

# What Should the Church Be Like

by Nelson Price

---

*The sermon emphasizes the importance of having proper concepts, productive characteristics, positive compliance, and purposeful concentration in the church, all of which are essential for being in God's will and waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**Duration:** 26:05

**Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 1:1-2

**Topics:** "Church Life", "Biblical Authority"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of activating and stimulating congregations to greater commitment to holiness, integrity, character, commitment, and evangelism. He uses an illustration from his childhood in a small town to convey his message. The speaker also highlights the role of the church in sounding forth the word of God, awakening, alerting, rallying, and giving commands to the people. He emphasizes the need for the word of God to be the authority and foundation of all actions. Lastly, the speaker discusses the concept of purposeful concentration, specifically waiting for the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ and the importance of recognizing his return.

---

## Transcript

The grace of God spoken of in such a manner as has been done here. That's one aspect of the Christian personality that has been diminished. That's one theme of the pulpit that needs to reverberate with new energy as never before.

And what a blessing it is to hear Lois sing here as she just did. That which is in effect a testimony, for when one such as she has found that all that you have is Jesus, then you realize all that you need is Jesus. He is the Lord.

He is the one who has called us. He is the one who has favored us. He is the one who has identified us.

Having redeemed us, He has honored us by calling us by a multiplicity of titles. Throughout the Bible, a variety of them are used regarding the collective corpus of His body. He calls us that.

The book calls us His body. The book calls us His church, His bride. It calls us the household of faith.

It calls us the temple of God. What flattering terms. On this occasion, I'd like for you to open your Bible, if you would kindly, to the book of 1 Thessalonians.

Having had the joy of speaking on the text, Christ's statement, I will build my church. Now I'd like for us to open the word of God and do a bit of expository study about what that church should really be like. For I am persuaded that the pulpit can only be kept fresh and vibrant on a projected basis by expository applied word of God, teaching it and applying it to the lives of the people we're blessed to teach it to.

With that background, the book is 1 Thessalonians. The chapter is number one. We begin with that verse number one, Paul and Silvanus and Timothy.

To the church of the Thessalonians, in God the Father, in the Lord Jesus Christ. Point number one, you are outline takers. I'll go ahead and give you the four Roman numerals.

Isn't that a travesty? Four instead of three. Number one, they had the proper concepts. Number two, they had productive characteristics.

Number three, they had positive compliance. And number four, they had purposeful concentration. Beginning with number one, logically, they had proper concepts.

And these concepts had to do with their relationship with the Lord God. You have a good fertile imagination. God's blessed you with it.

And I'd like for you to use that imagination, if you will, please. And envision your mind as a clean chalkboard. All right, in the center of that chalkboard, if you would kindly draw a small church, put a steeple and a cross on the steeple.

The church. You got it? Now we're going to be talking about characteristics of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you would now draw a large circle around that little church right in the center of your chalkboard.

That circle represents the will of God. The church is in the will of God. Now outside, if you would please draw an X. That X represents Satan.

Now between that X outside the circle and that church inside the circle, draw a dotted line. And that dotted line represents the attack of Satan on that church. But did you notice, for that attack of Satan to get to the church, it has to come through the permissive will of God.

And if you're in the will of God, He's going to turn even that attack of Satan into a blessing on the body. Now if you believe that, if you have that confidence, if you believe you dwell in the will of God, if you believe that you're encompassed in the will of God, if you believe you're within the circumference of the will of God, you can interpret the things that happen to you therein to His glory. Know your position, your posture, and His power.

And that will make a difference in your church life. One of the resources they had was a beautiful fact. The resource called our attention here in the last part of verse 1. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace is not a reference to saving grace, but rather sustaining grace. Grace is God's favor coming to us and abiding in us. And we don't deserve it to begin with.

You need that to build a church. You need the grace of God to build a church. For many of you have had your hearts broken.

You've been disillusioned by the promises of individuals who have asserted they're going to help you as God's instrument and God's agent to build His church. And they've deserted you. They have often denied you.

