

WHAT KIND OF MEN?

Introduction

The church in Thessalonica, planted by the apostle Paul, grew and thrived out of a time of affliction and adversity (Acts 17:1-9; 1Thess. 1:6). Paul's time there appears to have been short, covering just 3 Sabbath days during one visit with Silas, and no further visits recorded in Scripture (though a visit would be likely during the period in Macedonia mentioned in Acts 20:1,2). Yet, 1 Thessalonians reveals a church doing so well that it became an example to all the churches and believers in Macedonia and Achaia (1Thess. 1:7,8). Paul shows great affection for the Thessalonians in his letters to them, and is evidently very pleased and encouraged by their progress in the faith, and by their testimony to others.

In 1 Thessalonians Paul talks about his own ministry in a way unusual for him, whereas in other epistles he appears compelled to give defense of his ministry in the face of opposition, here he is setting forth his own understanding and practice of ministry as an example of how ministers ought to apply themselves to their task in such a way as to be fruitful in ministry. It appears it did not take long for the fledgling Thessalonian church to begin providing its own ministers, Aristarchus and Secundus are mentioned as Paul's travel companions (Acts 19:29; 20:4), and some 10 years later Paul writing from prison in Rome mentions Aristarchus as a fellow prisoner (Col. 4:10). Perhaps Paul had seen ministerial potential among the new converts, and wants to give some guidelines for ministry, and in writing to them he says, "you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake" (1Thess. 1:5); the kind of men that Paul and Silas were, is deserving of imitation by those who have the Lord's call to ministry.

Paul's words in the first 2 chapters of 1Thessalonians give an example for ministry, they exhort those with a ministerial call on their life to take Paul's example, and to apply those same principles and attributes to their own lives and labours for Christ.

What kind of men are those ministers who are faithfully fulfilling the call of God upon their life?¹

¹ Unless stated otherwise, ministry throughout is considered in a general sense and taken as referring to all ministry and eldership positions according to Eph. 4:11 and 1Tim. 3:1-13.

1. Men of the gospel

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit (1Thess. 1:5,6).

That the gospel was central to Paul's preaching and teaching is very obvious from the testimony of Acts and from his own writings (Rom. 15:16). Paul clearly understood that the gospel contains the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), and he zealously preached and guarded the truths of the gospel. Paul shows that true and effective preaching of the gospel is not something that can be accomplished by ordinary human means; the help and empowering of the Holy Spirit is vital and necessary because the generating of saving faith in the hearer cannot be accomplished by human means (see 1Cor. 2:1-5; Rom. 10:17). Very early in Paul's ministry we see that false gospels were being proclaimed and Paul uses heavy words of condemnation against those who pervert the true gospel and propagate false gospels, saying, "let them be accursed" (Gal. 1:6-9).

So, Paul arrived in Thessalonica as he did in all the places he visited, not preaching with "excellence of speech or of wisdom", but determined "not to know anything" other than "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" and to preach the gospel not with "persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1Cor. 2:1-4). Such preaching, Paul knew would bring forth fruit in the salvation of souls and lay the foundations of sound Christian living and true discipleship.

This type of preaching is exemplified by Epaphras in Colossians where Paul gives thanks for the faith, love and hope exhibited by the Colossian believers, such essential and basic attributes as faith, love and hope were the fruit of the ministry of Epaphras, a fellow minister of Paul's and a man that Paul knew as a faithful preacher of the true gospel (Col. 1:3-8).

Throughout history great works of God have been accomplished through those who have had a right and sound understanding of the gospel, who have seen and understood the power of the gospel to bring salvation, and through that knowledge have developed a great passion to spread the gospel around the world. Where false and shallow gospels are preached, low quality disciples are produced, Paul was assured of the Thessalonians' good start on the Christian life because he knew that he had preached the true gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Is the gospel at the forefront of our ministries? Do we understand and teach the true gospel? Do we preach the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit? Are we preaching the same gospel that Paul preached? The evidence of true gospel preaching will be seen in the lives of those who hear and believe our message, are they assured of their faith, and ready to lay down their lives in following the Lord, even when such service is attended with great affliction?

