calls faith is a state of soul in which the things of God become glorious certainties.

F. W. Robertson

Mercy and Faithfulness

Psalm 36:5

W. M. Calder

In the four preceding verses the Psalmist draws a fearful picture of the grievous state of the wicked, they are altogether estranged from God, God is not all their thoughts, ...they abhor not evil.

The Psalmist then proceeds to extol the glorious character of Jehovah his God, His mercy, His faithfulness, His righteousness, His justice, His preserving grace, His loving kindness, and His abounding grace and goodness. In verse 5, "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds or skies." Skies is the better word, I think the clouds are limited in their height above the earth, the skies are illimitable and such is the faithfulness of God. Mercy is that Attribute of the Godhead in which Jehovah is said to delight, see Micah 6:18, where the Prophet exclaims in wonder and admiration "Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage, he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." We must not however infer from this that there is any inequality in the divine character; that is not so. All the attributes and perfections of the Godhead are exercised in absolute harmony with each other. God is just, as well as merciful, he can by no means clear the guilty except on righteous grounds, justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne, mercy and truth doth go before His face. As far as our finite minds are able to comprehend the ways and purposes of God, the Attribute of mercy must have remained in abeyance had not our first parents fallen from their state of innocency in the Garden of Eden. Mercy requires an object upon which it can be exercised and our first parents with their wretched covering of fig leaves, hiding among the trees of the Garden from the all-seeing eyes of Jehovah were indeed miserable objects of mercy, and mercy appeared upon the scene. God could and God did righteously exercise mercy towards our first parents. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning," saith the Scripture.

In exercising mercy towards our first parents God had an eye to an event that yet lay in the womb of the future, namely the Cross of Christ, four thousand years later when man had been fully tested and remained incorrigible. God in sovereign grace and mercy provided a Savior and a great One, even His well-beloved and only begotten Son, Who by His death did give Himself a ransom for all, and paid the penalty for all who believe on Him. The work of the cross was retrospective as well as prospective, it reached forward to the last soul saved in this age, and stretched back to the first man, hence I say God could and God did exercise mercy towards our first parents on the ground of that finished work upon the cross, they were freely and fully forgiven, their fig leaves were removed and they were clothed in suitable garments, but they were expelled from that beautiful Garden of delights, and this was in mercy, lest they should put forth their hand and eat of the tree of life and live for ever in their sinful condition. God has so decreed that sin shall bring its own penalty, were it not so sin would overleap all bonds, and this world would become a pandemonium of atrocious wickedness, even as it was before the flood. "Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the skies. For ever O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven, Thy faithfulness is

unto all generations." The Psalmist, speaking prophetically, in Psalm 89 says, "I have said mercy shall be built up for ever, Thy faithfulness shalt Thou establish in the very heavens." This has been abundantly fulfilled in our day. The Lord Jesus Christ is established in the very heavens at God's right hand, He is the sum and substance of all God's faithful promises, all are Yea and Amen in Him. Speaking to Israel by the Prophet Jeremiah, Jehovah declares if the alternations of day and night can cease, or if the heavens above can be measured, or the foundations of the earth searched out from beneath, then might His word concerning Israel fail, not otherwise.

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Church at Corinth says, "God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and in Romans he declares "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Joshua at the close of his career declared that not one thing had failed of all the good things He spake concerning them, and he warned them that God likewise would be faithful in the fulfillment of His warnings concerning them if they failed to obey his commands. Those warnings we see in our day have been literally fulfilled in their dispersion among all the nations on earth, and yet they remain a distinct people. We may lie in heaviness through manifold temptations, and we may be called upon to pass through times of darkness, but Isaiah 50:10 provides an unfailing remedy for depression. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God."

The believer can afford to be at war with the world, the flesh and the devil.

Men Who could say "NO"

Charles R. Keller
Psalm 1:1-6

Please notice in connection with this Psalm that it first could be applied to our blessed Lord. He was One that walked not in the counsel of the ungodly nor stood in the way of sinners nor sat in the seat of the scornful. But there are also two classes of people spoken of in this Psalm. There are those that are righteous, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly"; and the other is the ungodly sinner, "The ungodly are not so; but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away." Chaff is good evidence of people being ungodly. The wind can drive it any way, and it can blow them very easily into a

dance or movie, but a child of God is a stone and it is not so easy to blow a stone into a dance or into a movie.

