

Assignment Title: Significant notes and observations

I Corinthians 12-15

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Campus Location: ATS/NY City

Course Title: I and II Corinthians (Eng. Text)

Course Number: NT634

Semester & Year: Spring 2020

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Date Submitted: March 23, 2020

Significant Notes

From chapters 12 to 14, Paul is challenging the “Puffed-up” Corinthians to yield to his authority given by God. Also, he is seeking to bring the disorderly and self-centered worship practices of the Corinthians under control so that the community may be built up (vv. 14:5, 12, 26, 40). While in chapter 15, Paul affirms Christ’s resurrection and its significance.

First, in 12:1-31a, Paul states that spiritual gifts are distributed within the community in diverse ways, and the Holy Spirit empowers all for the confession of “Jesus is Lord” (vv. 12:3). However, the Corinthians boasted their spiritual gifts, especially tongue-spoken, as signs of their spiritual knowledge and power that set them apart from the community. Thus Paul firmly points out that the primary purpose of spiritual gifts is not to boast about one’s spiritual gifts but to serve God’s purpose for the common benefit of the community. Further, Paul used the analogy of diversity and interdependence in the body, appealing Corinth’s affluent church members to value the contributions of their less privileged members (vv. 14-26). Paul envisions not only the tolerance of differences among members but also unity within the community of the church.

Second, in 12:31b-13:13, Paul is trying to reform the Corinthians’ understanding and practice of spiritual manifestations in worship. Paul insists that love is the will of God. Without love, a person who can speak the tongue of an angel or do mighty works is nothing. Love never fails; conversely, prophecy, tongues, and knowledge will all be nothing at the future event of God’s judgment and transformation of the world. Paul aims to call the members of the Corinthian community out of schism and into the unity of love with each other. Paul further points out that faith, hope, and love are the enduring character marks of the Christian life. Among them, love is the greatest of all because it will endure eternally when the love of God is all in all.

Lastly, in 14:1-40, Corinthians believe that their ability to speak in a heavenly language that surpassed human understanding is the sign of their spiritual power and maturity. Subsequently, they are placing excessive emphasis on the gift of tongues that makes the community’s worship assembly fall into disorderly confusion. To counteract the excessive valuation and undisciplined practice of

tongues-speaking in the community, Paul gives specific directions for regulating the gifts, specifically the gift of tongues. Further, Paul sees prophecy as a powerful tool of evangelism, but he sees tongues as a hindrance to making the gospel understood. Therefore, he preferred prophecy than tongues because of the former speak intelligible, inspired messages from God, which builds up the community (vv.24-25). Our God is a God of peace. The Corinthians should learn to be peaceful with one another and conforms to more orderly worship, which emphasizes concord and complementarity.

In chapter 15, most Corinthians consider themselves hyper-spiritual Christians and rich in spiritual gifts. Also, they were influenced by the Greco-Roman culture, which believed the body ceases to exist at death, only the spirit survives in a disembodied existence. Therefore, they found the view of the resurrection of the body stupid and embarrassing. However, Paul argues that the foundation of the gospel is the resurrection of Jesus, which gives believers future hope for a transformed body at Parousia (vv. 1-34). Without the resurrection, the gospel is a sham, and their faith is in vain.

Observations

The vv. 14:34a “Women should remain silent in the assemblies” negatively impacted numerous women’s ministries. According to Hays, the ancient manuscript evidence suggests that the authenticity of verses 34-35 is suspect. He further concluded that these verses are best explained as a gloss introduced into the text by the second- or third-generation Pauline interpreters who compiled the pastoral epistles. He further points out the similarity of both 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 to 1 Timothy 2:11-12 from which commands women to learn in silence and submission are stark. Hays suspected that there was a conscious effort to restrict the roles played by women in the first-generation Pauline churches.

Because of these verses, some churches do not allow the ordination of women, although these women have both academic qualifications and related church working experiences. The bible clearly stated that God created both males and females in his own image and blessed them equally to rule over the living things on earth (Gen. 1:27-28). In addition, Paul teaches that women may pray and prophesy in church (vv. 11:2-16). Secondly, evidence in the early Pauline

communities shows that women played an active role in preaching, teaching, and prophesying (Rm. 16:1-2; 16:3-4; 16:7; Phil. 4:2-3). Thirdly, the command in verse 34 is abruptly addressed not to the specific Corinthian situation but the churches in general. Fourthly, the unqualified appeal to “the Law” as requiring women’s subordination (v. 34b) is uncharacteristic of Paul’s way of appealing to Scripture. Finally, Paul believes the gifts of the Spirit are given to both men and women for the building up of the community.

The truth will prevail no matter who deliberately mislead people. We have witnessed the abandonment of the slave system. Therefore, I believe one day, women will be allowed to preach formally in all churches.