

## HOLY EXPECTATIONS

When we see Him we shall be like Him, said the apostle John. Two integrated expectations are found in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians: the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and holiness. John's statement could be a subtitle for Paul's intimate love letter written to a church born in a riot. Before we go any further I want to establish not the historical context of that birth in Acts 17, but the spiritual context of Paul's urgent message.

If we want to desperately pursue God and His plan for us, we need to see that Paul's letters (14 from Romans to Hebrews) reveal levels of experience and glory beyond the four gospels. At first that sounds like error. The gospels are the history of how twelve fallen men received eternal life from the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a very small snapshot of between 23 and 28 days of the life of our Lord. The Son of Man surrendered His divinity by not using the divine attributes. Yes He is the eternal Son of God always and forever, but only manifested His glory in a few glimpses - Cana and mount Tabor the notable times. A notable US Bible teacher speaks of a dream and meeting Paul in heaven. The great master builder of the church tells him its a big mistake to elevate his letters above the gospels. No one would want to do that because the New Testament is all gold and silver and precious stones. However, to grip what Jesus said, to do the Master's truth, we must be men and women of living experience. Paul points the way to the experience of glory, the dying out to self, and a hundred and one other essentials we need to be what the new covenant declares. The letters are not greater than the gospels in inspiration, but paint the wider canvass of heavenly places. Thessalonians are two of the five letters that have no reference to the Old Testament. With Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians we are taken into the heavenly dimension. If we're really living this is the map..... the five revelation letters of PROGRESS.

We need balance today. There is ministry on both sides of the Cross. The sufferings of Christ balance the power of His resurrection. The mind of Christ is both true humility (Phil. 2:5-7) and seeing in the Spirit when absent from the situation (1 Cor. 5:3). The balance of character and supernatural breakthrough is important. Supernatural knowledge will puff you up and give pride. The balance has to come by obedience in love. Do the revelation with humility. How?

By knowing His grace propels you to do what He HAS GIVEN you. It's ALL OF GRACE. God is working IN you to will and to do of His own pleasure. Whatever good we have done in the Spirit we have received it from heaven. Boasting and pride excluded! Hallelujah!

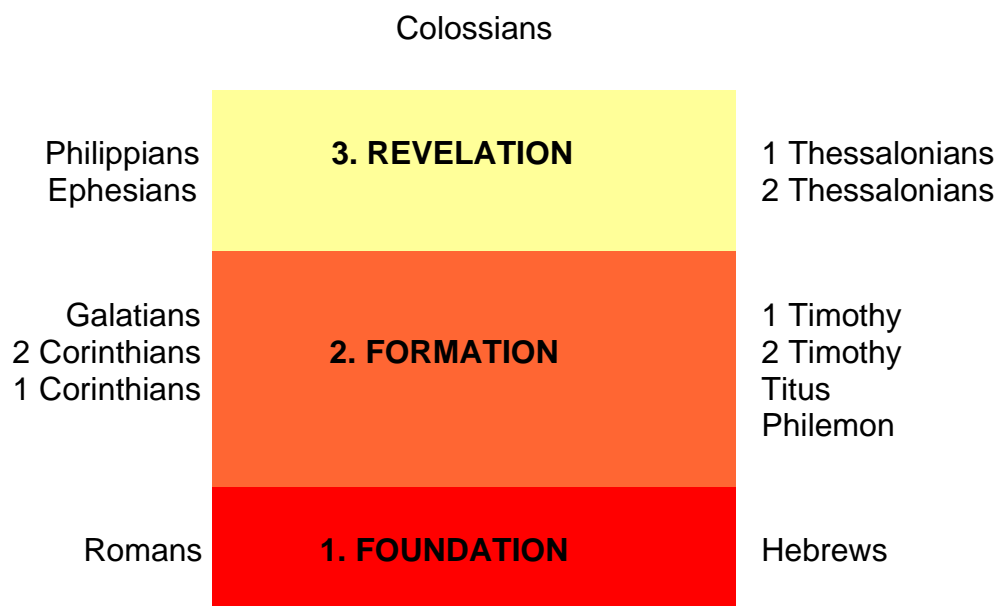
Jesus lived two lives.....before the Cross He was in the flesh (a human body, never in sin); He was under the law and walked on the earth. After the Cross He was in the Spirit, in liberty and in the heavenlies. Paul's knowledge (2 Corinthians 5:16) was in the second sphere - and that is why access to glory is much more apparent in the epistles than the gospels. Jesus relinquished flesh, law, earth for spirit, liberty, heaven. Will we?