In connection with this righteous man there are two things that are said about him: He had a positive righteousness and a negative righteousness. Every child of God should have these two kinds of righteousness—positive and negative. In the Scriptures there are things that a child of God can say "yes" to, but there are things in the Word of God that the child of God is supposed to, and should, say "no" to. God wants today in the world men and women of certainty.

We have illustrations in the Scriptures of men and women of certainty. A Christian doesn't amount to very much unless he is a man or woman of certainty, who can say "yes" and who can also say, at times, by the grace of God, "no." We have a good many "yes" Christians today, and you hear a great deal about "yes" men and women, and they say "yes" to everything that is put before them. Did you ever see a Christian like that? You know there are times in the life of every Christian when they should say "no."

I want you to notice a few cases in the Word of God of men that had the courage at some time or other in their lives to say "no." There is the man **Daniel**, and he said "no," and you know who he said it to? He said it to the people that were in authority in that day, that is, they were men of power. They couldn't get a thing on Daniel. It is nice when Christians live like that in the world. **Joseph** also was a case like that. The world couldn't get a thing on them as far as their lives were concerned. The world might have thrown mud at them, but when the sun dries mud it drops off and doesn't amount to anything. It is a good thing when a child of God has a clean life and the world cannot point their finger at them. Sometimes a child of God has to suffer. Has there ever been a time in your life when there was a cloud cast over you? And yet you knew that you were absolutely innocent and right? God says to suffer it: "Commit thy way, trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday" (Psalm 34:5-6). The noonday is when the sun shines the brightest, and if there is ever a time when you can see every speck of dirt it is when the sun shines the brightest. There will be a time when your righteousness shall be brought to light as the noonday sun. We can afford to wait if we are absolutely innocent under a charge. They had nothing against Daniel, and the only way they could get something against him was to pass a law; but did he say "no" to prayer? He was accustomed to praying his petition to the King of kings and Lord of lords. He knew that law was passed, and he, as usual, opened his windows and prayed to God, and was cast into the den of lions for it, but God delivered him out of it.

Has the devil ever told you to give up prayer? Have you given up prayer? You may have some loved ones and they are not saved; there might be unconverted children, husband or wife; it might be those Sunday

School scholars, and perhaps you have reached the point where after having pleaded with God and wept over those souls, your hands were hanging down and you have reached the point where you are about to give up praying for them. Don't do it. God still hears and answers prayer. I know of individuals who were honest in prayer, and those souls never saw their prayers answered and they died and went to be with the Lord Jesus forever, but God did what looked like the impossible—He came in and saved, after they went to heaven, souls they had prayed earnestly for while on earth. The devil comes around and says, "Give up prayer," but you just say "No, I am not going to give up prayer."

There was another man, and he was able to say "no" also; his name was **Abraham**. He had a great victory. That is when the devil will attack you. Sometimes assemblies see a good work done and they are happy and rejoicing and are off their guard, and that is when the devil comes around and tempts them. What took place? The king of Sodom came around, but Abraham had the courage to say "no" to him. He said, "That I will not take from a thread even to a shoe latchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou say, I have made Abram rich" (Genesis 14:23). Just previous to that God had told Abraham, "Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth" (Genesis 14:19). Abraham was linked up with the One that was possessor of heaven and earth. No wonder he was able to say "no." Dear child of God, everyone of us are linked up with the possessor of heaven and earth. Why should we go down and take from the world? We should have the courage to say "no."

We have another illustration of a man who said "no" and he was **Joseph**. He said "no" to sin. The shattered lives and shipwrecks among us, young men and women and others as well, are those that when that sin came across their path, they didn't have the courage to say "no." We have an instance in the Word of God of three individuals, and they wouldn't bow to gold. They were **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego**.

God is not getting what is coming to Him from many Christians. I believe that if we don't give God His portion some way or other, God will take it away from us. The king put up an image of gold, and if the people wouldn't bow to the image of gold, they would suffer for it. But these three men had the courage to say "no" actually to a king. They told the king that their God was able to deliver them, and He did deliver them.

Then there were the **7,000 men in Elijah's day**, and they had the courage to say "no" to the world's religion. I wonder if you have that courage? There are two things in the world today—assemblies gathered to the blessed name of the Lord Jesus, and Babylon the Great, and God doesn't want His people to tamper with the latter. He wants His people to say "no." You be very careful what comes over the radio, or you will be captivated by some of these men, and you will be sending them money because,

"they give good addresses." Assemblies are altogether different. There is a man in Pennsylvania who said that the reason he was in the assembly was because it was just a little better than the churches. God pity him. We are in the assembly of God because it is in God's holy, precious Word. James Brooks of the Presbyterian church in St. Louis said, when looking into eternity, "I sacrificed the truth of God looking at the failure among the brethren." And there are many like him. Remember, it is God's truth, and we have Scripture for what we do. What put us in the assembly? God's Word. What caused us to be baptized? God's Word. Why is it that our sisters don't take part in the assembly? What put them in that place? God's Word.

