

From 1 Thessalonians. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS: AWAKENING TO REVEALED TRUTH

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From 1 Thessalonians. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS: AWAKENING TO REVEALED TRUTH.
PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION, 1:1.

#1. A supernatural change had taken place in this city. There was a spiritual transformation that unfolded in that space, that time and in that sociology. We know that, because certain citizens became believers "...in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...".

#2. Old habits of thought, speech and behavior would have to have been curtailed and a new beginning initialized. A shift of influence was realized, moving those believers from traditional influences to eternal realities.

#3. Such a spiritual transformation *marks the frontier between the spirit and the flesh, between the church and the world, between the believing mind and the unbelieving mind, between one kind of behavior and another.*

#4. "Paul and Silvanus and Timothy" sent this missive to those who had "turned to God from idols", 1:9. One may consider the difficult personal, social and traditional thresholds that those souls had to cross to become Christian.

#5. The Almighty had performed *the act of inclusion*. Those introduced to the revelation and who obeyed it had been included in the eternal kingdom; collectively known as "the church of The Thessalonians".

#6. This inclusion would have to have been plenary. When the Lord takes us in to His spiritual kingdom, it involves the person, his/her location, the circumstances and the historical conditions with which the believer contends.

#7. Inherently, the stipulated act of inclusion determines the distinction between the believing church and the pagan world. Coincidental with divine inclusion is the conscious placement of *a kind of wall* between believers and unbelievers.

#8. All of this implies a *state of social contradiction*, and is an expected result of the introduction of the gospel. However, those who bowed before the will of God in Thessalonica believed that their obedience was a move from lesser importance to greater importance.

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PART 2: THE GOD CONSCIOUS, 1:2-4.

#1. "Paul and Silvanus and Timothy" (1:1) gave "thanks to God" (1:2) for the Thessalonian believers. Why? What had the Lord done in that city and among those people?

#2. The answer is that the Almighty *generated a consciousness of Himself in the minds of those who finally turned "to serve a living and true God"*, 1:9.

#3. A sudden burst of awareness or a lower cadence of development led to the same outcome: God consciousness. Thereafter, their thought, speech and behavior had to be understood as standing "in the presence of our God and Father", 1:3.

#4. God consciousness is sufficient to explain what became evident to all: "your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ...", 1:3.

#5. God consciousness is a state of mind and of behavior. In specific terms, the spiritual state of God consciousness is causal of public and private behavior. It is observed, then, that God consciousness is developed from the nature and strength of revelation.

#6. The Lord's purpose, in Thessalonica, was to affect the reasoning of the Thessalonians regarding the unseen dimension. The whole perspective of reality had changed. They were being watched and judged and acted upon by the invisible but very real God. Necessarily, therefore, one must consider their dramatic transformation of reasoning. After the preaching of the gospel and their applied belief, those Thessalonians reasoned on the "...hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father", 1:3. Oh yes! They surely became God conscious.

#7. And then, "knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you", 1:4. In the Bible there are references to the Lord's stated interest in those who respect His presence and value its implications. "His choice" was not and is not founded upon the arbitrary nor upon human inherency. The Almighty searches the earth seeking for those who are capable of God consciousness.

#8. The Lord was looking into the hearts of the Thessalonians, searching for the one or the many with just such an independent drive to know the truth behind the apparent. "...the church of the Thessalonians in God..." was peopled by those who could no further be satisfied by world appearances.

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PART 3: THE TERMS OF THE BLEND, 1:5.

#1. ". . . For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake", v5.

#2. The apostle depicts the presentation of the revealed truth to this pagan city as a *strategic blend of several facets*. However, those moments of preaching represented an *unequal blend* composed of the supernatural and the human.

#3. The Lord always provides the *revealed terms of conduct*. This verse elucidates at least 5 governing terms of the gospel presentation:

- ARTICLE 1: Preaching is done in accordance with the word of God. This has to be propositional truth. There was nothing vague in the gospel message. It "did not come to you in word only", but that was its central pillar. The word of God comes with a grammatical structure calculated to capture the thinking of the Eternal Reality. It is non-negotiable. Surpassing human wisdom, intuition, experience and time, the "word", like a breaker on the shore challenges the status quo. The "word" is the constant authority.
- ARTICLE 2: The presentation was made in view of the "power" of God. There is a supernatural "power" behind the gospel truth that is anything but time neutral. Revealed truth is underwritten by supernatural power that dwarfs human personal experience. The gospel message is *relative to a power that amends human circumstances*. The power of amendment must be a facet of preaching and of belief. This "power" is not far from the "word".
- ARTICLE 3: The preaching was under the aegis (approval) of the "Holy Spirit". Biblically, we learn, that it is His Excellency the Holy Spirit who takes responsibility for addressing the human race regarding the Lord's expectations of them through the revelation. Therefore, we are directly accountable to His Excellency for how revealed truth is spoken unto the world. It is a sacred privilege and duty.
- ARTICLE 4: Personal "conviction" is required as a fundamental facet of pushing revealed truth into the world. The stance of conviction symbolizes (makes knowable) the subordination of the self to the word of God. Without studied "conviction" the conveyor of revealed truth is susceptible to human genius for argumentation. Conviction deficit does not handle well the often-strenuous opposition from the universe of unbelief.
- ARTICLE 5: Conforming behavior is never incidental to teaching the revelation; it is indispensable. To the church in Thessalonica Paul reminded them "...you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake". One's personal behavior can bolster the revealed truth or it can detract from it (hypocrisy/double standards.)

#4. The projection of revealed truth into the world is undertaken according to at least these prescribed terms. Apart from these 5 articles we are not prepared to challenge the world views of unbelief.

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PART 4: THE MAKING OF A SPIRITUAL EXAMPLE, 1:6, 7.

#1. "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia ", 1:6, 7.

#2. From the point of the introduction of revealed truth into Thessalonica forward, a change of focus became increasingly evident. The word of God had made a profound impression upon many minds in that pagan city.

#3. Though the people were steeped in all the cultural, social, religious and temporal fibers of connection in the city, nevertheless, belief in Christ took root.

#4. To learn the deeper things of revealed truth, those who believed "...became imitators of us and of the Lord...", v.6. This alerts the reader to the *act of will* demonstrated by the believing Thessalonians. Paul, Silvanus and Timothy were observed and then imitated. These men represented another world, another way of understanding and a selfless spirit of service to "the Lord".

#5. "The Lord" Himself was correctly perceived as the true yet causal reality behind all things. It was He who was to be emulated and obeyed. Apparently the shift of focus away from their experience and to revelation was complete.

#6. The Thessalonians had never known Jesus during His sojourn on the earth. Knowledge of who He was had come to them through revelation. But this shift of focus was not without immediate and personal consequence. They had "received the word in much tribulation".

#7. Traditional Thessalonica understood their shift of interest, thought, speech and behavior as a threat. Vested interests were being challenged. A dangerous situation had developed.

#8. However, the Christians in that set of historical conditions manifested "the joy of the Holy Spirit"! *This means that their faith in "the Lord" was not subject to their troubling experience.* Quite to the reverse. That is how that they "became an example to all believers in Macedonia and in Achaia".

#9. The church of the Thessalonians made no compromise with the culture; made no accommodation to palpable danger and no hint of cowardice was displayed in the face of uncertainty. And this is how spiritual examples are made. Such people are made in the furnace of "tribulation"!

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PART 5: FROM THE FURNACE OF TRIBULATION TO THE FORE, 1:8-10.

#1. "Tribulation" is, of course, common to mankind. But how we deal with it is the issue. And we must deal with it as a spiritual challenge to be overcome.