2. Men who endure suffering

But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict (1Thess. 2:2).

Alongside the good fruit of saved souls through the preaching of the gospel came afflictions and sufferings. Paul and Silas had been beaten and imprisoned in Philippi before they set out for Thessalonica (Acts 16:16ff); their stay in Thessalonica was cut short when the Jews raised up persecution against them, and they had to flee from there to Berea after just three Sabbaths (Acts 17:5-10). However, the threat of persecution did not prevent them preaching the gospel, nor did it diminish their boldness in proclaiming the truth.

Paul gives detailed description of his sufferings in 2 Cor. 11 where he compares his ministry with that of false ministers. Paul does not see his

sufferings as evidence of a failed ministry, quite the opposite, for him the sufferings accompanying his ministry are a proof of the genuineness of his ministry, and even something that he can take pleasure in because they are done for Christ's sake. Again, in Colossians Paul mentions his sufferings, and says that he rejoices in them, because they are for the sake of the church and because he is filling up "what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ" (Col. 1:24), and again, in Philippians Paul mentions his sufferings, saying that in whatever state he found himself he had learned to be content (Phil. 4:12).

Paul's incredible ability to endure, and even to rejoice in the harshest of sufferings and persecutions which came upon him as he fulfilled his ministry, can be explained to some extent by the thought he expresses from prison, from where, in writing to the Philippians he says, "the things that happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel" (Phil. 1:13). Paul's greatest desire was that the gospel should go forth, and if that meant him being in prison or being whipped, shipwrecked or stoned, then he was content. What an example to the ministers of his day and our own. How much deprivation, how much suffering, how much humiliation, how much degradation, how much loss of our goods, how much persecution are we willing to endure for the sake of the gospel, and for those who have been and are being saved? Is the salvation of souls more important to us than our own comfort, wealth and exaltation? Paul suffered, Jesus suffered, countless other saints have suffered for their faith. Paul gives us an example, and so too, does the Lord Jesus who suffered for us, and also left an example, who "when he was reviled, did not revile in turn; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1Pet. 2:21-23).

A minister's true worth cannot be measured by his abundance of wealth and possessions, by his social standing, nor by the prominence of his name, it should be measured in the same way as Paul's, by his willingness to endure trials and afflictions for the sake of the name and the gospel of Jesus, and for His body, the Church.

3. Men entrusted

But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts (1Thess. 2:4).

Often Paul spoke of his ministry in terms of servanthood or stewardship (see Rom. 1:1; 1Cor. 4:1,2; 9:17ff; Col. 1:25). He had a sense of wonder at God's call on his life; once he was a blasphemer, a persecutor of the church, an insolent man, but the Lord Jesus Christ had counted him faithful, enabled him and put him into the ministry. Everything that Paul achieved in that ministry he ascribed solely to the grace of the Lord which was working in and through him (cf. 1Tim. 1:12-14; 1Cor. 15:9,10).

To Paul were committed glorious mysteries of the kingdom of God, the truths of the gospel, and New Testament doctrine. These things were not discovered by him through intellectual research, nor were they taught to him by men, they were given to him through the revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:12; 2:7). Following this great revelation Paul saw his ministry in terms of making known to the world those mysteries which had been revealed to him, preaching and teaching being the God ordained method of communicating them (Col. 1:25-28). From 1 Corinthians 1:17 through to 2:16 Paul explains his understanding of the workings of his preaching and teaching ministry: faith is necessary for salvation, faith cannot be attained by normal human methods of transmission of knowledge, something far greater is needed - the work of the Holy Spirit in enlightening the blind eyes and hard hearts of sinful men is an absolute essential, effective preaching and teaching therefore cannot be accomplished with the "persuasive words of human wisdom" but "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (2:4); "the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God" (2:14), but it is the extraordinary and magnificent power of the gospel to enlighten the heart and mind to spiritual truth, and thereby elicit faith unto salvation (see Rom. 1:16; 10:11-17).

