

REMNANT CHURCH SERMON NOTES – ROMANS 1: 8-15
PREACHED ON SEPTEMBER 28, 2025 BY REV. B.B. ANUM-HIGHER

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. 9 God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of His Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you 10 in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you. 11 I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— 12 that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. 13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles. 14 I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. 15 That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome. Romans 1:8-15

➤ **INTRODUCTION**

- Two weeks ago, we began a sermon series on the Letter Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome. Rome was the capital of the Roman Empire, one of the most powerful empires in the world. Paul first introduced himself to them because he didn't plant this church; he had not visited them before, and they had not heard him preach to them. As indicated in the last chapter, Paul seemed to know about two dozen of the believers in Rome.
- After his conversion, Paul spent some time in the East of the Mediterranean planting churches in former Yugoslavia and Turkey, with Antioch as his ministry's headquarters. After a fruitful missionary endeavor, Paul saw another opportunity to preach the gospel in the West, particularly in Spain, and he wanted Rome to serve as the supporting church for his ministry in the West.
- Last week, we looked at the second reason Paul wrote this letter – the gospel. Paul encouraged the Christians in Rome with the gospel. He told them that the origin of the gospel is God Himself, not a man-made gospel. The testimony of the gospel is the Old Testament, and the center of the gospel is Jesus Christ. Paul indicated that the gospel is about the person and work of Jesus Christ. The gospel bears fruit in the lives of all believers by their obedience to God. Paul also mentioned that the goal of the gospel is to call men and women to glorify God with their lives. The gospel creates, unites, and motivates the church.
- Today, among other things, Paul will challenge us to take this gospel seriously. He tells us four things in our text today.

➤ **FIRST – A COMPLIMENT**

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. Romans 1:8

- I mentioned last week that in the ancient world, their letters started with the sender's name, the receiver's name, a greeting from the sender to the receiver, and a prayer, regardless of the person's religious beliefs.
- The sender will give a compliment to encourage the receiver. So, Paul's compliment to this church was not unusual in ancient letters. However, this compliment was more than just a format for ancient letters. It came from Paul's heart, sincere words from the apostle to the believers in Rome.
- He was excited in his compliment because the church was planted in Rome, the most important city in the Roman Empire. Paul was a Roman citizen and was so excited that his people had received the gospel. Pentecostalism or prosperity gospel has spread throughout Africa, and in my country, Ghana, one Region or State, as called in the US, has only one Reformed Church. Imagine how excited I would be when several Reformed churches spread throughout Ghana, the rest of Africa, and the Philippines due to our connection to these nations.
- Paul was also thrilled because the Roman church had many Gentiles, and Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. Just as Peter was called to be the apostle to the Jews, but with the understanding that the gospel also belonged to the Gentiles, Paul had the task of ministering primarily to the Gentiles, so seeing a flourishing Gentile church was an excitement to Paul.

- **How did Paul compliment the church in Rome?**

1. Paul gave all the credit to God for the growth of the church. Paul could have just told them that he thanks the leaders for their excellent work, the missionary who planted the church, the members for their financial support, the Sunday School teachers, the organists, etc. Instead, Paul indicated that God builds His church. He was the One at work in the church in Rome. No human being could take the credit, so he said, **"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world."** Romans 1:8

Paul was so excited to hear about the work God was graciously doing among the believers in Rome, and he thanked God for it. Therefore, it is dangerous for church leaders to take credit for a successful ministry. The church is God's new creation in Christ, and a growing church is also the work of God.

On a personal note, can't you see the hand of God in the planting of the Remnant Church? It is God who has called us to gather here, it is God who provided us this place to meet, it is God who gave us all the resources we need for this ministry, and it is God who will sustain us. It is God who is transforming us through His Word to be like Christ.

Who changes people's lives and hearts to become new creatures? Who makes the gospel convincing to us? Who gives us peace in the midst of persecution?
It is God and God alone.

Paul understood that the church of God is a work of grace by God, not a building where people meet, not a branch of a denomination, but a creation of God.

2. Paul then tells us why He was thankful to God for His gracious work among the Roman believers. What was Paul grateful to God for? He wrote: **“because your faith is being reported all over the world.”**

How did Paul know that their faith was being reported worldwide?