#2. Tribulation comes in many forms and with varying effects. Illness, protracted pain, grinding circumstances of any kind, abusive situations, pressure from the state, persecution and other things all put us to the test.

#3. Tribulation must have become accepted by them as part of the life of faith; an inevitability. The Thessalonians did not elevate their suffering and hardship (their experience) above the importance of faith in the Lord. "For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you...in Macedonia... Achaia...also in every place...", 1:8.

#4. Their "reception" of the preachers and of the gospel was perfect. They "turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God", 1:9. That became the supreme motive for daily existence. The believers in the church of the Thessalonians did not believe that their tribulations were too high a price to pay for what they had gained from the Almighty.

#5. Their hardships would likely have affected every aspect of life. Disappointments, discouragements, heartache, perhaps despair, attended their way. But still they held.

#6. For them there was light in the darkness; more light than darkness. They held to faith in Christ, they chose trust in God above personal comforts, "and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come", 1:10.

#7. It is apparent from this text that, as far as the believers in Thessalonica were concerned, "tribulation" was not allowed to act as a *static benchmark* for reasoning nor for behavior. However, when trouble comes and it protracts over time, there can be a strong temptation to treat it exactly as a static benchmark.

#8. The power of just such a benchmark is to overrule and displace revealed truth and faith in it. Then one descends into a *private psychology of tribulation* which, outright, contradicts the Bible.

#9. "...to wait..." on the Lord is not superfluous. "...He raised..." Jesus from the dead. Our tribulations (all of them) are subject to the power of God that raised the dead. Therefore, as did the believing Thessalonians, *we push back against tribulation by the force of belief.*

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PART 6: THE SUPERNATURAL QUALIFYING FACTOR, 2:1, 2.

#1. People who commit to revealed truth will always find themselves in a state of struggle. The sociology of the world (human dynamics) will see to that. Opposition to the word of God is usually palpable, quantifiable and can leave an indelible wounding memory. Because of the experience of the struggle and its degree of intensity one may question the *validity of the struggle*. The question is, is it worth it?

#2. "For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain", 2:1. The strength of the opposition is always aimed at truncating the success of the subject. That did not happen in Thessalonica. Something spiritual happened in spite of the level of opposition. *This means that the active spiritual part of man can prove more forceful than tangible opposition.*

#3. The apostle makes use of an historical precedent that occurred in Philippi (Acts 16:11-40). "But after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition", 2:2.

#4. Paul and Silas had endured a great injustice in Philippi. One might say that they had been traumatized, to use a contemporary term.

#5. But, the important word here is "after". "After" the struggle, the suffering, the mistreatment and the effects had been registered, they were not so disturbed and neutralized.

#6. Paul and Silas responded with "boldness in our God". And they continued to "speak"... "the gospel of God amid much opposition".

#7. Think of it! *Spiritual boldness in the Lord can fully stand up against our fears, our uncertainties and depressions.* A faith so structured upon the revealed truth has *the particular power* to summon a determinant degree of "boldness" to take a bite out of the emotion of an experience.

#8. General Eisenhower advised airborne troops just before the Normandy Invasion; "the perfect idea is to move forward". And that is exactly what the "the church of the Thessalonians" did.

#9. When in the thick of it, when our fears mount up, when who knows what the outcome shall be; let us summon boldness in our God. Let us be BOLD in how we think, BOLD in action, BOLD in our speech. That is a perfect expression of faith.

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PART 7: THE PRIORITY, 1:3, 4.

#1. The priority for the believer in any, and every temporal circumstance is stipulated here. "...so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts", v.4.

#2. There is an *eternal consequential Witness* to our every thought, behavior and motive. Necessarily, then, personal experience is dethroned as the object of priority. It is displaced as the axis of thought, speech and behavior.

#3. Pleasing the unseen God is to become the unbendable priority. Mundane concerns, under this priority, can make no convincing claim on our attentions.

#4. With this ordained and revealed priority our entire relation toward the material world and the mind's relation to the physical body is dramatically changed.

#5. Therefore, we may generalize, that the development of a strong biblical revealed faith changes the believer's relation to and understanding of time. The spiritual relation of believers to God is, at least one precedent, for how the Lord gives shape to our historical conditions.

#6. Paul, the apostle, teaches us to make quite evident our rejection and disavowal of immoral and amoral behavior. "For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit", v.3.

#7. The teaching of the "exhortation" (gospel) and belief in it represents a standard of judgment above and beyond the human, the cultural and the social; it is an eternal banner of conduct. And it contradicts fallen human nature.

#8. People who commend themselves to the revealed priorities cannot be corrupted by those who hate the rule of God. They cannot be successfully intimidated to cease an independent pursuit of the greater reality.

#9. The church of the Thessalonians became a staging point for a higher, better and greater apprehension for the way things are.

#10. The Almighty is one "who examines our hearts", v.4. He is interested in the most important part of mankind. If the heart is redeemed by God and rescued from the materialism and self-focus so endemic in the world, then, we can have only God to thank.

#11. Being "approved by God" is a personal ambition without par. It is the believer's greatest achievement. To that end the church throughout the ages has been "entrusted with the gospel".

Think of it. The approval of God is within our grasp! Let's have done with this world.

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PART 8: SELF CONSIGNED TO THE PAST, 1:5-8.

#1. Those carrying "the gospel of God" (1:6) to Thessalonica had first come to the point of a personal resolution. It is apparent that "Paul and Silvanus and Timothy" (1:1) had *an understanding of the self not derived from the self*.

#2. In the anteroom of time before their arrival in the city, those 3 men *had consigned the self to the past*. Their previous manner of being was comprehended as incompatible with the revealed truth.

#3. They came to Thessalonica, but, as emissaries, as envoys of an unseen source, high, noble and redemptive. Their personal conduct and bearing were necessary appendages to the revealed truth.

#4. "For we never came with flattering speech...(any) pretext for greed...(nor did they) seek glory from men...(and with no intent of) asserted...authority", 1:5, 6.

#5. The self anchored in the flesh, in personal aggrandizement or in pursuit of the ignoble was nowhere to be found. They did not want anything from anybody.

#6. A different kind of man had appeared in Thessalonica. These men were bred by the Spirit and by the revelation. As such they were not beholden to worldly passions.

#7. In the apostle's words "...you had become very dear to us", 1:8. A bond between them and the Thessalonian believers, forged in faith, could not have been realized as long as the self remained unresponsive to revealed truth.

#8. Christians do not primarily respond to circumstances, nor to one another; we respond firstly to the Lord and by means of the word of God.

#9. "But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children", 1:7. Selflessness was the rule. The "children" came first and they were the point of all efforts expended in that place.

#10. The spiritually new require dedicated attention as they leave behind a coherent universe of former influence. Spiritual growth is not automatic. Nor does it have a schedule.

#11. The preachers had "...so fond an affection for you", 1:8. Which authored their consecration to the spiritual stability of those believers in, at that moment, an increasingly hostile social environment.

#12. So they "were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives...", 1:8. Professionalism was not the commitment. Something deeper and more permanent was necessary. The investment of the self by the preachers and the believers alike in revealed truth was the answer.

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PART 9: THE SUPERLATIVES OF MINISTRY, 1:9-12.

#1. INTENSE EFFORT. "For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God", v.9. These men worked to provide for their own material needs in order to not "burden" the new believers in Christ. Paul's language projects the pain, the exacting sacrifices that can accompany one's ministry and the supporting measures one may have to personally supply just to proclaim the gospel of God. Time was devoted to survival and to teaching the revealed truth. They were being ground down.