Paul understood that the true gospel is powerful, effective, and God's ordained method of offering and bringing the sinner to salvation. If false

gospels are preached then souls are not brought into a correct understanding of sin and its consequences, nor will they have a right concept of the cross. No wonder that Paul states that perverters of the gospel should be accursed (Gal. 1:8), because in the wake of perverted gospels come perversions of true Christianity with deceived converts who have no real understanding of basic and essential Biblical truths. Not so in Thessalonica, Paul knew he had preached truthfully in the power of the Holy Spirit; his speech had not been with worldly wisdom, and the new converts were on a sound footing.

The thought of stewardship is a very serious matter for Christ's ministers, it helps understand that there has been committed into their hands a particular task from the Lord their Master, and that there is a duty to be faithful. There is a significant difference between stewards and servants: a servant is given no freedom, he simply obeys all that his master tells him; a steward however is given much more responsibility, he may well have been promoted from the position of servant because his master has found him to be faithful and honest, and so felt confident in committing to him certain responsibilities. In the New Testament times a steward was often given charge of his master's business affairs, keeping the accounts and handling the household finances - a position requiring great trust. Ministers of Christ are not mere slaves without any choice other than to obey their master's every whim, rather they are stewards who are faithful, and willingly seek to do their Master's will (see 1Cor. 9:17), they know that God Himself entrusts and gifts them with the necessary spiritual understanding, and by His grace enables them to fulfil His calling on their life.

A minister who is assured of his stewardship, and understands what Christ has given him and requires from him has no need to use error, uncleanness, deceit or flattering words in an attempt to make others accept his ministry, neither does he seek glory from men (1Thess. 2:3;5,6; see 2Cor. 2:17), he simply sets about openly, honestly and faithfully doing those things the Lord asks of him, his accountability is to His God, and constrained by the love and grace of God he seeks to do only those things that please Him.

4. Men who lay down their lives

But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us (1Thess. 2:7,8).

Paul uses the picture of a nursing mother to illustrate the depth of his gentle love and concern for the members of the new church. Similarly, Peter compares new Christian converts to new born babies who need the milk of the word (1Pet. 2:2). Paul's teaching was done with gentleness, gentleness is a necessary qualification for a minister - even in the face of those who are in opposition (2Tim. 2:24-26). But Paul takes it a bit further - to the laying down of life on behalf of others. When we consider the new mother, her sole desire is for the new child, she feeds it and cares for its every need. She goes without sleep and forgoes all other pleasures, desires and ambition in order to care and nurture the young child, her life from the moment of conception is one of selfless sacrifice, with the good of the child as the primary objective. What a picture for the minister to bear in mind when considering his own level of care and responsibility toward those whom the Lord has called him to lead! Here, laid before us in very stark terms is the real cost of true ministry. Who is prepared to give up all claims to self? Who is prepared, like the nursing mother, to make sure every action is of benefit to those who are dependent on their ministrations? Who is prepared to be deprived of sleep, leisure, rest, ambition, time, money, pleasure, in order to be 100% devoted to the care and nourishment of God's children?

Paul uses the Greek word "*thalpo*" (translated as "cherishes") to illustrate his care for the church. Vine explains that the word, "primarily means to heat, to soften by heat; then, to keep warm, as of birds covering their young with feathers ... metaphorically, to cherish with tender love, to foster with tender care."² Our perceptions of ministry, our qualifications for