Look now—the Word of God can be displaced. I was in the West last winter, and they had their woman's meetings. They cannot find it in the Bible! And they take up collections at these woman's meetings and they send it out to preachers. They cannot find it in the Word of God. Then at these meetings there is one woman who does the preaching, and they said, "She can preach better than the preachers preach." It wouldn't take much to get ahead of us sometimes, but look, what is she doing? Displacing the Word of God. When people bring in an organ, you don't find it in the Bible; they have to displace the Word of God. When they say that baptism is immaterial, what do they do? Displace the Word of God. Oh, that God's holy, precious Word would be given a place until our blessed Lord Jesus Christ comes to take us home to be with Himself forever.

Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Here is the negative righteousness. The only thing that is right in the world is the Bible, and things are not right in the world at the present time. There are a lot of things wrong, and the Word of God contains things that if they were done in the world, the world would be all right. Is any great leader of the past or present going to make the world all right? No. There is no such a thing as prophecy in this age. It has to do with after the Lord comes. This is the age when the gospel is going forth and souls should be reached and saved and God's people seeking to reach out after souls. The devil is in the wrong place. He is in heaven and should be in hell. The world will never be right until the devil is in his right place. Christ is the King, and the Word of God has said, "I have set my king in the holy hill of Zion." But at present He is out of place:

"Our Lord is now rejected, and by the world
disowned,
By the many still neglected, and by the few
enthroned;
But soon He'll come in glory! The hour is
drawing nigh,
For the **crowning** day is coming by and by."

The world will never be right until He is in His right place. The Jews are in the wrong place. Their place is over

in Palestine, and the world will never be right until they are there. The Christians are out of place, too. We sometimes sing:

"I'm but a stranger here; heaven is my home!
 Earth is a desert drear; heaven is my home!
 Danger and sorrow stand round me on every
 hand;
 Heaven is my fatherland, heaven is my home!"

We are pilgrims and strangers passing through this world. It is a bad thing when a Christian gets to the point where he is absolutely at home in the world. Soon we will be with Christ and will be in God's presence, "and fall at His feet and the story repeat, and the lover of sinners adore." The Christian is out of place. Things will never be right until the Christian gets in his true place. In the meantime, may the Lord help us to say "No" to every element that is contrary to God's will.

THOSE that are weak in grace dwell more upon what may discourage, than what may encourage them; more upon that which may feed their fears, than upon that which may strengthen their faith; more upon the cross than upon the crown; more upon those that are against them than those that are for them.

Feast of Trumpets

(Leviticus 23:23-25)

(Rosh Hashanah)

Larry Steers

The meaning of Rosh is "head" and Shana means "year". Rosh Hashanah means the head of the year or the day of the New Year.

We have noticed that in our day the length of the interval between the Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Trumpets varies. In Leviticus 23, the counting of days commences with the Passover and ceases with the commencement of the interval again because the Passover is never the same time each year. In this interval, often referred to as "the day of grace", Israel is "scattered and peeled" (Isaiah 18:7). They are despised among the nations of the earth.

Today it is estimated there are sixteen million Jews in the world, and less than half of that number are found in the land of Israel. The Feast of Trumpets sol-

emly reminds us that the purpose of God is to restore these Jewish people to the land promised to them.

Along with Leviticus 23 there are many references to the Feast of Trumpets in the Old Testament as well in Matthew 24. While sitting upon the Mount of Olives, the Lord gave to His disciples His great prophetic statement concerning His return to the earth. Much of what He said relates to the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Atonement.

The first four feasts deal with fulfilled past events, while the last three feasts following the interval speak of future events.

Here we will note more recent historical events. On November 2, 1917, the British Parliament at Westminster issued the Balfour Declaration, in which Great Britain supported a homeland for the Jewish people. However, following World War 1, only a small number of the world's Jewish population had emigrated against great opposition to Palestine. Facing an enemy that vastly outnumbered them, the Jews, though having very limited supplies, succeeded in defeating their enemies.