#2. MINISTER IN PURITY. "You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers", v10. These chosen descriptive terms of personal behavior convey honesty, authenticity and singularity of purpose. There was no double standard operating in the preachers. They were what they appeared to be. There was no public/private divide in their thinking or their behavior. These men did not say one thing and then do something else.

#3. DRAWING LINES IN THE SAND. "Just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children", v.11. Preachers have the necessary duty of drawing lines between the eternal kingdom of God and the cultural inventions of the world. Functioning in this regard is not always appreciated by believers. It is necessary but can be a *thankless task*. These preachers exhorted, encouraged and implored the Thessalonians to draw lines in the sand between themselves and the universe of unbelief. The preachers were trying to drive a spiritual separation of sufficient dimension to prove faith.

#4. WALKING WORTHY OF GOD. "So that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory", v12. The kingdom of God makes heavy claims upon the lives of believers. Thought, speech and behavior are regulated by "the God who calls" us to the eternal kingdom. Life, then, is administered by the terms of that kingdom. To "walk in a manner worthy" of God is our cherished possession. The preachers saw that end as the apex of their ministry.

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PART 10: THE GROUNDING OF THE FAITH, 2:13.

#1. The scripture is read, the gospel is preached, the word of God has its moment in one's consideration. But, the fact is that we believe, at first, what we think about the revelation.

#2. "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe", v.13.

#3. Upon hearing the revealed truth proclaimed, some of the Thessalonians formed an understanding of its nature and import. For whatever reason, they rejected the idea that the gospel was just another humanly conceived philosophy or fantasy.

#4. In other words, the terms they heard had exerted a profound effect upon the reasoning of that certain number of people who came to believe in them as supernatural. Their conclusion was that what they heard was not "the word of men".

#5. The Thessalonians first trusted in their appraisal of the word of God. Correspondingly, then, those people found their reasoning being grounded in precisely what they had heard and "received". They believed ("accepted") that the terms they heard were telling them the truth about time, life, history, man and their relation to God.

#6. And that is the precise contemporary problem of belief. What then, did the Thessalonians initially think of the revelation delivered by human hands ("you heard from us")? ANSWER: THOSE CERTAIN, AND PERHAPS FEW, PEOPLE BELIEVED THAT WHAT THEY RECEIVED WAS INDEPENDENT OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS!

#7. This means that the word of God cannot ever be circumscribed by human reason, nor by human wisdom. Those believers determined to ground their thought, speech and behavior in "what it really is, the word of God".

#8. Things changed because the word of God "performs its work in you who believe". Question: What happens when people who think of themselves as believers, do not believe that the Bible is independent of human consciousness? Interpretation happens! --Which really grounds what they read in the Bible within human consciousness.

#9. That is the general reception of the Bible today. The modern predicament: We can refer to the Bible as the "word of God" and treat it as "the word of men".

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PART 11: HINDRANCES, 2:14-17.

#1. Some of the Thessalonians had turned to God (1:9), but they found themselves in a world of *living hindrances*. In fact, they were up to their necks in hindrances. Those things come in many modes, intensities and with various reaches of effect. Everywhere in scripture, faith in the Lord and in revealed truth immediately encounters every kind of hindrance.

#2. "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews", 2:14.

#3. Such hindrances were conceived by the troublers as an effective way of hindering the furtherance of the unusual spiritual change that occurred in the city. They were enemies of "God" and of "Christ Jesus".

#4. At the root of their *tactics of hindrance* was the hostility that they bore toward all men, 2:15. They will not leave people of biblical faith alone. Such people objected to the revealed claims that the Almighty made on all men. There was no consideration of the reality of the God of creation. Those who hindered were "not pleasing to God", 2:15.

#5. But the believers in Thessalonica had made pleasing God a priority. Believing in the revealed truth, those people concluded that the word of God did not originate within human consciousness.

#6. This necessarily means that *their reasoning and their behavior were equally independent of mere human consciousness*. That does not garner the approval of the sociology of unbelief.

#7. The people who became "the church of the Thessalonians" (1:1) could no longer be complicit in the status quo. Believers are never satisfied with the status quo.

#8. "Hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved", 2:16. The hindrance, in this case, affected the operational parts of service to the gospel. But Paul reports that their trust in the Lord and in the revealed truth was never subjected to hindrance.

#9. We remember, as we face the actuality of world hindrance, that unbelievers who employ tactical hindrance are "fill(ing) up the measure of their sins" (2:16) and that "wrath has come upon them".

#10. Of course, we will face hindrances as the people of God. But we "endure(d)" them in faith. Therefore, faith must be stronger than the hindrance.

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PART 12: SATANIC INTERFERENCE, 2:17-20.

#1. The gospel was unveiled in Thessalonica. Thereafter, trouble ensued, 1:6. It was, apparently, inevitable.

#2. The apostle records: "For we wanted to come to you--I, Paul, more than once--and Satan hindered us", 2:18.

#3. A powerful variable had inserted itself into human affairs. This satanic variable had to be understood, from that point on, as being part of the general situation. The same circumstance was had in the Garden of Eden, Genesis 1-3. Even in a perfect world there was still room for the satanic variable. According to this epistle, a malignant and obstructive force began to lean upon a particular set of human circumstances. Certain people of belief in God were targeted by Satan. The evil one is discriminating and calculating.

#4. The purpose of Satan was to hinder the work of God in time, 2:18. It is a human proclivity to *rationalize away the satanic variable* -- to pretend that in the modern world such influence does not exist. That is a mistake because satanic interference renders to us a strata of explanation for current events. The devil is at work in the world.

#5. The satanic variable presents to the life of faith the *egregious element of frustration*. "But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while--in person, not in spirit--were all the more eager with great desire to see your face", 2:17.

#6. Personal frustration, induced by satanic interference, is a substantial counter agent to trust in the Lord and in revealed truth.

#7. The apostle cleaves experience and revealed truth in two. They were separated, the apostolic coterie and the church of the Thessalonians, in terms of experience ("in person") but there was no separation in "spirit", 2:17. Spiritual understanding, made known by the revealed truth, gives a perspective on experience not dependent upon measurable circumstances nor emotions.

#8. The satanic variable is granted a place in time and in our struggle of faith. We are, thereby, tested. But we can capitulate under satanic frustration. This happens if believers become confused. God is absolute, which means that satanic intrigue is and can only be a variable. He can be out smarted, out witted and defeated. We are getting to know the enemy, being guided by the revealed word of God.

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PART 13: THE FINAL ISSUE: RETENTION OF THE FAITH, 3:1-5.

#1. The apostle was extremely concerned for the Christians in Thessalonica. His language affirms this: "Therefore when we could endure it no longer (the tension), we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone", 3:1.

#2. Paul's concern: The faith can be lost, abandoned, forfeited. "...I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain", 3:5.

#3. According to the Bible, *faith in Christ is always paired with opposition to it*. There are always hindrances, from within and without, to the revealed truth. In Thessalonica the problem was "affliction". . . "so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this", 3:3.

#4. Those believers were enduring calculated pressure and stress, brought to bear upon them by rabid unbelievers. The purpose was *to induce them to give up their faith in Christ; thinking it not worth the trouble*.

#5. This is what it means to be "disturbed". The disturbance was the function of an invisible spiritual authorship; "the tempter".

#6. No one likes disturbances of any kind, but, the intended leverage does not lay with the disturbance. *The real, true and actual leverage in events is a function of biblical faith*: "and we sent Timothy...to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith", 3:3.

#7. Timothy was there to convince the Thessalonians *to use the faith*, its words, promises, its truths to resist the disturbances to the life of faith. Use it, do not forsake it!