² From Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words

ministry and our motives for ministry are challenged here: The call to ministry is a call to love, nurture and protect the children of God, to provide a safe haven from “every wind of doctrine” and from “the trickery of men in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (Eph. 4:14); the good nursing mother devotes her life to doing only that which is for the benefit of the child, her own thoughts of self-promotion must be put to one side, all attention is diverted to the child, and all efforts are directed to developing and preparing it to fulfill its potential in life. Even so, must those who minister to the body of Christ lay aside all thoughts of promoting self and devote all efforts to the nurture of others. Paul knew that the place to look for evidence of good ministry was not in the life of the minister, but rather in the lives of the recipients of the ministry, in writing to the Corinthian church he told them, “You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us ...” Letters of commendation from himself or from others had little worth, the proof of the ministry lay in the lives of the recipients of the ministry (2Cor. 3:1-3). The tired, worn and frazzled image of the nursing mother is no advert for her skills, but the healthy, smiling, bouncing baby is!

Some words of the prophet Ezekiel serve as a warning and are very relevant, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel to the shepherds, “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves. Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?”” (Ezk. 34:2). Two questions particularly need to be asked: Why am I in ministry? What do I expect from my ministry? If the answer to these questions contains any thought of promoting myself, of ambitious self intent, of financial gain, of earning fame and popularity, of proving something to others, then I need to consider very carefully if my call to ministry is genuine, remembering with great sobriety that Almighty God Himself is going to call me to account for the things done to His people in His name under the banner of “my ministry”.

5. Men who laboured and toiled

For you remember, brethren, our labour and toil; for labouring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God (1Thess. 2:9).

Hard work! Let no one be deluded, the work of ministry involves hard labour and toil! Paul is not talking only about the work of ministry, he is alluding also to the physical work he often had to undertake with his own hands in order to provide his basic necessities (cf. Acts 20:34,35). It is true that the word of God makes provision for the church to sustain its ministers, “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain” and, “The worker is worthy of his wages” (1Tim. 5:17,18), and it would be well for more church committees and trustees to take heed of those words; but Paul was at pains not to be a burden to any, and when funds were not forthcoming, then he was willing and ready to put his hands to secular work in order to pay his way (see Acts 18:3 and his “tentmaking”).

Ministers must be free from covetousness and the love of money, indeed one of the qualities of eldership is to be “not greedy for money” (1Tim. 3:3, 8; 6:9,10), and there may be times when the hard labour of ministry will yield little financial reward. Like Paul, we must learn to be content in every situation (Phil. 4:11,12) and to be thankful when the Lord raises up those who are willing to support the ministry financially (Phil. 4:15-19); and be prepared to work for our living when and if the situation calls for it (*see footnote 3*).

Paul spoke further of his labours in 1 Corinthians, noting that, “I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1Cor. 15:10); Paul worked hard, but he laboured in the grace of God, this was not mere human endeavour; men are able to accomplish many wonderful things in their own strength, yet the minister must not succumb to temptations to use his own natural resources to try and

accomplish the work of God, the old hymn puts it well, “The arm of flesh will fail you, ye dare not trust your own.” Nor should men be going into ministry because of natural talents, ministry is spiritual work, spiritual work requires spiritual enabling, God enables those He calls, and God often chooses foolish things to put to shame the wise (1Cor. 1:27). That is not to say that God will not use men of intellect and talent, He will, but only where there is a laying aside of the importance of those things that were once given high regard. Paul is a good example, a man of great natural intellect, vigour, passion and talent, but who was ready to “count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil. 3:8), without Jesus we can accomplish nothing of spiritual and eternal value, the branch cannot bear fruit unless it abides in the vine (Jn. 15:4,5), works accomplished by natural talent may look fine and good for a while, but we can be sure there will be no eternal value, and no lasting spiritual fruit, a minister working hard in the flesh is like the church of Sardis - having “a name that you are alive, but you are dead” (Rev. 3:1).

