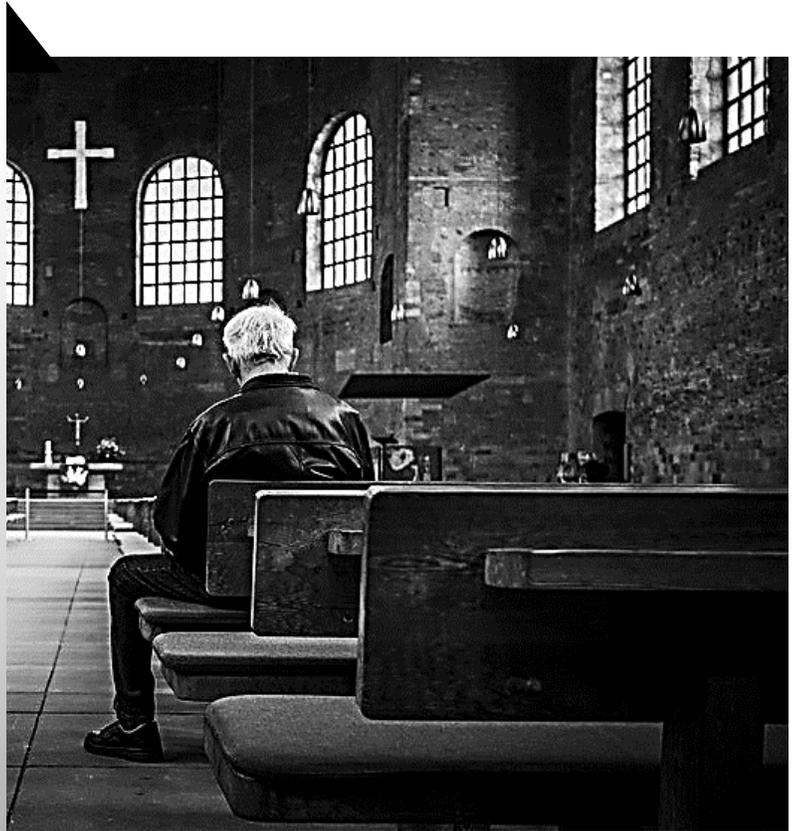




St. Paul's Lutheran Church
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The Epistle of Romans

The Justification of the Ungodly

Chapter 1 Verses 8-17

Vs. 8-15 are an extension of the health-wish section of the letter. Paul wishes them prayerful circumstances in this life.

There is something more going on though. Paul is leading the conversation to the main two theses in the letter of Romans. (Keep in mind that a thesis is the main point that is to be proven and communicated)

The two main theses (that will be our focus of this study) are in verses 16 and 17. That is to say; Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel because of the two theses below.

Thesis #1 – The Gospel is the power of God

The word 'power' is closely related to the word 'dynamite.' What is power? The answer, the Gospel! That means if the church wants God's power it is not found in fancy laser shows, hip music, impressive liturgical dancing, or slick marketing, but in the Word of the Gospel! Yes, the power is in the Word of the Gospel.

"I will preach it, teach it, write it, but I will constrain no one by force, for faith must come freely without compulsion. Take myself as an example. I opposed indulgences and all the papists, but never with force. I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise, I did nothing. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything."

- Martin Luther

So if the Gospel is the power of God, what is its power unto? It is power unto 'salvation.' Keep in mind that the left-hand kingdom has power – the power of the sword to protect body and goods from anarchy and violence. However, the power of the left-hand kingdom does not have power unto salvation. Only the gospel (which is exercised in the church) has power unto

salvation. This is why we need to keep the two spheres separate and not confuse them. Too often churches run to the power of the state to see change; however, the power of the state cannot influence salvation.

Who is this salvation for though? This salvation is to everyone who trusts. In other words, status, works, ability, and family do not contribute anything.

Thesis #2 – In the Gospel, the righteousness of God is being revealed

Where is this righteousness of God found when it is revealed? Is it a quality within us? No way! The Gospel reveals what God does for man in Christ that saves, 'not' what God does in man in Christ. We must beware of shifting the emphasis to us when talking about the Gospel! The Gospel always turns us away from ourselves to the good news of what Jesus did for us! More specifically, righteousness is always found 'in Christ', not us. However, we possess righteousness 'by faith.' Faith/trust is the posture of the empty-handed beggar. Righteousness is received by faith – faith receives.

Though it may sound technical, when God's righteousness is placed into our open hands (faith), this is the forgiveness of our sins. And where there is forgiveness, there is life and salvation.

And so this righteousness is of God and not us. Furthermore, it is righteousness not to God, but from God to us!