#8. Trouble is coming; it's always coming! We are "destined" (appointed) "for this". Our faith is being tested, being proven by how we handle trouble.

#9. This is arranged by the Almighty to prove that trust in Him and in revealed truth is stronger than time! But we have to show up knowing what we are doing. That is our job. We confront the trouble, the disturbance, the afflictions; we do not surrender our faith to it!

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PART 14: AUTHENTIC, COMPETENT and OPPOSING FAITH, 3:6-10.

#1. Relief finally came to those in the apostolic coterie as Timothy returned to them with good news. "But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you", 3:6.

#2. The teachers who brought the revealed truth to Thessalonica had done their work well. Their labor was not in vain, 3:5. The church of the Thessalonians, being under great distress, pulled together in mutual love and with a powerful shared faith. They must have greatly supported one another. The church did not collapse, fragment nor defect back to their former way of life.

#3. The believers did not turn against those who taught them the truth. And it was the revealed truth that sparked all the subsequent "tribulation" (1:6), "sufferings" (2:14) and "afflictions" (3:3).

#4. Surely these are the temporal signs of an *authentic, competent and opposing faith*. The apostle made a revealing statement when he wrote: "as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith", 3:10.

#5. A full-orbed faith was, at that time, still to be formulated. Yet, their faith was wholly competent to oppose their enemies. That is inherent in the textual language. There can be no doubt that the Christians in that city had a faith that could actively oppose the assaults upon what they had come to believe.

#6. Although Paul and those with him endured "distress and affliction" (3:7) they were equally "comforted" by the competence that had developed in those Gentile believers in that place. They were building a church grounded upon revealed truth and rooted in the conviction that the Lord was with them. *Those believers must have fully accepted the idea that their faith in Christ could survive and thrive even in such a hostile sociology*. It turned out to be true that they were ready for the challenge.

#7. Their teachers, geographically distanced from them, related their vital interests in the outcome of the *faith battle* in that place. ". . . for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord", 3:8.

#8. The strength to hold on was predicated upon an outside element: the power of God. That was the rationale for "...night and day...praying", 3:9, 10.

Biblical faith, in the good days and bad days, is a joint effort, between the Almighty and the man on the spot!

From 1 Thessalonians. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS: AWAKENING TO REVEALED TRUTH.

PART 15: THE DETERMINANT RELATION, 3:11-13.

#1. The words that capture the ideas of this short segment have, of course, as does the entire epistle, the most profound background and source: THE SUPERNATURAL.

#2. But in these 3 verses the apostle calls attention to the essential issue of the *structure of time and circumstance under God*. That structure is depicted in simplified terms here.

#3. "Now may our God and Father Himself direct our way to you", 3:11. Then, "and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people...", 3:12.

#4. The structure is this: SUPERNATURAL CAUSATION--> precedes--> CIRCUMSTANCE, THOUGHT, SPEECH and BEHAVIOR. Therefore, here is the proper understanding of time, life, history and events.

#5. The life of faith is founded upon this revealed fact about the relation of God to time. One of the immediate consequences of this revealed fact is its effect upon one's linguistic representation of experience. *In a universe governed by this causal relation, the term "hopelessness" is void of meaning.*

#6. For the Lord "...to direct our way...", what one may call situational forces or dynamics have to be overruled and overridden. Nothing can, in fact, prevail against it.

#7. All of this amasses to a revealed non-worldly response to personal circumstances. It is the Lord's will that believers respond to contrary circumstances from the condition of heart called "love", 3:12. Not anger, revenge, emotion nor outrage. In today's parlance Christians are *soft targets*.

#8. The goal of this kind of response to the situational is to be found "without blame" (3:13) before God. One can sacrifice one's holiness in the torrent of a merely human response to circumstance.

#9. If the Lord "establish(es)" our "hearts"..."in holiness", then, there are some things we must do and some things we will never do.

All our personal temptations are bordered by our pursuit of holiness. Holiness is a way of reasoning; a way of life.

1 Thessalonians. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS: AWAKENING TO REVEALED TRUTH.

PART 16: AVOID THE REJECTION OF GOD, 4:1-8.

INTRODUCTION: "So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you", 4:8. The Christian life is by nature a polarized way of life. In concert with its practice, the believer draws lines of behavior calculated *to fully demonstrate absolute commitment to the Lord*. In other words, there would be no rejection of God. The Holy Spirit is the author of this remarkable change in the believer's life. The Holy Spirit puts the stipulations and requirements upon one's thought, speech

and behavior. The revealed truth is the instrument that brings to human consciousness the knowledge of the eternal, invisible realities. Faith is being deferential to the leadership and authority of His Excellency the Holy Spirit. The believer defers to the sacred words of God. To reject the revealed truth is to reject the Holy Spirit. Here is how one can avoid the absolute and or the *defacto* rejection of God.

#1: ALLOW NO DISCREPANCY BETWEEN THE CLAIM OF FAITH and THE PROOF OF FAITH, 3:1. It is our "walk" that "please(s) God" and proves faith, not mere rhetoric. We are to obey the revealed apostolic instructions and "to excel still more". In other words *minimalism* is disallowed. Believers cannot live on the edge between the spiritual and the world. Any unwarranted reduction in the discipline of understanding the word of God or diminishment in its reach is a kind of rejection of God. It is a form of spiritual carelessness.

#2: DO NOT UNDER-DIMENSION THE WORD OF GOD, 3:2. This is the constant inclination of men (believers and unbelievers alike), to underrate or even undercut the inherent importance of revelation. "For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus", 3:2. The apostolic concern centers on any thought pattern, behavior pattern that purposefully or inadvertently practices a reductionistic effect upon the axial importance of the word of God. Trials, hardships and the strain of such historical conditions, not to exclude the unabating routine of the daily grind, can blur our focus on scripture. The pressures of the temporal dimension can be used to justify a shift of focus away from the word of God and to more "practical" and immediate concerns.

1 Thessalonians. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS: AWAKENING TO REVEALED TRUTH.
PART 17: AVOID THE REJECTION OF GOD, 4:1-8.

#3: DO NOT FORSAKE THE REVEALED PURPOSE OF GOD, 4:3. "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality". "Sanctification" is the work of God. Only He can set one at such a variance from the pull of the flesh. That variance from the flesh is called sanctification. Impropriety, deviance and other "more natural" pursuits are the antithesis of that spiritual condition before the Lord. It is the Lord's representations of us that are of the greatest possible value and importance.

#4: COMMIT THE BODY TO SANCTIFICATION and HONOR, 4:4. "that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor". The physical body was always prefigured by the Lord as a means to an end, a "vessel". The purpose was *spiritual service*. The vessel's purpose is not grounded in the universe of things, but in the eternal realm of meaning. This comprehension is exclusive of any other and absolutely necessary. The believer must possess his/her vessel to force upon it the revealed expectations.

#5: CONSISTENT SPIRITUAL BEHAVIOR, 4:5. "Not in lustful passions, like the Gentiles who do not know God". Revealed knowledge of the invisible God has the most consequential effects upon the use of the physical body. The material body, as far as its use is concerned, is taken out of the unrestricted pursuit of "lustful passions". That universe of meaning is closed and bolted shut by the direct intervention of God. After conversion to Christ, that world is an antinomian (lawless) universe of forbidden practice. A universe of thought, speech and behavior peopled by those "who do not know God". Behavior is a public manifesto of personal belief.