A call to ministry is a call to hard labour, let’s be sure our labours are those that the Lord has called us to, that He has enabled and equipped, that He can bless, that will give glory to His name, and will render eternal benefit to those to whom we minister.³

³ Phil. 4:10ff mentions support given to Paul by the Philippian church; in 2Cor. 11:7ff Paul mentions his reluctance to burden the Corinthian church, support coming from other churches in Macedonia. The occasion of Paul’s “tentmaking” at Corinth mentioned in Acts 18:3 may have been a short endeavour, showing good faith to his hosts, Silas and Timothy’s arrival from Macedonia, likely with funds seems to mark a “release” into a more effective stage of ministry (Acts 18:5). Paul’s words in Acts 20:33-35 are relevant and suggest that Paul often worked with his hands to support himself and his team, and he gives his practice in this as an example that elders should follow. Paul’s “tentmaking” in Corinth cannot form the basis for a doctrine that ministers must work to pay their own way, and should not receive financial support from others; ministry is much more effective when the minister can devote his time fully and wholeheartedly to his ministry, disencumbered from the necessity and hindrance of having to earn his living he is fully available to God and to those he is called to serve. However, there is at the same time no Scriptural warrant for a minister to refuse to undertake secular work, when those ministered to cannot carry the burden of financial support then it is incumbent upon the minister to do what he can to provide for his own needs.

6. Men who are devout, just and blameless

You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe (1Thess. 2:10).

“Devoutly, justly and blamelessly”, the spotlight is shining on the minister’s behaviour. Paul uses three words with similar meanings: “Devout” (Greek, *hosios*, pure from evil conduct, having a quality of holiness); “Justly” (Greek, *dikaios*, in accordance with what is right); “Blameless” (Greek, *amemptos*, no charge can be maintained)⁴. Together these three words highlight the high standard of behaviour that ought to be expected and exemplified by Christ’s ministers. The lives of Christ’s ministers are especially on public display, their position as leaders in the Church means that the eyes of believers are upon them, their place in the world means that the eyes of unbelievers are also watching them (even if for no other reason than to find a cause of complaint). Paul, writing to Timothy and Titus mentions several times of the need for elders to be blameless before the church and the world (1Tim. 3:2; 7, 8; Titus 1:6,7); and Timothy is exhorted to be an example “in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1Tim. 4:12).

Related to these words is the Biblical teaching of righteousness in which God is presented as the only absolutely righteous being, God created man to be righteous and He expects and requires righteous behaviour from the people He created in His own image. The first man Adam lost his righteousness at the fall thereby bequeathing unrighteousness to the human race (Rom. 3:10ff), in Christ redeemed sinners are restored to righteousness and enabled by God’s grace and by the power of the Holy Spirit to live righteous lives acceptable to God (see Rom. 8:4; 2Cor. 5:21; Eph. 4:24). All redeemed believers are (like Abraham) examples of the redeemed life made possible by faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ, and having once been slaves of sin have now become slaves of righteousness (Rom.

⁴ From Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words

6:17,18), and are witnesses to the power and reality of the Holy Spirit, and to the saving grace of God manifested through the Lord Jesus.

So then, we understand something of the reasons for this scrutiny and emphasis placed on the life and behaviour of the minister, as leader of the Lord's redeemed people his life must be a powerful example of God's saving grace. There is something much more here than merely the thought of keeping clean accounts in the eyes of others (though this is important), for his life must also give testimony to the reality of the new, supernatural life of righteousness made possible by the empowering of the Holy Spirit, such testimony gives an example encouraging other believers to enter in to the fullness of Christian life, and testifies to unbelievers of the reality of God. Consider, however what happens should the church leader fall, because of his position the fall is public and brings shame and disrepute on the name of God (note how in 2Sam. 12:14 when David fell into sin Nathan told him that he had "given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme"), members of the congregation may fall into sin privately and be protected from the glare of publicity - it is rarely so for the minister, and his misdemeanours will soon be devoured and made use of by God's enemies to denounce and ridicule the Christian God and the faith of His people.