On May 15, 1948, David Ben Gurion, the leader of the little nation, raised the Star of David over the city of Tel Aviv. For the first time in two thousand years the Jewish people possessed a home land.

Legend suggests that the Star of David was the symbol adorning the Shield of David. The star is composed of two quadrilateral triangles. It has been suggested that one point of the six pointed star points upward to heaven and another downward to an earthly people. Two points of the star point west and two point east signifying an earthly scattered people.

But the quadrilateral triangles are interwoven, and this may suggest a unique people who have never lost their identity. This author's Jewish dentist stated emphatically, "I am a Jew".

When they cried to Pilate, "His blood be on us and our children" (Matthew 27:25) they determined much of their future sojourn of suffering on earth. They have been persecuted indescribably.

In 1948 a very small part of the entire Jewish population possessed only a very limited portion of the land. While it was tremendously significant that a Jewish state existed, this small gathering did not represent the future regathering of Israel. The rapture is in the future, followed by the Feast of Trumpets and a mass migration to the land. They will face violence, and the great tribulation which has never been experienced by any nation upon this earth..

Three captivities and three deliverances summarize the history of Israel.

Abraham was informed by God, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them: and they shall afflict them four hundred years" (Genesis 15:13). Little did Joseph's brethren comprehend that they were preparing the way for a journey to Egypt. Initially their sojourn was favorable

until “there arose up a new king over Egypt which knew not Joseph (Exodus 1:8). The Israelites were plunged into bondage and servitude in Egypt.

They would be delivered from Egyptian bondage because God intended to raise up “a Prophet from the midst of thee of thy brethren” (Deuteronomy 18:15). Moses, raised up by God, delivered Israel from slavery and Joshua led them into the land God had promised them.

Because of their obstinate rebellion against God, there descended upon them a second captivity which occurred in two stages over a number of years. Upon the death of Solomon, Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, took two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, and established a southern realm centered on Jerusalem. Jeroboam took ten tribes to the north.

Those in the north took the character of Jeroboam, who caused Israel to sin. God’s judgment fell upon them in 740 BC when Tiglath Pileser, the Assyrian, invaded the area and took some into captivity. In 721 BC, another Assyrian King invaded the north and took most of the rest into captivity. Those of the Assyrian captivity have never been restored.

The south was preserved for another hundred years until 610 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian monarch, invaded the area and took many down to Babylon. Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed.

The Babylonian captivity would last for seventy years (Jeremiah 29:10). With the defeat of the Babylonian monarchy, Cyrus the Persian issued a decree (Ezra 1:1-4). In that decree Cyrus records an interesting statement that the Lord God of heaven “hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:2). A small number from Judah and Benjamin, along with a few Levites and Priests, were permitted to return to build the House of the Lord God of Israel and to construct the walls of Jerusalem. Cyrus also restored the vessels of the House of the Lord which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple and had placed them in the house of his god, entrusting them into the hands of those who returned.

The third scattering occurred in 70AD when the Roman legions under the command of Titus invaded the land. Many Jews were put to death. The stones of the temple were cast down. The city of Jerusalem was torched. The Jewish people were scattered to sojourn in every nation on earth until the present.

Paul asks “Hath God cast away his people”? He strongly answers his own question, “God forbid” (Romans 11:1). The Apostle reminds us that of that people, “There is a remnant according to the election of grace” (Romans 11:5). He was part of that remnant (Romans 11:1).

Immediately following the rapture, the trumpet will sound. It is not likely that the literal blowing of the shofar or of the silver trumpets is intended. More significant here is that, rather than the sound of a literal trum-

pet, it will be a moment when God puts it into the heart of every Jew in the world to return to the land. They will recall the promise of God to Abraham, “Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates” (Genesis 15:18). That vast area encompasses approximately 300,000 square miles. Even during the reigns of David and Solomon, when the kingdom was its largest, it never reached this extent. The refrain will be “that is our land”. The greatest emigration this world has ever seen will quickly occur by whatever conveyance is possible.

The valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37) will be stirred to life by the four winds that breathe upon the dry bones. The Holy Spirit interprets the passage and reminds us that “these bones are the whole house of Israel” v. 11, “and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army” (v. 10)

The two sticks of Ezekiel 37:16 signify the two aspects of the division of Israel under Jeroboam and Rehoboam then becoming one nation (Ezekiel 37:22).

