

Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: March 7th: 2 Corinthians 4: 7-18: Some Notes

Please read Psalm 116 as well. This is the text that Paul quotes: “I believed, so I spoke”. Another useful bit of background is that Corinth manufactured clay pots as lamp containers, as well as bronze and gold lamps.

Paul’s very personal letter is anything but a “me, me” letter. It is about how Me fits into the bigger picture. Like the quoted psalm, this letter is earthed in the reality of human frailty engaged in God business and reflecting God glory. That reality includes pain, bereavement, the physical deterioration that comes with ageing. The message is very definitely not about a future of escape from the body into the spirit, but about the transformation of the body; not about escape from the physical world, but about transformation of the physical world. It is about living the Gospel now, sometimes at a high price, and living it into the glorious future when we can be ourselves as God intended without all the current limitations. The word “Glory” that Peta highlighted is again very much to the fore. “An eternal weight of glory”.

One of the commentaries quotes Francis Thompson’s poetry: Jacob’s Ladder to heaven based in Charing Cross, and Jesus walking on the Thames rather than on the Lake of Galilee. All about the ordinariness of Glory. For all of us feeling a little helpless regarding Ukraine, it is encouraging to hear St Paul saying that he has been not sure what to do.

The other way of looking at things – things we all experience – is that as well as light in the midst of darkness there is life in the midst of death. We talk about death being one of the ultimate realities, but the ultimate reality is Life.

I was taken by the commentary note on Roman triumphal processions. The victorious general had someone to remind him that he was going to die one day; and his troops were encouraged to shout out that, as well as being a victorious general, he was a bit of an idiot at times. Imagine Putin asking his officials for public criticism! I did work for a minister who asked officials to point out what was wrong with his policies =- though in private rather than in public. Good in some ways to have pride; but good to keep it in check!

All a long way from the prosperity Gospel: sign up to Jesus and rest on a bed of roses, walk a pathway of daisies. It ain’t like that – as we know. All coming back to Jesus, the ultimate example of living the good life and not having an easy life.