Secondly we need to see the context of the Thessalonian epistles with the other letters. Truth is multi-layered, and one aspect is the very ordering of the letters.

There are three groups of seven letters - letters of PROGRESS (from the foundation of Romans to the high point of Colossians where Christ is pre-eminent); the letters of PERSEVERANCE (from 1 Thessalonians to the final appeal of Hebrews); the letters of James to Jude are primarily the letters of PENITENCE. No one can appeal to the backslider quite like the apostle of the return, Peter.

(1)	(2)	(3)
↑ COLOSSIANS PHILIPPIANS EPHESIANS GALATIANS 2 CORINTHIANS 1 CORINTHIANS ROMANS  (PROGRESS or the WAY TO REVIVALS	1 THESSALONIANS 2 THESSALONIANS 1 TIMOTHY 2 TIMOTHY TITUS PHILEMON HEBREWS  (PERSEVERANCE) ↓ In blessing? How to stay there.	↑ JUDE 3 JOHN 2 JOHN 1 JOHN 2 PETER 1 PETER JAMES  (PENITENCE) How to return to blessing.

If we focus on Paul's 14 letters we see a temple of truth with three different levels of truth.



## 1. FOUNDATION

So we have a 2 - 7 - 5 formation. The two foundational books mention Old Testament saints the most. Why? They are waiting IN FAITH for the Messiah to come. The seven formation books mention the Cross the most. Why? It is the path of LOVE..... that makes His path through problems in the church. Surely Corinth and Galatia were churches in the wilderness. Yet Ephesus, Colosseae, Philippi and Thessalonica are churches experiencing the promised land of CHRIST IN YOU, the HOPE of GLORY. Here there are no references to the Old Testament; we are in the Spirit, in the heavenlies and in the perfect law of liberty.

One of the tragedies of the true church is that we let the formation truths split us. Marriage and divorce. The place of law. How to heal or prophesy. Sufferings of Christ. Elders and deacons. Finance. Do we have demons? Etc. etc. What is the answer? Simply Jesus living His second life in us, the hope of glory. Or living in the experience of the revelation letters.

Now we can come to 1 Thessalonians, because we have seen something of its spiritual context. Also we need to appreciate the balance of Cross and Resurrection, the first Coming on earth and the second Coming in the air, the sufferings and the glory, and the balance of being on the earth yet at the same time being in heaven. See John 3:13 where Jesus has a present tense consciousness of the ISNESS of being heaven while He talked to Nicodemus on earth! Holy expectation comes from what the Father is saying to the Son. Jesus could do nothing of Himself but only be subservient to the Father's pleasure and purpose. If Jesus suspended His deity to function as a new creation man under the anointing of the Spirit, we must also crucify the flesh to also live and walk in the Spirit, waiting for His glorious return.

## THE BEGINNING

After the riot at Jason's house Paul walked at least 35 miles to Berea. He had only been at Thessalonica for a few weekends of ministry and an evangelistically aggressive church had been born who were to relay the rhema of God's Word to all Greece and S.Bulgaria. The Greek city had been called Therma or "hot springs" and the work of faith through the embattled believers was red hot. They turned the world upside down by the conviction of sin and openness to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. The real riot was nothing to do with jealous Jews, but rather a spiritual; R.I.O.T. or radical invasion of truth. This R.I.O.T. entered their hearts and caused three qualities of enduring reality.

### a) The Work of Faith (verse 3)

They turned the world upside down by their acts, process and result of faith. Smith Wigglesworth had three stages of faith based on Mark 4:28;

the blade	=	saving faith (Eph. 2:8),
the head	=	hearing faith (Rom. 10:17),
the full corn	=	abiding faith (John 15:7)

After the new birth we need the supply of the rhema Word of Christ which produces instant faith. (Romans 10:17). They already had their faith strengthened by the riot at Jason's house, but had to grow and "exceedingly growing faith" was the apostolic tribute to this young church.