The returning Jews will be surrounded by their enemies and history will repeat itself. So often Israel, when facing their enemies, would turn to another King and not to God. Since they have returned in unbelief they will seek deliverance and help from a powerful leader of a western confederacy. This leader will offer them protection and a degree of freedom of worship. Isaiah calls this an “agreement with hell” and describes in very graphic and solemn language consequences: “And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. (Isaiah 28:18). This agreement will not stand because this western leader will break the covenant after three and a half years.

The time of great tribulation will burst upon, not only Israel, but also her enemies that surround her. This is referred to as “the Day of the Lord”. Since it is described in many passages of scripture, it is sufficient to quote Isaiah 13:9-10: “Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and the fierce anger, to lay the land desolate, and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine”.

The Feast of Trumpets commences with Israel’s return to the land. But the time of Jacob’s trouble speaks very loudly of a people that despised their God and rebelled against Him.

Two feasts, the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Atonement complement each other. The Feast of Trumpets reminds us of the return of Israel to the land and the Great Day of Atonement of her repentance and conversion.

Pride is so base a disease that God had rather see His dearest children to be buffeted by Satan, than that in pride they should be like Satan.

The Church at Antioch: Its Autonomy

O. B. Wyllie, (dec). New Zealand

The careful reader of the history of the church at Antioch will have observed that, although it was the church at Jerusalem that sent Barnabas to Antioch, there is nothing said of his return to report on what he had found. Throughout, the Lord is seen working in His sovereignty apart from any authority of man. Having seen the genuine work of divine grace, as the Lord's servant responsible directly to Him, Barnabas brought Saul from Tarsus to participate in the work of instructing the young converts without reference to Jerusalem. During that whole year of ministry it was the Lord who supplied the word, and so used it that a church of His own design according to Mathew 18:20 was established. He was in the midst in absolute authority and the operations of the Holy Spirit availed for their understanding of His will no less than for those at Jerusalem. To seek outside authority for their status as an assembly, or sanction for their conduct, would have been a virtual denial that He was indeed in the midst.

Had the church at Jerusalem entertained the idea that their recognition of the new work was necessary when they sent Barnabas forth, there was sufficient evidence from subsequent developments under divine guidance to dispel it. Modern notions of a "circle" or "confederacy" of assemblies into which others newly formed were to be received and from which some could be put away evidently did not exist in apostolic days. Reception and putting away are scriptural procedures only as they concern individual believers in relation to a local assembly. The autonomy of each assembly where the Lord is indeed in the midst is the clear testimony of the New Testament Scriptures.

Twice only in His ministry did our Lord utter those words expressive of ratification by heaven of the action of men on earth, namely, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven." The first occasion concerned Peter's use of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew 16:19, and the second, a local assembly exercising discipline on one of its number (Matthew 18:18). Peter's use of the keys to open the doors of the Kingdom of Heaven to Jews on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and later to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10), was never to be repeated.

The doors once opened remained so. Any claim, Papal or otherwise, to succession to Peter in the use of those keys is utterly false. But while churches exist and disciplinary action is both necessary and effected according to the mind of the Lord, that assurance of divine ratification remains. It applies now only to a local assembly.

The Scriptures will be searched in vain for that same assurance granted to a "united oversight," "central authority" or the like, no matter how designated. To allow of any manner of control from without by any form of hierarchy bearing a name, or that unnamed but existing because of authority assumed by some and allowed by others, represents departure from the Scriptural pattern of assembly life. The idea of receiving an assembly into, or putting it out of, fellowship presupposes the existence of a circle or confederacy of assemblies with a central control contrary to the Word of God.

But there is a fellowship of assemblies clearly indicated in the Scriptures that should be observed by them all. They are each constituted according to the same pattern and their subjection to the same Lord begets a common interest in the welfare of each. The prophecy of Agabus at Antioch concerning the approaching world-wide dearth stirred the saints to send relief unto their Jewish brethren in Judaea (Acts 11:27-29). National distinctions had ceased, and though distance separated them, their oneness in the same Lord taught them to love as brethren. The condition of the poor saints at Jerusalem years later called for a combined effort of the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, directed by Paul, to send them help. See Romans 15:25-27, where an important principle that should actuate saints in their giving is also enunciated. The fact that the Lord is seen in Rev. 1 walking in the midst of the churches, in itself suggests that, as each was subject to Him, so what He spoke to each was to be observed by all.

