

St. Paul (02.29.26) Session 3

A. Important Background Points

1. image → likeness (cf. Rom 1:18-20; 1 Cor 8:6; Rom 11:33-36; Acts 17)
2. Karl Raher's definition of God as "self-giving love" → how do we understand salvation history

B. Paul's Foundational Belief

1. The Christ Event (death/resurrection) has had a fundamental effect on salvation history
2. He sums up the Christ Event as "Christ crucified," his shorthand, used numerous times throughout his letter; also uses the phrase Christ Jesus over and over → he is less interested in the life of Jesus (e.g., as per the gospels) but in the defining elements of that life, which is the Christ Event
3. importance of the term "Christ crucified"
 - a.) Christ is Kyrios (Lord) in contradistinction to the imperial system, which is why in several places he compares the wisdom (folly) of this age and its rulers with the folly (wisdom) of God in Christ (1Cor 1:17-2:16)

C. How does the Christ Event, the death of Jesus save us

1. Paul experiences this as a mystical event for which he employs several vantage points/symbols (e.g., justification, redemption, salvation, glorification) none of which can fully capture the mystery; Paul should be read as a mystic and not as a theology professor
2. **Justification** (to be made upright) is the most common image employed by Paul, though this image is intrinsically connected to other images, especially **salvation** and **freedom/deliverance**
 - a.) from Paul's Jewish background, justification involves a "putting things right" between God and humanity between human beings: in Christ crucified, God declares us justified, i.e., put right)
 - b.) he also says that Christ frees us from sin/evil; from his Jewish tradition, he is borrowing from the Exodus and the release from the Babylonian Captivity
 - c). How to make sense of this in terms of traditional ways of understanding that "Jesus saves us"
 - i) early Fathers: Christ pays a ransom to the devil

ii.) Anselm: Christ redeems us from the justifiable wrath of an angry God whom our sin has offended on an infinite level: substitutionary sacrifice

iii.) Nothing in Paul supports either of the above: they are efforts to collapse a mystery into a theological formulation AND they fly in the face of Rahner's definition of God

3. Is there a **before/after** with respect to the Christ Event?

a.) No, Jesus' death cannot be seen as changing God's mind about humanity; cannot be seen as a redefinition of who God is

b.) But, Yes, the Christ Event reveals with historical finality what has always already been true about God: in the Christ Event, the self-giving love of **from** God meets the perfect return of self-giving love **to** God; he lives out fully the value system of his Father even to the point of "death, death on a cross;" in this sense he takes on our sin, our failing to live up to God's call; and so sinful humanity puts to death "the Lord of Glory, and even there, precisely there, God loves us at our worst

c.) Christ Jesus embodies the meeting place of those two loves; and if we believe this through faith, then we can never doubt either the nature of God or the nature of God's relationship with us