This letter was written before the invention of TV, radio, newspapers, the internet, and the telephone. The only means of communication was by word of mouth from one individual to another and through letters.

Paul, therefore, wanted these believers to know that wherever he went, people spoke about the work God was doing among the Roman believers. With the limited means of communication, the only way people spread God's gracious work among them was through the great work advertising itself. God's mighty works continually advertise themselves. The new us will be known as God continues His transforming work in us.

3. Paul thanked God for the believers because their faith was reported throughout the world. What did people say about the believers in Rome throughout the world? Was it their growing numbers, great programs, excellent preacher, and beautiful church building? None of these. Paul told us in Romans 16:19 what the world noticed:

19 Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.

It was their obedience to God that was being reported throughout the world. They were bearing the fruit of the gospel, which is obedience, and the world heard about them. How do you know if a church is living and beautiful? The true beauty of the Church lies not in its physical structure. The Church in Rome was a living and beautiful church because of the faithfulness and joyful obedience to God's will by its members.

Among other changes, thieves stopped stealing, gossipers stopped gossiping, adulterers became faithful to their spouses, children began to honor their parents, false witnesses against their neighbors stopped doing so, and those who coveted other people's spouses and properties became content with what the Lord had given them.

There was a positive lifestyle change, and the world could not keep quiet or blind but to notice the significant transformation among the believers in Rome.

I can imagine people saying to each other: “Have you heard that Mr. Lee had stopped stealing after he became a believer?” “Have you heard that Mrs. Serrano is now faithful to her husband after she believed the gospel?” Their obedience caught fire in the

ancient world and Paul was thrilled by it. 8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. Romans 1:8

➤ SECOND – PAUL’S LOVE FOR PEOPLE

9 God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of His Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you 10 in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God’s will the way may be opened for me to come to you. Romans 1:9-10

- Most Christians will promise others that they will pray for them, but they immediately forget to do so. Here we have Paul calling God as his witness, saying that he constantly prayed for a church he had not visited, a church he had not preached to, and people he did not know. This expresses Paul’s love for mankind and commitment to God’s service.
- In his closet, Paul would lift people he didn’t even know before the Lord in prayer. Paul knew that Christians do the real work not before people for their applause, but before God, who sees all things. He had this hidden prayer life, which every Christian must emulate. We do not need to be seen before we pray; for the most part, prayer is a hidden ministry. God knows when we pray, and that is what matters. Paul could have just told them that he prays for them; instead, he called God his witness, saying he had privately prayed for them. Paul was sure of what he was communicating to the believers at Rome.
- Didn’t Jesus teach about a private or hidden prayer life too in Matthew 6:6? 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

➤ THIRD – PAUL’S INTEGRITY

11 I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— 12 that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith. 13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles. Romans 1: 11-13

- In the church at Corinth, where Paul probably was when he wrote this letter, there were outspoken Corinthians demanding proof that Paul was really an apostle of Christ, which begs the question, why? Why were there Corinthians who doubted Paul’s apostleship?
- One of the reasons was this: Paul had initially wanted to revisit the Corinthians but changed his mind. (2 Corinthians 2:1, 2 Corinthians 1:17). These outspoken Corinthians murmured (complained) and doubted Paul’s apostleship, and some even thought he was fickle and lacking firmness in his purpose or devotion.
- In our text, Paul proved that he was a man full of integrity by taking the time to explain to the Roman Christians that he was not fickle, as some of the Corinthians thought of him; he was not changing frequently, as regards his desire

to visit them and share God's Word. Later in Romans 15:23-29, Paul didn't beat about the bush about his plans, but gave detailed information about his plan to visit the Romans.

23 But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to visit you, 24 I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to see you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. 25 Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the Lord's people there. 26 For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem. 27 They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. 28 So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this contribution, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. 29 I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.