#6: RESPECT THE FEAR OF GOD, 4:6. The Almighty "...is the avenger in all these things...". Serious liability accrues to those who "transgress" revealed constrictions on personal practice. The apostolic emphasis is that just such consequences are inescapable in the wake of the sin. The attractions of the flesh, perhaps particularly sexual behavior are powerful enough to overrule even revealed truth. The word of God strips the social, cultural veneer away from the actuality of the sin. The universe is an open system to God. He can and will act upon it and upon those within it according to revealed truth.

#7. "For God has not called us for the purpose for impurity, but in sanctification", 4:7. There is behavior generated by the word of God (sanctification) and then, there is behavior generated by the central nervous system (impurity). They are not coequal. Believers choose between the two.

1 Thessalonians. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS: AWAKENING TO REVEALED TRUTH.

PART 18: THE DESTRUCTIVE UNITY, Genesis 3; 1 Thessalonians.

#1. There is a nexus between Genesis 3 and every other passage in the Bible; holding for the Old Testament and the New. In observance of this nexus, Genesis 3 and 1Thessalonians will be treated as one text.

#2. There are two sources of behavior for time and circumstance. One of these sources is behavior generated by the central nervous system. The other source is the revealed will of God.

#3. These two kinds of behavior are in a constant state of contradiction. The one will suppress the other. The apostolic message to us in 1 Thessalonians, in part, regards the differential between the two sorts of behavior. "For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake", 1:5. Paul refers to behavior rooted in the revealed truth. There is nothing earthly or temporal about it. But then, there is behavior prompted by the central nervous system. "For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by deceit", 2:3. The study of behavior generated by the nervous system is called *psychology*.

#4. The church of the Thessalonians could not serve as the outpost of revealed truth without having transcended behavior rooted in the nervous system, 1:8.

#5. Idolatry is a kind of religion purely derived from the machinations of the nervous system, 1:9, 10.

#6. The sins of the flesh are generated by the nervous system, 4:1-8.

#7. The rationale of the word of God calls us "to walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory", 2:12.

#8. Notably, the contest between these two bases for thought, speech and behavior begins in the Garden of Eden and with the unsettling matters of Genesis 3.

1 Thessalonians. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS: AWAKENING TO REVEALED TRUTH. PART 19: THE DESTRUCTIVE UNITY, Genesis, 1 Thessalonians.
GENERALIZATION FROM GENESIS 3:

#1. The material order of things precedes us all. Light, for example, carries some knowledge of the external world to the human central nervous system. And there is a sequence producing representations in the mind (representations like images, smells, the feel of things, particular sounds and the taste of things). Then human reasoning comes to bear upon those representations and arrives at what is called an *understanding*.

#2. This is how we have been created. But at the pinnacle of representations there is the word of God, revelation. Into this divine arrangement comes satanic influence. "Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Indeed, has God said, You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" 3:1.

#3. That was the opening gambit in a larger satanic strategy to undermine human confidence in the word of God. "...the serpent..." had the purpose of convincing Adam and Eve that they could and should trust in the unity between the nervous system and <-- human reason. Revelation, the serpent opined, was superfluous, unnecessary and unreliable. That creature was capable of "critical thought"; considered to be the fundamental requirement for the improvement of human conditions. But that is false.

#4. "The woman said to the serpent, 'From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die'", 3:3.

#5. The published word of God, its meanings, promises and warnings would have to be displaced and disputed by something outside and independent of it.

#6. The satanic substitute was the destructive unity between the central nervous system <-- and human reason. Genesis 3 is the first of many episodic exemplars of this pragmatic practice. Its lineage begins here and continues unto the present. It is a cherished human self-deception.

1 Thessalonians. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS: AWAKENING TO REVEALED TRUTH. PART 20: THE DESTRUCTIVE UNITY, Genesis, 1 Thessalonians. GENERALIZATION FROM GENESIS 3.

#1. The continuous human practice of *psychological behavior (that grounded in the nervous system)* begins in Genesis 3. It was realized through the agency of satanic influence and human indifference to revelation. That is the lesson.

#2. "The serpent said to the woman, 'You surely will not die'", 3:4. That was a direct satanic repudiation of the character of God, the Creator. He lied! God always lies! His words revealed are not to be trusted. Revelation is not what it claims to be or what it appears to be.

#3. "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil", 3:4, 5. The purpose of the word of God is to suppress human potential and stunt mankind's inner development.

#4. The point of this line of argumentation was to convince those two human beings that their only meaningful course of action was to *elevate psychological behavior above the behavior of faith*. But these are two different horses; we can ride one or the other, but not both.

#5. The argument was brilliant! Paint the Almighty as benevolent yet obscuring the real truth of His motives; repression. That is an equally modern conception. In other words, the Bible has nothing meaningful to say to men in contemporary time.

#6. The contemporary reading of scripture is this. We may safely read the Bible pursuing doctrine and basic morality, but for daily life we must follow the course of psychological behavior. That is the way it was always intended to be!

#7. That is false. The rule of biblical faith declares that the believer is to transcend psychological behavior and establish every day response to time and circumstance upon the revealed truth. The church of the Thessalonians had to make the same personal disposition according to biblical faith.

1 Thessalonians. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS: AWAKENING TO REVEALED TRUTH. PART 21: THE DESTRUCTIVE UNITY, Genesis 3, 1 Thessalonians.

GENERALIZATION FROM GENESIS 3.

#1. The critical problem of the *destructive unity* between the nervous system <-- and human reason is this; *one can attribute to it a higher range of competence than it, in fact, possesses*. The serpent's argument was well conceived.

#2. THE ARGUMENT: If the Lord lies to us in His revelation, if He cannot be trusted, if He does not have the powers He claims, then it does not matter if God exists or if He's spoken. It really makes no difference at all. The 1882 observation of the German thinker Friedrich Nietzsche captures the spirit of the satanic claim; "God is dead".

#3. The central nervous system serves the flesh. It has its uses but it has its weakness. It cannot be relied upon beyond its range of competence. "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food (psychological behavior) and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise (attribution of super competence), she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate", 3:6.

#4. Right there is our contemporary problem with the Bible; both within the churches and outside of them. Once the word of God is displaced by the destructive unity between the nervous system <-- and human reasoning, and if revelation is therefore disputed and deemed unreliable, then, one has no choice but to conclude that God lies or that He does not exist or that His word cannot be trusted. Either way it does not matter.

#5. Some in the contemporary churches believe in the destructive unity over belief in the word of God! The strong preference for the unity between the nervous system and human reason is the source of progressivism, apostasy (2 Timothy 4), "weak faith" and "small faith", Matthew 14:31; 8:10; 15:28.

#6. The satanic intentions of Genesis 3 are two-fold: *one is to leverage the reach of biblical faith by means of the destructive unity and then to consequently unseat the fear of God*, 3:3. "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil", 3:5.

#7. The revealed meanings of what is good and what is evil were to be inverted. A present contemporary accomplishment! For us that is a suicidal inversion.

#8. On the foundation of psychological behavior, Israel plunged themselves into depravity (Exodus 32), turned back on the day of battle (Numbers 13, 14), and why they were stalemated in the Valley of Elah (1 Samuel 17).

#9. The revealed truth, however, calls for the displacement of psychological behavior by the prescribed behavior revealed in the revelation. And that, a contemporary heresy!

1 Thessalonians. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS: AWAKENING TO

REVEALED TRUTH.

PART 22: THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD: THE DISPLACEMENT OF TIME, EXPERIENCE and THE SELF, 4:9-12.

#1. The commandments revealed to mankind by the Almighty, do not incur any temporal limitations, whatsoever. "...But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and to work with your own hands, just as we commanded you", v. 10, 11.

#2. Obedience to the revealed commands of God cannot be circumscribed by human reason, qualified by temporal expediency nor reduced by personal fear.