As an art teacher we have to know the difference between primary and secondary sources. If a student photographs or draws an object it is primary, but if an image is taken off the internet it is secondary. The primary source of faith is the word of spirit and life our Lord Jesus speaks. (John 6:63). Logos, the written word of God, can become personal, spoken, subjective and specific provided we follow these young Thessalonian believers. How? They received the word in much affliction in the joy of the Holy Spirit.....says verse 6. Notice three things here - they received the engrafted word in meekness (meditation). They received it in much affliction (suffering). They received it in the joy of the Holy Spirit (supernatural power). These are three essential keys to strong faith that keeps growing.

The balance between meditation and the Holy Spirit has been emphasized in recent years, but very little concerning the place of suffering. Persecutions, insults, rejections should strengthen faith and lengthen love if we hear the counsel of Scripture and church history correctly. Today too many saints prefer feelology to theology and pander to their emotional state. Carnal believers fail to make Jesus Lord by living in the realm of emotions. The ancient saints, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Jacob, Job, Jeremiah and the prophets lived a life with their Lord on the inside, in their spirits. The Kingdom comes to earth by self abnegation : the giving up of the soul to God by crucifixion. Tozer said, we can only be as happy as we are holy - and this apostolic gospel is rarely heard in Europe today. We go through the desert of crucifixions into the successful warfare and welfare of the Promised Land. The young church at Thessalonica knew this principle; And so did Saul who became Paul. The defining moment of his life was witnessing the joyous martyrdom of Stephen whose face was transfigured like an angel. Even after this he dragged christians off against their own will to be tortured. Then came the blinding light defining moment and the destiny unveiled when the Lord included suffering and highlighted suffering in his apostolic commission. (Acts 9:16). The full corn of "abiding faith" is cross centred. The head (Mark 4:28) of "hearing faith" is Holy Spirit impregnated, a supernatural lifestyle of signs and wonders, healing and deliverance. The Thessalonian converts possessed both aspects. They received the word in the joy of the Holy Spirit but also in much affliction. May God teach us this precious balance.....of "whoever is least among you shall be the greatest." Our humiliations lead to exaltation said Guyon and the mark of the apostolic team among the young churches was surely this route of suffering.

Paul calls no other church an example, (1 Thessalonians 1:7). The Greek word 'tupos' can mean a seal, or dye, or impression left by a blow. The word is used in John 20:25 'print' and Romans 6:17 'form'. The Thessalonians were from the act of saving faith a cross-centred called out community of red-hot evangelists.

"For from you the word of the Lord  
thundered out not only in Bulgaria  
and Greece but in every place. Your  
FAITH toward God has gone out, so

we need not say anything.”

1 Thessalonians 1:8

The apostolic team were nearly out of business because every part of the body was DOING ITS SHARE causing growth of the body. The gospel came to them IN DYNAMIC POWER of conviction of sin AND in the supernatural POWER of signs and wonders. Again, note the balance. Is that true of us today? Will the reformed Calvinist and the radical charismatic get married soon?!

## **b) The Labour of Love (1: 3)**

Paul's revelation is that we can enter into the intimate, eternal love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father. Their counsel of peace and glory in eternity can be known only by the cross of Christ. Paul refers in this phrase to the “painful labours of love.” The essence of love is expanded in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12. Three aspects are found here.

### **1. Abstain from lust (4:3-8)**

All sexual sin brings defeat in the Christian life. By going beyond the boundaries of morality we abuse ourselves and cheat others. Continual sexual sin will despise and reject God and bring to nothing God's purpose. The “passion of lust” is strong sensual desire that has burned a present pain in our souls. The ‘inordinate affection’ of Colossians 3:5 is the attraction between two who have suffered this emotional and mental pain in past relationships. Buried pain promotes compulsive behaviour of fantasy lust. Counselling and the imperative of destruction by neglect will win the battle as we pray.

