

Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: July 11th: 2 Corinthians 12.11-13.4: Some Notes

“Less of me or of God.” “ready to mortgage my life for your good.” “God is the judge.”
“Your growing up.” “Afraid of mutual disappointment.” “Pigsty of evil, sexual disorder, and indecency” “Good Friday weapons in an Easter Sunday world.” Strife, envy, anger, factions, slander, conceit, disorder.

Any theatre critic who blamed the theatre management for the audience, individually and collectively, not being very nice people, would probably be referred for psychiatric assessment, or sacked; certainly laughed at. It is what matters on the stage that is the business of critic and management. This is because the audience only exists during the performance. The people who make up the audience are generally, before and after the performance, not a body at all. One of the difficulties in relating Paul to today's church, is that Paul saw Christians as signing up to being the visible body of Christ: not just individuals who came together once a week for a church service. In Paul's perspective, signed up Christians were individually and collectively accountable: ultimately to God, but also, and also important, to each other and to their leaders/pastors. This letter has been called the supreme pastoral letter, and it assumes that there is pastoral responsibility and authority: he is minding his business!

Of course there is room for political/personal debate about the limits to State/ Community/ Family/ Church etc responsibility and authority; but a starting point that we are (at least as adults of sound mind) accountable for what we say and do or fail to say and do; and also share a collective responsibility within the groups we belong to, including our local church, is not a bad starting point. The visible local church, in today's more individualistic society, may just be folk who have chosen to attend a service in a building that Sunday, but the outside world will judge church-goers (and maybe have expectations of church-goers) individual and collectively even if it doesn't have any real concept of Church as Body of Christ. “These Christians are all the same!”