Commendation by letter of saints passing from one assembly to another is taught in the Word and was practised by the early churches. When Apollos was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren at Ephesus who knew him encouraged him and wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and the result of that visit proved they had the mind of the Lord in their commendation (Acts 18:26-28; 1 Corinthians 3:5-6). After the enemies of Paul and of the Gospel that he preached had evilly affected the minds of the Corinthian saints against him, they would have demanded of him a letter of commendation for subsequent visits — a circumstance that caused him so to write in 2 Corinthians 3:1-3 as to show that when a servant of the Lord's godly walk and service are known beyond doubt, the letter of commendation is redundant. Most of Paul's Epistles include the commendation of saints passing to the assemblies addressed; see for example, Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 16:10-11; Ephesians 6:21;

Philippians 2:29; and Colossians 4:10. The neglect of this scriptural order sometimes causes much embarrassment to the assembly requested to receive visitors, while the letter of commendation should encourage a warmth of affection and hospitality from those receiving them.

In the light of these truths, when a person has been scripturally excommunicated from one assembly, the reception of that one by another assembly should not for a moment be contemplated. Where the pattern of assembly life has been rejected, fellowship with such assemblies becomes no longer possible.

The autonomy of the churches of God in a fellowship one with another sustained by subjection to the one Lord Jesus Christ and guidance by the one Spirit according to apostolic doctrine gradually gave place to a vast clerical system fostering the erroneous concept of the church on earth. This emerged from the carnal condition pervading the churches generally, as the heavenly character and calling of the saints was forgotten and their separation from the world was lost.

The lust for power among men of the Diotrophes spirit disrupted the scriptural order of guidance and rule exercised by a plurality of elders (overseers or bishops). The elder of strongest influence began to take ascendancy over his fellows, and there was neither the spiritual strength nor vision to resist this tendency. Gradually the one bishop as distinct from other elders was recognised in each church, and he assumed all ministerial responsibility.

The scriptural order of distribution of gifts through the Holy Spirit operating in His sovereignty was thus set aside. Many of our readers will have noticed the footnote by the editors of the Oxford Bible to the second Epistle to Timothy, which states that, "Timotheus was ordained the first bishop of the church of the Ephesians." This is plain evidence of the elements of a false clerical system so engrained in men of professed enlightenment that they overlook the facts of Scripture. Six years before that Epistle was written Paul had summoned a plurality of elders to meet him at Miletus, and said to them ". . . the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers" (or bishops). See Acts 20:17, 28.

A further development came as rural churches were formed around the cities in which bishops exercised their authority, and the bishop in charge of a diocese came to be recognised. As time elapsed, the ever-present desire for prominence produced the one bishop in recognised authority over others of a province. The assumption of rule by man over his fellows, so deeply rooted in this expanding organization of clerisy, was consummated in supreme authority ultimately vested in the bishop of Rome, and the Papal system governing that which arrogantly claimed to be "the one true church" was established. Church councils and their edicts were an important factor aiding the universal acceptance of this order of things.

Thus from early post-apostolic times the idea of "The Church on earth" was firmly established as an essential feature of Christianity. The Reformation delivered many from the bondage of Rome, but not from the principle of clerisy. For that there was needed a further mighty work of the Spirit; and this was graciously granted about one and a half centuries ago, when many of the Lord's redeemed ones were awakened to the evils of the religious systems of Christendom. Through diligent study of the Word of God they learned that their place was outside all, in separation to their Lord to follow the pattern of assembly life revealed to them.

It is significant that companies of believers thus taught of God began to spring up in various places quite independently of one another, and in some cases without the knowledge that others existed. Gathering "on the ground of the one body" was unheard of, and there was no earthly authority to grant recognition of their status as assemblies. As the planting of the church at Antioch was the work of the Holy Spirit using vessels of His own sovereign choice, so was the formation of these. They found sufficient authority for the order of worship and service, to which they adhered, in the Word of God. Obedience to the truth received is ever essential to the enjoyment of the Holy Spirit's manifest presence and power. Their obedience was amply rewarded. As He illuminated the pages of Holy Writ, rejecting all sectarian names, and owning none other than that of their Lord, and no authority but His, they were given a very real sense that He was indeed in their midst.

Learning the truth is ever a gradual process. Some of the elements of the false systems from which they had been led out still clung tenaciously. One of these was the idea of "the church on earth," and this persisted through failure to see the two distinct lines of teaching concerning the church which is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:23, Colossians 1:18), and the churches of God (1 Corinthians 11:16, 1 Thessalonians 2:14, 2 Thessalonians 1:4). Associated with it was such teaching as "preserving the unity of the body," and "gathering on the ground of the one body." The unity of the body is a divine work in relation to which man has been given no responsibility; but we are enjoined to "give diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit;" and the sphere of this exercise is the local assembly. "There is one body" is a precious truth to be acknowledged with all other "onenesses" of Ephesians 4:4-6, but nowhere in the Scriptures is it presented as the ground of gathering.