They have frequently attacked you. They have left you broken without resources or recourses. You need the grace of God to sustain you at a time like that.

All of us have been there. And those crucible moments are God's time of really drawing our attention and our devotion to Him and shaping us. My first pastorate, I think every Baptist association in America has a Mount Pisgah.

And I was pastoring Mount Pisgah down in Louisiana. The ten years prior to going there as pastor, they had had ten pastors and a number of interim pastors. This was not on a gravel road.

This was on a dirt road. And the little sign out in front of the church, they had the pastor's name on there like they do in front of most churches. But the distinctive feature of this one was the pastor's name was written in chalk.

Now that was threatening enough, but the chairman of the deacons every Sunday sat on the front pew playing with a racer. Now that will get your attention and put you on your knees before the Lord God. That may be where you are right now.

But whether you're there or pastoring the most preeminent church in your community, the reality is if you're serving Him, you're in His will. And He's with you in either extreme. And in neither extreme is there any reason to become egotistical or depressed.

Colossians 3.23 says, Whatsoever you do, do it heartily unto the Lord and not unto man. Now if that's your philosophy of ministry, and you do what you do heartily unto the Lord, and He sanctions it and people applaud you, you don't get the big head. You didn't do it for them, you did it for Him.

And if you do what you do heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men, and the Lord approves and people condemn you and criticize you, you don't get depressed. Because you didn't do it for them, you did it for Him. And He's your audience of one.

And if you please Him, you have reason to revel and to rejoice. I want to call to the attention of those of you who serve our beloved Christ in ministry, a devotion of nature, a pastor, a staff member, a denominational leader. I want to share with you this word of encouragement.

Because we have swirling around us at all times those images of eminence and success. Those ideals. We see the headlines heralding the prominence and the popularity of people.

One such individual of yesteryear was a renowned athlete by the name of Pete Maravich. Pete was perhaps the greatest basketball player who has ever played the game. Any basketball player that can average 44 points a game throughout his entire collegiate career is a phenomenon.

All American, all pro, a headliner everywhere he went. I had the joy of the Lord letting our paths cross at a crisis time in Pete's life and seeing Maravich come to receive Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. I had the delight of discipling him for one year before he ever gave his testimony publicly for the first time.

I think that's critical when we lead somebody to Christ. We need to ground them in God's Word before we put them on a platform so that they're stable in the Lord Jesus. Pete Maravich knew two things.

He knew brokenness and he knew mercy. For a year I disciplined him. One Friday night he called and he said, I've been reading the Bible about this thing we were talking about the other day, baptism.

And I've come to believe that that's right in God's sight. And I want to be baptized. Do you baptize people? I said, of course I do, Pete.

He said, I mean the Duncan kind. I don't want any of that sprinkling stuff. I said, I wouldn't do any other kind.

He said, if I fly in there this weekend, will you baptize me please? It was a joy to bury him in baptism with the Lord Jesus Christ and to see that new walk in the Lord Christ. The next night we sat in my study until after midnight with him pumping one biblically oriented question after the other. I share this with you, my brothers, in ministry.

When that session was ending, he stood up and he walked over to my desk and he put his hand right on that Bible. We were seated in my library at the time. He looked deep into my eyes and he said, Nelson, you're one lucky man.

You've spent your life studying this book and these volumes about Jesus Christ and all I've ever done was play basketball. The headline, the success, the financial phenomenon that he was saying to you, to me, as Christians, you're lucky people who are privileged to spend your life studying that book and the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, God's going to give you that grace.

You being in his will, he's going to give you the resource of his grace and that peace, that peace that just settles in your heart and abides in your heart. That stability that comes as a consequence of you knowing you're walking in God's will. They had proper concepts.

The second thing you'll notice in the text is they had productive characteristics. We give thanks to God always for you all. See, he was from Georgia, you all.

Making mention of you in our prayers. No emphasis is too great to be placed on that vital art of talking to God. Prayer is simply throwing the door open and saying, God, you've got access that's all on this side of that door.

I want you to dominate it. I want you to domicile here. I want your will more than I want my will in my life.