### **2. Abound in Love (4:1, 2, 9,10)**

We can be taught by God to love. One day an African bridegroom was stood up by his bride - but boldly declared he would be married that day and asked if any lady present in the church would come forward and take his hand in holy matrimony! She came forward! He rejoiced, knowing marriage was not based on money or physical appearance and he was taught by God to love her.

We are to be knit together in agape love (Colossians 2:2). Self interest always produces friction, disunity, and finally divorce. Only agape from both partners toward each other can cement souls and spirits. Sensitivity to one another's needs has to be learned from the essential partner in marriage who is the Lord Jesus!

### **3. Ambitious to lead a Quiet Life (4:11,12)**

God works for those who wait for Him. Holy expectations come to those who wait with rest in their spirit and zeal in their heart. Don't be a busybody meddling or trying to manage the affairs that belong to someone else. Life is lived forwards but understood lived backwards! So a quiet life at your centre, deep down in your spirit, is required, the busy life at the circumference. Check out the writings of Guyon, Fenelon and Molinos, the quietests of the late 17th century. You will find counsel of

a deep and satisfying nature because they know a sovereign God in complete control of our lives, and a silent place of retreat in our human spirits where Christ IS in us, the hope of glory. True love hates the flesh and will not birth an Ishmael. We will soon know the difference between a good idea and a God idea, if we live in the Spirit.

### **c) The Patience of Hope (5: 3)**

The blessed hope is the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power and in glory. Imagine the greatest reunion the world has ever seen when ten thousand times ten thousand angels meet with millions upon millions of redeemed humanity. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 is the noisiest verse in Scripture. Sound waves of sonic booms from the voice of the Lord open the graves and re-constitute the ashes of every true believer. The voice of archangel Michael and the trumpet of Gabriel announce the mid air meeting where golden glittering bodies finally see the Lord Jesus and become like Him in a split second. Mortality puts on immortality. Corruption puts on incorruption. The saints actually meet Moses, Elijah, Abel, Abraham, David, Paul, Peter and John and every righteous character from the Bible, including Adam and Eve, whom God clothed with the skins of animals.

We are to come to the patience of hope by FORTIFYING ourselves with the words of the second coming passages. How?

- a) watch and pray (Mark 13:33-37)
- b) be sober (do not allow your faculties to be dimmed by excess)
- c) don't sleep.....did you know that Gaddafi, Libya's extreme leader, said there is a giant above all to come - but it's asleep and it's the church of Jesus Christ?!
- d) don't be drunk - Matthew 24:48-51
- e) put on faith and love as a breastplate - 1 Thessalonians 5:8.
- f) put on the helmet, the HOPE of salvation. We need to guard our minds and hearts in these days of deception.

We need the patient endurance of hope because great controversy surrounds the timing of His coming. 80% of the western world believe in pre-tribulation second coming. It is a relatively new doctrine that started in the 1830's in Edward Irving's church in London. Before then everyone agreed : post tribulation. 80% of the suffering church believe in the post-tribulation appearance. Correction, probably over 90% - So it's ESCAPOLOGY or ESCUATOLOGY. 1 Thessalonians 5:9 tells us we are not appointed to wrath. There are two wraths - one from satan in the 7 year antichrist reign where we run, hide, survive. Then the wrath of God when sinners run and hide, when they say to the mountains:

“Fall on us and hide us from.....  
.... the wrath of the Lamb! For the  
great day of His wrath is come and  
who is able to stand?”

Revelation 6:16,17

Also see the place of the cosmic blackout as after the Great Tribulation and before His coming. Matthew 24:29,30 contains two time sequence words :v.29 “immediately after” and v.30 “then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven.” Joel 2:31 confirms this with another time sequence word “before”. Revelation 6:12-17 also confirms. We will not know the day or hour of His glorious return in power, but we will know the season (1 Thessalonians 5:2-4). How we need an undiminished, confident, eager expectation of His return that the morning star may shine in our hearts?

Sadly the church is often asleep - but the Holy Spirit has a remnant and He is stirring up holy expectations.

Through the work of faith  
the labour of love and  
the patience of hope

WE WILL BE READY

WE WILL ENDURE

WE WILL EXPECT !