

Week 2: Paul and the Theology of the Cross

Theme : What does the cross mean to Paul?

Core Concept: The cross is the center of Paul's theology—God's wisdom and power.

1. Introduction: Background of the Theology of the Cross

1) 1 Corinthians 1:18

“For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

2) For Paul, the cross is not merely an execution tool, but the very heart of God's redemptive work.

2. Theological Significance of the Cross

1) Revelation of God's Righteousness

(1) Romans 3:21–26— The righteousness of God apart from the law

(2) The cross reveals the meeting point of God's justice and love

(3) “So that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26)

2) Propitiation (Atoning Sacrifice)

(1) Jesus was given as a propitiation (Greek: *hilastērion*)

(2) It satisfies God's wrath against sin and restores the relationship between God and man

3) Substitutionary Death

(1) 2 Corinthians 5:21— “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf...”

(2) The cross is a sacrificial death in place of sinful humanity

3. The Cross and the Elimination of Human Boasting

1) 1 Corinthians 1:29–31— “So that no flesh may boast before God”

2) The cross utterly negates all human attempts at self-righteousness

3) Boasting in law, lineage, or works is nullified before the cross (cf. Phil. 3:7–9)

4. The Cross and Paul's Ministry Method

- 1) 1 Corinthians 2:2— “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified”
- 2) Ministry model: Not based on human wisdom or strength, but centered on the crucified Christ

5. The Cross and Christian Living

- 1) Galatians 2:20— “I have been crucified with Christ...”
- 2) Believers are called to die and live with Christ
- 3) The cross is not just a past event but a present principle for life

6. Key Scripture References

- 1) 1 Corinthians 1:18–25
- 2) Romans 3:21–26
- 3) 2 Corinthians 5:21
- 4) Galatians 2:20
- 5) Philippians 3:7–10

7. Summary

- 1) For Paul, the cross is the power of God, the channel of righteousness, the solution to sin, and the foundation of the believer's life.
 - 2) The theology of the cross is the heartbeat of Pauline theology and must be central in theology and the church today.
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