We are seeing that there are very strict standards to which the leader must be willing to conform in order to maintain a good testimony in the sight of God and men, there must be a clear and strong determination to keep from every form of evil and immoral conduct. There must be no hint or suggestion of wrong-doing, the leader must be seen to be a "man of God" whose heart is set to live for God in doing the will of God, he is a man devoted to God, who does not shirk from the the responsibility of living righteously, a man who knows the power and help of the Holy Spirit in overcoming sin and temptations, and who is an example to others and so, like Paul, can say to others, "imitate me" (1Cor. 4:16, Phil. 3:17, Titus 2:7,8).

7. Men who exhort, comfort and charge

You know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory (1Thess. 2:11,12).

Paul had previously used the picture of a nursing mother in verse 7 to describe aspects of his ministry, now he describes aspects of his ministry in terms of fatherhood, this thought of parental care is important to him and shows how much he loved and cared for God's children. Whereas the picture of the nursing mother spoke of loving nurture, the picture of the father here speaks of preparation, just as fathers ought to do all they can to prepare their children for life in the world, so Paul sees himself preparing the believers for a life of service to God. There are acts of loving discipline involved here, along with urgent pleadings and warnings. A loving father wants the very best for his children, his desire for them is that they meet their full potential, that their abilities and talents are put to the very best use and that they find fulfilment in life. The task is not easy, he must steer them clear of distractions and unhelpful pursuits, at times with chastisements, at others with encouragements, rewarding when appropriate, punishing when necessary. The letter to the Hebrews points out how God disciplines His children, chastening and correcting just as human fathers do, but God does it out of His love, and for our eternal benefit that we may be partakers of His holiness (Heb. 12:3-11). Paul too, because he loves the children of God instructs them in the ways of righteousness, chastening and correcting, encouraging them to enter fully into the life that God has called them to. Paul knows there is nothing better to do with the short span of life than to "press on" and "lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me" (Phil. 3:12), anything else can be counted as rubbish (Phil. 3:8), and he, as a good minister of Christ will do all he can to direct others into the same attitude.

Example is again so important, the ministers life, itself, surrendered

to the will of God, subjected to God's discipline and correction is to be one worthy of imitation. His acts must confirm his words, his spiritual maturity, wise counsel, gentle but firm correction all exhibit an attitude of fatherly love which is itself an imitation of God's fatherly love for His children.

Conclusion

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit: for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2Cor. 3:5,6).

Reading through the preceding seven points may well bring to our minds Paul's words from 2Cor. 2:16, "who is sufficient for these things?" Ministry is a very serious matter before God and before His people, the seven points considered here ought to bring that home very strongly to the reader. The thought of our own unworthiness and lack of natural abilities in the realm of Church leadership should cause us to consider very seriously indeed the call to ministry, and exhorts us to make sure that God has indeed called, and that in making the call God Himself is going to equip. And that is one of the great wonders of ministry, it is true that we are not sufficient of ourselves to meet the requirements, but it is equally true, that God, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit is able to make us sufficient. God takes the foolish and with it confounds the wise. When a defeated Moses believed he was unable God made the greatest leader of all; when proud Peter fell, God restored and made a great preacher and apostle. To be inhibited by our own sense of uselessness is to doubt the ability of God to make something useful of us for His work and for His glory, on the other hand, to be filled with confidence in ones' own natural abilities robs God of His glory and inhibits the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and robs others of the true spiritual blessings. The minister must come to the place of understanding exemplified by Paul's words in 1Cor. 15:10, "By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more

abundantly than they all, yet not I but the grace of God which was with me.”

There is no place for pride in the work of Christian ministry, nor, once called, should there be any place for feelings of uselessness, rather an attitude of complete dependance on the grace of God along with a sense of wonder and expectancy that God will do great things because He is working through His chosen vessel, and when that vessel is pure and completely yielded to His will there is no limit to what God can do with and through it.

The God of Israel said,
The Rock of Israel spoke to me:
He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.
And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises,
A morning without clouds,
Like the tender grass springing out of the earth,
By clear shining after the rain.
(2Sam. 23:3,4)