The matter of prayer. The productive characteristics in verse 3. Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, your labor of love, your patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. What were these productive characteristics? Look at them.

Their work of faith, their labor of love, their patience of hope. How did he know they had faith? You can't see faith. How did he know they had love? You can't see love.

How did he know they had hope? You cannot see love. He knew by the same reason we know in the autumn what we planted in the spring. If you harvest tomatoes in the fall, you know you planted tomato seed in the spring.

If you harvest corn in the fall, you know you planted corn in the spring. How did he know that they had faith, love, and hope? Look what the seed were. He could see their work, which evidenced their faith.

He could see their labor, which evidenced their love. He could see their patience, which demonstrated their hope. Characteristics commendable of God's children.

Faith. That calm confidence. That certainty.

That trust in the Lord God. Then that matter of labor compared to work. Labor means to endure abrasive, abusive obstacles in order to persevere and continue in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

No obstacle diverting you from your course of serving Him, knowing and following His will, and their patience of hope. I'm so grateful for the joy of being in company with brothers from all over the world and one colleague in Christ from Romania. I want to ask you, my brothers and my sisters, where was the church when the wall came tumbling down in Europe? Where was the church when the wall came tumbling down and hopes went soaring up? I'll tell you, the records emerging from Eastern Europe now reveal the church was on its knees behind the wall.

And sister churches on the other side of the wall were merging at God's apex, at before His throne in prayer, praying, asking, entreating the Lord God to work in their midst. What did they have during those long, agonizing years of horror? They had hope. What is hope? It's a calm confidence in an absolute certainty.

When you believe the promises of God, you have hope. Calm confidence in an absolute certainty that God's going to keep His word. Our Anglo-Saxon word, hope, comes from the combination of two ancient Anglo-Saxon word meanings.

They were desire and expectation. And these two Anglo-Saxon root meanings came together, desire and expectation, and formed our English word of hope. What is hope? It's desire.

It's expectation. Do you have any hope for your ministry? Do you have any desire for your ministry? Do you have any expectation for your ministry? What do you anticipate seeing God do? Continuing, if you will, in the text. They had positive compliance.

Notice here in verse 5, for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power. If it comes any other way, it's ineffective. In what was that power? And in the Holy Spirit.

Can't do it by the energy of the flesh. And in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became, watch this if you will, please.

Followers of us and of the Lord. Verse 7. You became, you who are reading the authorized King James, examples to all. Verse 8. You sounded forth the word of the Lord.

These were their positive compliances. First of all, they became followers of Paul and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now there's no ego here.

But my dear colleague in Christ, if you're serving the Lord Jesus Christ, you need to be aware that you are a role model, whether you want to be or not. There are individuals watching you, as an example, whether they should be or not. They are.

And you should live honestly and humbly before the Lord God begging His guidance so that your leadership will be received and responded to. I am persuaded that a positive, strong pastoral leadership is needed in the churches of America today. But it is not to be and it must not be and it won't long be a dictatorial leadership.

It must be leadership that is born of love. It must be leadership that is strong in patience. It must be leadership that is alive in hope.

It must be leadership that is committed to patterning before the people the Lord Jesus Christ. And if He gives you any degree of eminence, there is no room for ego. Because one of these days, I get excited about this, one of these days, we're going to have to stand before Him and give an account of the charge He has granted us.

That will strip you of any semblance of ego and put you on your knee to know, oh dear Jesus, I might be answerable to committees and boards now, but that's nothing. I am now and I am going to be in eternity accountable to You. Let me be found faithful.

He said, You are followers of us. You, my dear friends here, who are members of congregations that have godly pastors, I want you to commit yourself to following them as they follow Jesus. I'd hate to be a member of a congregation that has to stand before the Lord Jesus and say, I stood in my pastor's way.

Individuals like that dear soul who said, Pastor, in the ten years you've been here, there's been a lot of progress, but I want you to know, I've opposed every bit of it. That individual may now have moved their membership to your church, for their name is Legion. But I want to urge you, dear friends, if you are a member of a church and you've got a godly pastor who's following the Lord Jesus Christ, you follow him.