#3. Every command of the Lord is to be *forced, pushed into the substance of time and circumstance*. Accordingly, the commands of God obeyed, alter every human circumstance to some non-trivial extent.

#4. Effectively, excelling in obedience to the commandments of God brings the force of displacement to bear upon the structure of time itself, human experience and the autonomy of the self.

#5. An example is the command "to love one another", v. 9. The church of the Thessalonians had been "taught by God to love one another", v.9. The commands are not of this world; did not originate within human consensus. Commands are a divine imposition upon human thought, speech and behavior.

#6. "for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia...", v.10. A popular myth is that "it takes a village" to generate substantial change. But, biblically it requires an obedient individual. Collectivism is not a revealed conception. The Lord builds His kingdom from the individual out.

#7. The commandments of God inherently involve a movement from things abstract (ideas, ideals, intentions), which originate in the mind of God --> to the things concrete (the universe of material conditions), v. 10, 11.

#8. Obedience carries the eternal factors of the will of God deep into time and circumstance. Out of this arrangement a redeemed sociology (the church) emerges. A revealed worldview takes form with its eternal perspective. And a supreme motive for behavior becomes apparent.

#9. James Madison acknowledged that many such biblical ideals were incorporated into the U.S. Constitution.

#10. The commandments are purely directional; running from Eternity --> to time, energized by the reality of God and the power of God. It is our duty and our privilege to obey the Lord while we are in the temporal dimension.

1 Thessalonians. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS: AWAKENING TO REVEALED TRUTH.

PART 23: THE CASE AGAINST EXCESSIVE GRIEF, 4:13-18.

#1. *This text teaches believers to confront grief.* Whatever the source of the grief, we do not give in to its demands. Grief is confronted on the foundation of revealed truth. "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope", v.13.

#2. The temporal consort of grief is hopelessness. While "hope" is a perspective on *plenary reality*. The apostle verbally pulls back the curtain between the seen and the unseen. He assures us that life is a continuum running through and beyond that which is seen. Death does not extinguish life; it merely separates life from fleshly existence.

#3. To accept the premise that life is exclusively dependent upon biology and physiology is to be "uninformed". That is not a Christian perspective. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus", v.14.

#4. Spiritual reality superintends and is determinant over temporal/material reality. That is our position. Our loved ones who "have fallen asleep in Jesus" are as alive as they have ever been. Nothing truly important has been lost!

#5. We will see each other again, never thereafter to be separated again. *Life contracts back upon this revealed truth.* And therefore, so must grief equally contract. "For if we believe" the revealed truth about life and death then we cannot be without hope. And that hope overrules all apparency.

#6. People with biblical hope are never duped, deceived nor captured by naturalism; because they know too much. "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep", v.15. The word of God confronts the apparency of death as an experience. *We are called to believe that revelation is stronger than death!*

#7. We are bereft, for a while, of the presence of our loved ones who have fallen asleep. Time is not an illusion, but it is not finality either. Jesus is the only finality. "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first", v.16.

#8. The dead in Christ will know about the end of the world before those who are "alive and remain". They are closer to the Source. Everything will be put right! All things will be made better! Perfection will be achieved! Do not grieve too much nor too deeply! Nothing is really lost! WE WILL GET BACK FINALLY MORE THAN WE'VE EVER GIVEN UP!

#9. "Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord", v.17. How blessed are we to know and believe such things.

Let's not miss this for the world! "Therefore comfort one another with these words", v.18. That great day is closer than ever before! All sorrows will pass away!

1 Thessalonians. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS: AWAKENING TO REVEALED TRUTH.

PART 24: THINKING DOES NOT PROCEED FROM WHAT IS.

#1. The church of the Thessalonians endured "much tribulation", 1:6; escaped false and vain religion, 1:9; accepted the revealed truth and incurred great "suffering", 2:13, 14; experienced local hostility, 2:15.

#2. The apostle and those with him were greatly concerned for the state of the faith of the Christians in Thessalonica, 3:1-5. "and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith", 3:2.

#3. Here is the heart of the great concern: Paul and the others were non-marginally troubled by the possibility that under such pressures the believers in that place would come to conclusions founded upon *what is*. The apostolic authority was unsettled by, perhaps, an irresistible pull toward the blatant passions of the flesh, *what is*, 4:1-8. Then there was the fear of death and its affect upon trust in the word of God, *what is*, 5:13-18.

#4. An important generalization is achievable from this text and from a multitude of others in the Bible. Generalization: Part of the responsibility inherent in biblical belief is the refusal to reach conclusions founded upon *what is!*

#5. This obligation has always been an inescapable factor in the exercise of faith in the revealed truth. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve were persuaded to reach conclusions uniquely based upon *what is*. Father Abraham took the Hagar Solution (Genesis 16) for their problem of aging and biological limitations, *what is*.

#6. At the margin of the Red Sea the Israelites effortlessly reached conclusions founded upon *what is*, Exodus 13, 14. In Sinai, confronted by inhospitable climate they were inveterate in their reasoning from *what is*, Exodus 15, 16.

#7. In the Vally of Elah, the men of Israel, including King Saul, reached "logical conclusions" founded upon the superior strength of the Philistines, *what is*, 1 Samuel 17. But not David.

#8. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, being captives in Babylon, determined not to think, speak and behave in accord with the *what is* of Babylonian culture, Daniel 1.

#9. In Luke 24 the disciples were dumbfounded by the events of the Lord's death, *what is*. Their reasoning had not changed.

#10: Today, we hear bad news regularly and with great routine. So be it! But we, who are believers, are not permitted to reach conclusions founded upon *what is*! The Almighty carries us away from such thinking and teaches us to reason on the foundation of the word of God and the power of God.

#11. The *what is* offers the supposed advantage of "logical progression" of events. Yet, in a world governed by the God of the Bible and with historical conditions shaped by eternal will and power, *what is* does not apply.

#12. Paul and Silas, arrested and imprisoned in Philippi (Acts 16:22-40), avoided reasoning about their experience based on the *what is*. And then--"they had travelled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica...", Acts 17.

1 Thessalonians. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS: AWAKENING TO REVEALED TRUTH.

PART 25: THE LIFE OF FAITH: A REVEALED COSMOLOGY, 5:1-11.

#1. The Bible presents to the reader, we believe, a revealed understanding of *plenary, total, complete reality*. There are two worlds, yet only one reality. One world exists in a fully dependent relation to the other greater world. This secondary and dependent world remains in *a dense proximity* to the first. The greater world is purely spiritual and indissoluble. That cannot be said of the material, temporal order.

#2. This is called a COSMOLOGY! It is a revealed, comprehensive picture of all things. The biblical cosmology is contradictory to all humanly conceived explanations and is, therefore, naturalistic.

#3. "Now to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night", v.1, 2. It is eye opening to appreciate the fact that inherent in the gospel message and indeed in all of the revealed truth of the Bible is a *stipulated cosmology*! In consequence of this biblical demonstration of its reach, the Bible is not primarily a book of ancient history with its antiquated religious rituals.

#4. No natural cosmology holds men accountable for their behavior to an unseen and superior, causal order. Well, this one does! The revealed cosmology does not begin with pre-existent matter; to the contrary it begins with a supreme, causal personality; "the Lord".

#5. Biblical cosmology, furthermore, stipulates impermanence. The material/temporal order will not last indefinitely. The impermanent state of the universe is not tied to

physical determinism nor any other naturalistic force. The universe exists, stands and remains at the pleasure of the Almighty, its Creator and Sustainer. There will come "the time(s) and the epoch(s)" in which "the Lord" will terminate the material universe, its purpose having been met.