Where these views concerning the body are held, teaching concerning the autonomy of New Testament churches is rejected as "independency," a term which naturally raises the question, Independency of what? To be "free indeed" of all humanly-devised organization and man-made authority on the one hand, and wholly subject to our Lord and His Word on the other, should be the constant aim of all true children of God. The same careful searching of the Scriptures and

ready obedience that brought such blessing into the lives of the saints of the past century is an urgent need of the assemblies today.

Though sin and grace were never born together, and though they shall not die together; yet while the believer lives, these two must live together; and this keeps them humble.

Faith or Fanaticism?

Certainty of the Rapture

Joel Portman

The truth of the rapture has been a source of joy and comfort to saints for many ages. When we speak of the rapture, we are referring to the coming of the Lord to the air unexpectedly, suddenly, secretly and imminently, to receive unto Himself the Body of Christ, the church. This event is separate from His coming in glory at the end of the Great Tribulation or the 70th Week of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9, Matthew 24:15, 27-37). It will deliver His people from the coming day of wrath, the Great Tribulation (I Thessalonians 1:10). We believe this rapture includes every believer who is part of the Body of Christ, everyone who is truly saved regardless of their personal condition at the time and that it will be complete (I Corinthians 15:23, I Thessalonians 5:10). This deliverance will take us into the Father's House (John 14:1-3) to experience the manifestation of the Lord Jesus to His saints and to be with Him for eternity (John 17:24).

We believe in the certainty of the rapture because of the

1. Character of the Church

Those who see the church as a body that is distinct from Israel also see that God's dealings with the church are distinct from His dealings with the nations or with Israel. Careful study shows that apart from a few times when the word "ekklesia" is used for a gathering of people (Acts 19:39) and for Israel (Acts 7:2), the New Testament only uses to define a body of believers who have been called out unto the Lord Himself. In this sense, it is used either for a local assembly or for of the entire body of believers, the Body of Christ.

The truth of the church is a mystery revealed in the New Testament, particularly through Paul (Ephesians 3:4-9). This is also indicated when we look at Matthew 16:18, where the Lord Jesus places the building of His

Church in the future, not saying that He was building, but that He would build His Church.

In addition, the Church Age is a parenthesis in God's program regarding His dealings with men. We notice in Acts 15:14-17 that James and Peter clearly understood this truth based on their understanding of the passage in Amos 9:11-12. Notice that there are many other parentheses in OT Scriptures such as in Isaiah 61:2 as read by the Lord in Luke 4:18-20. His closing of the book in mid-passage shows that there would be a difference between His coming in grace and His coming in judgment that would include a period of time. The typical teaching of the Feasts of Jehovah indicates a parenthesis in God's timetable since there is a break between the Feast of Pentecost and the following feasts that typify God's dealings with Israel in a future day. This break coincides with the present age that began on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit formed the Body of Christ.

The mysteries of the New Testament emphasize distinct and previously unknown truths such as in I Corinthians 15:51-52. The mystery Paul is revealing there is not that of resurrection and the change of the body, since resurrection was not unknown in the Old Testament. However, the truth of a translation without death was never known previously. Notice Martha's response to the Lord in John 11:24. She believed in a resurrection of all at the last day but knew nothing of a distinction in resurrection, or an "out resurrection" from the dead when some are raised and some are not. The mystery of I Corinthians that has to do with the transformation of the body in a moment, with the living taken out of the sphere of death-reigning, is a comfort to believers that is only found in the New Testament.

All these aspects indicate that the church is distinct and will be treated in a distinct manner that is separate from Israel or the nations of the world.

2. Consideration of Old Testament Types

Enoch (Genesis 5) was removed from the earth without dying prior to the flood of God's Judgment. Lot also, that failing, though righteous man (2 Peter 2:6-9), had to be removed from Sodom before the fire of God's judgment could fall, (Genesis 19:22). These picture those who will be alive on earth just prior to the Great Tribulation that is coming to judge and destroy unbelieving men, but they are taken out of the sphere of that judgment before it comes to pass.