If he's not doing God's will, he's going to have to answer to the Lord Jesus. And if you're not following him, you're not following God's will and you're going to have to answer to the Lord Jesus. But again, pastors, I say, this strong leadership role must be by grace and love and tender affection.

It cannot be dominating, dictatorial force. You'll lose your charge before you can give the command to charge. If you try that style.

They were followers. Then in verse 7, the expression in the authorized King James, in examples. An example is one of those things that is easier to describe than to define.

Therefore, by way of description, this is an example. Suppose I hold here a soft pliable plate of wax, beeswax. It's moldable.

And I make of my right hand a fist and I strike that pliable wax. When I remove my fist, that which remains is an example of my fist. And I hope that your life has been so impacted by Jesus that there's a holy example of Him in you.

He became examples. The next thing you'll notice, they sounded forth the word. This is an expression descriptive of a trumpeter.

And a trumpet was used for several reasons. One, to awaken people. Two, to alert people.

Three, to rally people. Four, to give the command to charge to people. And the expression here is of them putting the gospel to their lips as a trumpeter would place a trumpet to the lips.

And with their lips, they trumpet forth the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to awaken, to rally, to alert, to give the command to the people to charge. Let the word of God be your authority. Let the word of God be your basis.

Let it be the foundation and the fountainhead of all that you do. Sound forth the word of God. Now this fourth factor.

They had purposeful concentration. And I thank God for this. Look at it in the last verse of that chapter, if you would kindly.

And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he hath raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come. They had this purposeful concentration. They were waiting for the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I don't think in our churches we should go to seed on any doctrine. But I think there is a doctrine that does need to be underscored on frequent occasions. And that is the reality of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For the pages of your Bible ripple 1,863 times with the announcement, He's coming again. He wanted to make it very emphatically clear. The book of 1 Thessalonians, every chapter in it closes with a pronouncement regarding Him coming again.

Time and time again, the Word of God asserts that. That is one of the great stimulus in my life, I hope it is in your life, to know you're going to meet Him. What a rendezvous! What an encounter that's going to be! Whether it's through the Old Dawn on His death, or whether it's through that grand portal called the Second Coming, when we're caught up to be with Him.

A grand momentum that should activate, catalyze, stimulate our congregations to greater commitment to holiness and integrity and character and commitment and evangelism than we've ever known before. I urge you to keep your people mindful of that reality. And again, my simple little mind can comprehend sublime truths by way of illustration.

Therefore, I share this out of my own childhood in a small little town where I grew up. My children remind me that when I was growing up, all towns were small. But it really hasn't been quite that long.

But in that little town, there was a blacksmith, a grouchy-gritzy old gentleman, a friend of my dad's, however, and therefore he tolerated me. And in his shop, he had a great large horseshoe-shaped magnet. There was a massive wheel there that was used for sharpening form implements.

And always on the table beneath it, a pile of little iron filings. And sometimes when Mr. Sid was doing something else, I would enjoy playing with that magnet, spreading those iron filings out on the table, taking that big magnet and holding it up above the table, bringing it down ever so gradually. And there was a certain point there when the force field of that magnet began to have influence on those iron filings.

And holding it at that distance, I could move it around and those iron filings would dance around on the table under the force of that magnet's power and influence upon them. And then still very, very gradually bringing it closer and the closer it got, the more influence it had on those little iron filings, the more they responded to its presence and reacted to its power. And then as that magnet came to a certain point, just the right distance above those little iron filings, they would jump up to meet the magnet and be under the

control of its power.

And oh, my dear brothers and sisters, his coming is drawing nearer and with the coming nearer, he becomes dearer and we should be all the more active under the influence of his coming, drawing power to that grand moment when he comes and in his appointed time, we're caught up to be with him. And till that time, let him use you, let him spin you, let him be the one guiding through you to build his church and to have these ideal aspirations from the holy word of God by his power within you.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/16/SID16676.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/nelson-price/what-should-the-church-be-like/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**