

5. Pauline Theology in Modern Theological Debates

1) Overview

Pauline theology has become a central topic in 20th and 21st century theological debates, particularly concerning soteriology, the relationship between law and gospel, ecclesiology, eschatology, and justification.

These areas have sparked deep dialogue and contention between Paul's original teachings and various modern theological perspectives.

1. Key Debated Issues

1) The New Perspective on Paul

- (1) Contrasts with traditional Protestant interpretations (e.g., Luther and Calvin)
- (2) Advocated by scholars such as E.P. Sanders, James D.G. Dunn, and N.T. Wright
- (3) Rejects the view that Judaism was based on "works righteousness"
- (4) Reinterprets righteousness as covenantal membership rather than legal merit

2) Justification Debate

- (1) Is Paul's concept of justification a forensic declaration (legal standing before God) or a relational inclusion in God's covenant community?
- (2) Ongoing clash between traditional Protestant theology and the New Perspective

3) The Role of the Law

- (1) Law as condemnation vs. Law as a tutor or guide
- (2) Debate over whether the Law was abolished or fulfilled in Christ

4) Pauline Eschatology

- (1) Emphasizes the tension between the "already" and "not yet" aspects of salvation
- (2) Interprets church life and Christian ethics through an eschatological lens

2. Tensions between Pauline and Modern Theology

Topic	Pauline Theology	Some Modern Theologies
Salvation	By grace through faith	Emphasis on works and social justice
Church	The body of Christ	Inclusive and pluralistic community
Holy Spirit	Regeneration and sanctification	Focus on spirituality and mysticism
Ethics	Transformation by the gospel	Postmodern ethical pluralism

3. Theological Application

Pauline theology offers a critical corrective to many challenges faced by contemporary theology and the modern church, such as syncretism, moralism, legalism, and secularism.

The recovery of the true gospel must be firmly rooted in Paul's apostolic theology, which centers on justification by faith, the work of Christ, and the transformative power of the Holy Spirit.

Available Resources (upon request)

- 1) PowerPoint slides (summarized)
- 2) Word & PDF formatted documents
- 3) English lecture script