#6. The apostle said to the church of the Thessalonians that "...you yourselves know full well" what was going to happen to this world, to human civilizations and to every individual on the face of the earth. The end will be precipitate. No further warnings will be given. It will "come just like a thief in the night". Once it shows up it will be jarring and terrifying to most. And it will be inescapable for all.

#7. Under such revealed absolutes, then, biblically defined belief is COSMOLOGICAL FAITH. Obedience to the commands of God, by which we *push the will of God into time and circumstance* is cosmological. Our thought, speech and behavior are to be equally conceived as cosmological.

#8. "The night" referred to here is ignorance, human lassitude and indifference to these revelations. We had best learn to think and live within revealed cosmological terms!

1 Thessalonians. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS: AWAKENING TO REVEALED TRUTH.

PART 26: THE LIFE OF FAITH: A REVEALED COSMOLOGY, 5:1-11.

#9. "While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape", v.3.

#10. The universe of unbelief *uses language to obscure revealed truth*. Such language is not really presented as a viable alternative to revealed truth as much as it is a *denial of the word of God*. There will always be a clash between revealed truth and the denial of it. The agenda of denial is as old as man.

#11. The denial of the validity of revelation has a purpose; which is to obscure the relation between God and time. The word of God is presented as quite inflexible regarding its claims about that supernatural relation.

#12. The Bible maintains that the only sufficient cosmology is the one rooted in the spiritual. Men who preach "Peace and safety!" deny the spiritual as the starting point for understanding the temporal/material world. For them human experience and human reasoning is the only starting point.

#13. People can think as they choose but there are consequences, of course. One proposes that each of the two cosmologies, the revealed and the naturalistic, supply the rules for language use in general. These are the two precedents for how linguistic representations are formed and how they are applied.

#14. *Each cosmology puts forward a theory of language use. There are two cosmologies of language then; one biblical and one in denial of revelation!*

#15. The revealed cosmology of language sets God and the eternal as the true context of man and his world. While the humanistic cosmology of language sets man as the context of God and revelation.

#16. Those who proclaim "Peace and safety" deny the possibility of divine intervention into time and circumstance. Such language does not directly challenge the existence of God, but it does reject the Lord's powers of intervention. Thereby the Lord and the word of God are *pragmatically excluded from serious consideration*.

#17. As this humanistic use of language carries us forward in time the danger mounts. The stipulated time and epoch (v.1, 2) appears without warning. Their "destruction" overtakes them "like labor pains upon a woman with child". There can be no "escape".

#18. The revealed cosmology of language proclaims the Lord's powers of intervention into every particle of temporal existence. Biblical cosmological faith is our way of "escape" from certain inevitabilities.

1 Thessalonians. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS: AWAKENING TO REVEALED TRUTH.

PART 27: THE LIFE OF FAITH: A REVEALED COSMOLOGY, 5:1-11.

#19. Distinctions between the revealed and humanistic cosmologies are as pronounced as the differential between "light" and "darkness", "day" and "night", 5:4-8.

#20. These two cosmological apprehensions are directly, immediately and unavoidably oppositional. No state of peace or equilibrium between them is conceivable.

#21. *The cosmology of light* is directly causal of a broad phenomenon: "the day". *The cosmology of darkness* is the causal force behind "the night". "for you are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of night nor of darkness", v.5.

#22. The factor of causation is greatly explanatory of outcomes and effects. The differential between light and darkness issues into the world two very dissimilar cultures, peoples and states of spiritual being.

The cosmology of light gives representational absolutes, truth and understanding to everyone. But the cosmology of darkness is the attempt to dismiss revelation and the God behind it. Ignorance is preferable to revealed truth, indifference overrules revealed and manifest warnings about consequences, moral lassitude shapes human interests.

#23. Each of the two cosmologies constitutes *A REALM OF DETERMINANT INFLUENCE*. "so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For

those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night", v.6, 7. The ambience of revealed light influences, stimulates *alertness and sobriety*. Those are thought forms and behaviors consistent with the word of God.

#24. But the realm of darkness and its cosmology inclines its aspirants toward "sleep" and inebriation. Those asleep are hardly conscious to what is happening beyond the immediate. While the inebriates are fully disoriented in a world created by, ordered by and subject to invisible yet very real spiritual realities.

#25. Cosmologies must precede world views. This text teaches us that the only way to resist the humanistic cosmology of darkness is by *supernatural conditions of heart, mind and soul*. "But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation", v.8.

#26. "Faith" is allegiance to the revealed truth and equally a rejection of humanism in all its forms. "Love" is the power of discernment between potentials. The displacement of the self above fleshly indulgence. And the helmet of "hope" is the supernatural gift to see beyond the frontiers of the dark cosmology.

#27. And so, "...you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day (of the Lord) would overtake you like a thief", v.4.

BE ON GUARD! STAND TO THE ENEMY! ARISE TO COSMOLOGICAL OBEDIENCE!

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PART 28: THE LIFE OF FAITH: A REVEALED COSMOLOGY, 5:1-11.

#28: Here is an amazing recognition: THERE IS GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT TO BE HAD and GREAT STRENGTH TO BE DERIVED FROM THE WAY IN WHICH THE UNIVERSE and HUMAN HISTORY ARE CONSTITUTED and CONSTRUCTED, v.9-11.

#29. And the universe and history are constructed by God to be a cosmology. They demonstrate a cause to effect relation one to the other. "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ", v.9. The point of both the creation of the universe and the development of human history is *human personal salvation through Jesus Christ*.

#30. The structure is unavoidable. The eternal, spiritual, invisible God, came, to bear into existence, the universe of materiality in an unprecedented causal manner. Something did not originate from nothing; materiality originated from the powers of spiritual reality. This is the structure of all things.

#31. "Salvation" is the redemption from the universe of effect and unto the causal reality of all things; a movement from the lesser to the greater. "Who died for us, so that

whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him", v.10. Jesus was inserted by the will of God into the material universe and into human history in order to posit (to reveal) the eternal meaning of time, life, history and creation. His appearance in time was cosmological; a miracle of the relation between the two worlds. Whether alive in the flesh or "asleep" diminishes nothing. Death has no affect upon life with Christ. This preliminary (first on earth) and final state of being (Heaven) epitomizes the revealed cosmological universe.

#32. The highest personal achievement resulting from this cosmology is not a few decades of "success" in time, but "to live together with Him" forever.

#33. "Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you are doing", v.11. Upon entering this world, every subsequent step is movement toward the ultimate. Nothing that happens here is meaningless, unless it is tied uniquely to the sins of the flesh. Every step in this cosmological world is an investment in higher attainment. Every day we are closer to something better and something eternal.

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PART 29: FUELING SPIRITUAL GROWTH, 5:12-22. There must be...

#1. GIFTED SPIRITUAL LEADERS, v.12, 13. Those who "diligently labor" toward the spiritual development of the believers, those who provide "instruction", and thereby are pushing back and away world encroachment, those who take responsibility for the spiritual well-being of the churches. Those fully identified with "their work"; not given to worldly distractions.

#2. A CULTURE OF CORRECTION, v.14. The church absolutely must generate a culture of correction. A people known for the actual and sincere commitment to leave the world behind, in terms of behavior. Those who ignore revealed absolutes ("unruly") are admonished. The "faint hearted" are encouraged to persevere. The "weak" are supported and protected and patience is a ubiquitous virtue.