3. Consummation of Christ's Triumph

Because of the completeness of the victory won by the Savior at the cross, all that belong to Him must be delivered from the scene of Satan's power. That deliverance will be accomplished in a way that emphasizes the power of the Victor. The word from which we get "rapture" is found 13 times in the New Testament and always indicates a violent seizure, a snatching away by force

from the grasp and domain of an enemy. For example, in Acts 23:10 Paul was "taken by force" from among the Jews by the soldiers of the chief captain. The conclusion seems to be that it is logically and scripturally required that those who are the fruit of His work at the cross should be snatched with power from the sphere of opposition to the Lord Jesus and brought into His own presence to enjoy Him eternally.

4. Consistency of God's Righteousness

When we understand the purposes of the Great Tribulation and the significance of the 70th week of Daniel 9, we see that the church has no place in it whatsoever. It is a judgment to come upon "earth-dwellers," or those who are only linked with this earth (note its occurrence in Revelation). For this reason, the church must be taken out before that event begins to unfold. In fact, the promise of the Lord to the overcomer in Philadelphia (Revelation 3:10) is that He will keep them "from the hour of temptation." Literally, this is "out of" that hour and indicates a complete deliverance from ever being in it. Thayer's Greek Lexicon says that the word indicates a complete removal from the sphere of that testing. So it is according to God's righteousness to make a difference in His judgments. 2 Peter 2:9 tells us that "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation," and the context suggests the judgment of God on the world of the ungodly, or unjust.

5. Care of the Lord Jesus for His own John 11:25-26; 14:1-3

These precious passages from the Lord Himself to His own before He left them for Calvary indicate His personal interest in their joy and deliverance. To the sorrowing Martha in John 11, we have the first indication of the rapture, though not in those words. When the Lord told her in verse 25 that the one who dies believing in me shall live, He was speaking of the resurrection. The next verse, verse 26, tells us that the one who lives who believes in Him shall never die. Some have taken this to refer to deliverance from spiritual and eternal death, but in keeping with the previous verse, the Lord is telling her and us that there will be those who believe in Him who will never die. This is an early hint of the rapture of the saints. In addition, the Lord in John 14:3 tells the sorrowing disciples that He would come again and receive them to be with Him. This is not His coming in power and glory but a coming for His own that will deliver them from this world to be with Him. His care is so great for His loved ones that He waits patiently for that day when He will rise up and bring them to Himself.

6. Confidence of God's Word 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

In this passage, the apostle is seeking to comfort the saints in Thessalonica. They were experiencing great

trial of their faith that seems to have caused them to wonder if they were in the Great Tribulation. Paul seeks to reassure them that what they were experiencing was only a trial for a time. They were also questioning if those who had died as believers had missed out completely since they would not be alive on the earth when that Kingdom is set up. Paul seeks to assure them concerning the great events that must take place in which every saint, whether sleeping in death or alive until He comes will have part. There would be a great "catching away" that would include every one of the Lord's own, taking them out of this scene to be with Him. A simple reading of this passage makes it clear that this coming is distinct from His future coming to the earth. The events that must take place between (the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Marriage of the Lamb as well as the time of Jacob's trouble) make necessary a space between it and that coming in glory when we will come out with Him. Since there are clear signs that would indicate the visible coming of the Lord to the earth and since the coming of the Lord is an imminent event that could happen without warning at any time, we must make a distinction between the two comings. This would then place the coming of the Lord for His own in the air prior to His coming in glory. With our confidence in the certainty of His Word, we rejoice as we anticipate this glorious event.

7. Comfort of the Blessed Hope 1 Thessalonians 4:18

Finally, the hope of the Lord's coming for His church is to be a comfort to our souls. If it were not a certain event to be anticipated at any time for His own, it would not have the comfort He intended it to have. That comfort is that at any moment He will appear (1 John 2:28, 3:2) to receive His own. No matter what are the circumstances of a believer's life, there can be a calm sense of assurance and the blessed hope that He is coming and perhaps it will be today. This has proven to be a source of immense comfort to many souls who are experiencing trial, sorrow, physical pain, or persecution for His sake. What heart does not rise with joy to think that His coming is "perhaps today."

The rapture of the church is a distinct reality from which we can derive great comfort, a truth that should live with fervency in our souls and which should motivate us in our service to Himself. He may come even today in fulfillment of His promise, "Surely, I come quickly" (Revelation 22:20). Our hearts reecho, "even so come Lord Jesus."

The Christian must be consumed with the infinite beauty of holiness and the infinite damnability of sin.