

A Body of Power

1 Thessalonians 1:1 – 4

I. Intro

- A. Back to Paul's first letter to Thessalonians; group of new believers; Paul spent time with them on a missionary trips – Silvanus (Barnabas) and Timothy with him
- B. Dissension caused by Jewish leaders and local government forced Paul to leave Thessalonica suddenly; while Paul is now in Corinth, he writes both letters to these new believers – of course, he really longs to be able to return to Thessalonica
- C. Weeks past in 1 Thessalonians 4 focused on us as believers in Christ and holy living – what holy living looks like in unholy times of today and talked about practical steps for holy living
- D. Today, go back to beginning of this first letter of Paul's and focus on us as body of believers – the church, and how can we become a body of power and influence in our community (could say a model Christian church)
- E. **READ 1 Thessalonians 1:1 – 4**
- F. **Question:** What are some characteristics of a church body of power we can see in these 4 verses?

II. 1st Characteristic – Grace and Peace

- A. Well-known greeting in Jewish tradition was *Peace be to you* or *May peace be with you*
- B. Paul has changed this traditional greeting used in this first letter to *Grace to you and peace*
- C. Wednesday night study of Joshua, talked about “old covenant” God established with Abraham – covenant of obedience through following God's law which we know could not fully atone for a person's sin and could not save a person from the enslavement of sin; today, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we are under a new covenant – covenant of grace – only by God's grace through death of His Son that we are fully cleansed of our sin and we are saved
 - i. **Ephesians 2:8 (ESV)**
⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,
- D. Because God extends His grace to us, we are to also extend grace to others; **TRUTH** – A church that does not extend grace to others is a church that does not experience peace
- E. Grace is receiving something we do not deserve; extending grace to others isn't dependent on whether or not they deserve it

- F. There is nothing we can do to earn our own salvation and we need to remember that when it comes to extending grace and ministering to others
- G. Then peace comes when we do that while trusting God no matter what is going on around us

III. 2nd Characteristic – People of Prayer

- A. This is absolutely crucial; **Question** – How can a church be an effective influence in its community without prayer?
- B. Prayer is the tool which God has given us through which He blesses and moves on behalf of His people
- C. Sharing and talking together is the way all people communicate, fellowship, and build relationships with each other; this not only is true for people but also true for people and God; prayer is us sharing and talking, fellowshiping, and building that relationship between us and God
- D. What is sad – few people (Christians) take prayer seriously; few churches take prayer seriously
- E. Jesus said - Matthew 21:22 (ESV)
²²... whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.”

IV. 3rd Characteristic – Works of Faith, Labors of Love

- A. All know that we are not saved by our works; but, our salvation through faith in Jesus Christ should lead to good works for the cause of Christ
- B. Work that a church does in its community and in the world is evidence of its congregation’s faith in Christ
- C. We, as the church, have not been put here to serve ourselves; we’re here to serve the people of Mt. Vernon, Ailey and surrounding areas – whoever God places in our path
- D. Word about VBS – if physically unable, or for some other reason aren’t available, to serve in VBS then you can serve after VBS by helping with followup; we need to look at serving in VBS from new angle – our serving is evidence to our community of our faith in Lord Jesus Christ
- E. James 2:14 (ESV)
¹⁴What good is it, my brothers [and sisters], if [*we say we have*] faith but [*do*] not have works? ...
- F. James 2:18 (ESV)
¹⁸... Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.
- G. Our faith in Christ should produce good works, but our works should be motivated by love
- H. It was God’s love for us that led to the work of Jesus on the cross; and it’s being motivated by God’s love that we can serve others

V. 4th Characteristic – Steadfast Hope

- A. Later in this letter of Paul's he speaks of Christ coming back again – our hope for this life and eternity as we have surrendered our hearts and lives to Him as Lord and Savior**
- B. It's not a wishful hope – wishing that something might happen; it's a hope knowing that something WILL happen; it's that hope for eternity that helps us keep pushing on**
- C. It's that hope confidently knowing that God will guide, provide, deliver, strengthen, sustain, bless, and reward**
- D. Church, whenever we feel beat down by circumstances of life and we think we can't continue to give and serve anymore, remember the hope we have and cling to in Jesus Christ**

VI. Close

- A. 4 characteristics of a powerful church body are: grace and peace, prayer, works of faith and labors of love, and steadfastness of hope**
- B. 2 Thessalonians 2:16–17 (ESV)**

¹⁶Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace,

¹⁷comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.