#3. A LEARNED SPIRITUAL RESPONSE TO THE TEMPORAL REALM, v.15. "...no one repays another with evil for evil...". This is one of the more difficult stages of spirituality to master. We do not respond in kind. Learned spiritual responses to the fallen world of men, pursue only "that which is good"... "for all people". It will be taken by our enemies as weakness. But it must, in the end, be stronger than a fallen culture.

#4. MINDS NOT CONTROLLED BY CIRCUMSTANCES, v.16. Such a state of mind is evidenced by the will to "Rejoice always". This is a mind that has grown beyond time and circumstance. It refuses to submit itself to the general pressure of human lived experience. This mind rejoices because of the God in whom it trusts and that quite apart from existential experience.

#5. DEVOTION TO PERSONAL PRAYER, v.17. "Pray without ceasing". Prayer is the pursuit of *the presence of God*. And His presence is transformative. Our relation to the world of things and people is indirect. Believers petition the Almighty directly to intervene in human circumstance and we do so with a confidence implanted by the word of God. One cannot claim viable faith and then neglect prayer.

Paul disavows the entire field of *spiritual neglect*. To pray without "ceasing" signals the rejection of the unacceptable *daily practice of spiritual neglect*--perhaps the most potent obstacle to greater spiritual development.

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PART 30: FUELING SPIRITUAL GROWTH, 5:12-22. There must be...

#6. BIBLICAL COUNTER-INTUITION, v.18. "In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus". Everything about the biblical presentation of faith is counterintuitive. Everywhere in scripture, faith transcends commonplace expectations from given situations. The word of God is patently clear on this subject. The development of biblical faith inherently requires a strong conception regarding counter-intuition. To "rejoice" regardless of circumstances is surely counter-intuitive. This is part of the heritage of the revealed truth. Rationalistic persuasions have, generally, expunged biblical counter-intuition from serious consideration. Naturalistic readings of the Bible have made conscious dependence upon the power of God an historical anomaly. Rejoicing in everything necessarily means that that reaction is not directly relative to the circumstances. It is, however, directly relative to God and His revealed truth. And that is a learned reified (made real) response (behavior) to the trials and tribulations of life. The implications of this are stunning. Founded upon the will of God ("God's will for you"), one joins

- (a) learned biblical behavior to
- (b) the phenomenon of revealed counter-intuition; whose expectations are beyond commonsense logic.

Following this revealed wisdom would be a tremendous protection against the usual and pervasive effects of *personal depression and desperation*. Predicted and dangerous outcomes, the culprit. Hannah (1 Samuel 1), for example, did exactly that in her shame of barrenness. Abraham followed revealed wisdom regarding the commanded sacrifice of his only son Isaac; expecting the counter-intuitive, a resurrection, Genesis 22. Had the Israelites connected *learned revealed behavior to biblical counter-intuition*, their panic would have been brought under control at the Red Sea (Exodus 13, 14); their unfaithfulness would have been defeated at Kadesh Barnea, Numbers 13, 14. The continuous development of spiritual growth forces supernatural influence into all of our difficulties, hardships and trials.

WE LEARN FROM THIS THAT THE LORD DOES NOT and WILL NOT LEAVE US AT THE MERCY OF EVENTS and CIRCUMSTANCE!

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PART 31: FUELING SPIRITUAL GROWTH, 5:12-22. There must be...

#7. ACTIVE RESPONSE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT, v.19. "Do not quench the Spirit". The Holy Spirit brings *spiritual order into time*. He expressed His power over time, events and circumstance throughout the Bible. The eternal thoughts of God were joined to human natural language in order to enlarge human comprehension. The Spirit sets us on the path of right thinking; which is the purpose of revelation. To "quench the Spirit" means, at least, to repress His work and wisdom within the temporal sphere. The Holy Spirit is so closely related to revelation, that to repress His work and wisdom, constitutes a form of assault upon His Eminence. The Holy Spirit merits from and requires of those faithful, a posture of active response to His teaching. *The word of God is not a work of history; it is the work of the Holy Spirit*. The scripture is not ancient literature, it is current revealed taxonomy.

#8. AN ADVANCED APPETITE FOR REVEALED TRUTH, v.20. "Do not despise prophetic utterances". The admonition is to elevate the importance of revealed truth ("prophetic utterances") above lived experience. The very presence of revelation must force a displacement in understanding founded upon personal experience in favor supernatural wisdom. And that is a preeminent and repetitive theme throughout the Bible. One "despise(s)" prophetic utterance by allowing human wisdom to overrule its content and meaning. *Prophetic utterance is the definitive version of its theme*. Believers are expected to respond (obey) to the publication of revealed truth; not despise its counsel, nor disregard its imperatives. Apostasy rests upon the despising of the word of God.

#9. AN INSPIRED TAXONOMIC MIND, v.21, 22. "But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil". The minds of the church of the Thessalonians were to function as clearinghouses of ideas and the extension of them into forms of human behavior. The apostle meant that one should "examine" the universe of ideas, ideals and behavior in the light of the word of God. *THE REVEALED CLEARINGHOUSE EFFECT* is to enable the mind of the believer to make distinctions (taxonomy) between "that which is good" and "every form of evil". That cannot be achieved by social consensus, nor by cultural evolution. Public education does not pursue that end. Many things "trending" are supposed to be on "the right side of history". That is a myth. It is a social contrivance to blur revealed distinctions between good and evil.

One fears that some in the churches see no relevance in the development of the *Christian taxonomic mind*. Without it we are as blind and indifferent to the meaning of revealed truth as is the world.

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REVEALED TRUTH.

PART 32: THE ETERNAL COVERING POWER, 5:23-28.

#1. Living in the world on the foundation of revealed truth immediately puts the believer in a contrarian position relative to everybody else. We have been pulled out of the world in every significant sense; being in it but no longer of it.

#2. Believers need, must have, what we may call a *SPIRITUAL COVERING FORCE OR COVERING POWER*. Such a covering force would address our inadequacies, the power of our enemies, the strength of the demonic factor and the worldly, temporal, circumstantial pressures, ever leaning upon us.

#3. "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ", v.23.

#4. The Lord has put us on the battle line. This world is a place of *great spiritual struggle and perhaps, even greater spiritual efforts*. This will never be easy! It has always been a fight to live the life of sanctification (one reserved only for the service of God).

#5. But we cannot be that, alone and unaided. The Almighty, the apostle reports, will "Himself" be the covering force that enables us to live by faith alone in this wretched world. The supernatural covering force "entirely" attends the believer in the friction incidental to the pursuit of sanctification among those who represent the universe of unbelief. Conviction by faith restructures our purpose in life. And that purpose is *plenary sanctification* in Christ. "...spirit and soul and body..." are to be withdrawn from the fleshly world of indulgence, impurity and dependence upon immediate human experience. Thereafter these elements are to be devoted, only, to achieving the approval of God through our thought, speech and behavior. And thereby we are... "without blame..." in spirit, soul and body.

#6. "Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass", v.24. That satisfactory outcome is a function of the Almighty. If one is corrupting himself/herself with fleshly indulgence, it is not because there is no choice. It is because of a conscious ambition, in complete disregard of the *eternal covering force*! It is open defiance to the will of God and all its supernatural provisions.

#7. The Lord has made possible the life of sanctification, with all its rewards. Collectively, those in Thessalonica who valued sanctification over worldly indulgence, were called "the church of the Thessalonians", 1:1. They were that, as long as they remained awakened to revealed truth!

#8. Those ancient believers were asked to pray for the servants of the Word, ("...pray for us", v.25); guard the sense of brotherhood, ("Greet...with a Holy Kiss", v.26); and to "have this letter read to all the brethren", v.27.

#9. The preachers say: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all", v.28.

Yes.