➤ **FOURTH – PAUL'S EAGERNESS TO PREACH THE GOSPEL**

14 I am obligated (a debtor) both to Greeks and non-Greeks (barbarians), both to the wise and the foolish. 15 That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome. Romans 1: 14-15

- Paul, at this time in his life, was an older man who had had a fruitful ministry and could have taken an early retirement. He had undergone several challenges in his ministry, and he could have said enough was enough. Yet, he tells us that he was still obligated to preach the gospel both to the Greeks and non-Greeks (barbarians), including the Roman Christians. Paul felt a sense of obligation to all.
- Another translation is this: Paul said he was a debtor to preach the gospel. What does it mean to be a debtor to preach the gospel to the Christians in Rome? How did Paul become a debtor to the Christians in Rome, when he had no connections with them? There are two ways to become a debtor:
 1. If someone gave you a very expensive gift, you could tell the person, I am indebted to you.
 2. There is a second way to be a debtor. Let's say someone gave you an expensive gift to be given to another person because the person was in need. While you had the gift with you, you were indebted to the person who must receive the gift. You are indebted to the person until you have handed over the gift. This is what Paul meant by being indebted to Greeks and non-Greeks, including the Romans.
- Paul saw himself as someone God had given the gospel to be given to others, and until he had preached the gospel to the people he came across, he was indebted to them. The gospel was not given to him to keep, but to share with spiritually starved people. He understood that he was holding something that didn't belong to him and felt obligated (indebted) to give it to the intended people.

➤ APPLICATIONS

1. The church in Rome was doing very well, and Paul didn't have to stress himself about them, but he tells us that he prayed for them always. Paul understood that Satan always had several different weapons in his weaponry that he uses to attack the church of God, which include human pride, flattery, false teaching, etc, so Paul won't stop praying for them for protection against the Devil. Likewise, we must not cease praying even when everything seems well.

2. The Book of Romans also shows us that we must thank God for how He leads our lives, including the disappointments He brings our way. Paul had on several occasions planned to visit the Roman believers, but was always hindered from doing so, and just as some of the Corinthian Christians doubted Paul's credibility because of what appeared to be his changing his mind, some of the Roman believers might have expressed similar feelings. However, unknown to both Paul and the believers in Rome, God was doing a mighty work by hindering Paul from going to Rome. If Paul had gone to Rome as planned, he would have just preached to them, and this great letter we are studying, which has changed so many lives since it was written, would not have been written. Paul was compelled to write this great letter to explain to them why he kept postponing his visit, and now we have become great beneficiaries of this great letter. So, the disappointments in your life might be God's tools to lead and guide you towards His plan and purposes for your life. The Christian does not have a bad day; all things, including our disappointments, work for our good and the good of the church. The most glorious thing in the world is to be a Christian.

3. Sometime ago, Maricel and I were waiting for our children to return from school, and suddenly heard a knock on our door. I opened the door, and there was a man who had read online that I was the principal of a school he knew and wanted to meet me. We talked about several things, including what led to the planting of this church. He mentioned this: "in this area, we are not very welcoming to outsiders. Someone I know had difficulties with his ministerial work here because he was considered an outsider." I also shared my experience with him. Later, I was discussing it with my wife that this attitude, especially from Reformed believers, cannot be a cultural issue, but rather from a sinful heart. Paul was a lover of all kinds of people: he said he was obligated to both the Greeks and Non-Greeks (barbarians) or unlearned people. He demonstrated his love for all types of people by praying for others, encouraging others, etc. Our Savior Himself received harlots and murderers like Paul. The church of God must unite all races and nationalities. When we hold negative opinions about others who do not look like us and try to destroy their reputation for selfish gains, it is not a cultural issue, but a visible sign of an unrepentant heart. We can't be good evangelists without love for other people.

4. But where did Paul get this deep obligation to preach the gospel to all people from? Luke tells us in Acts 9:15

15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.

- After his conversion, God gave him this obligation, and he was faithful to his calling. In the same way, have we asked ourselves why God saved us? Did He save us just because He wanted people in heaven? He saved us to bring Him glory and enjoy Him forever by being witnesses to our unbelieving friends, family, schoolmates, co-workers, neighbors, and everyone we meet in our daily lives. We tell our unbelieving neighbors to stop robbing God of His glory and direct them to the gospel, Jesus Christ.
- Another question: why did the disciples and, by extension, all believers receive the Holy Spirit when we believe? Jesus tells us in Acts 1:8

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

- When it comes to witnessing to others, there is no retirement. As long as we are alive, every day is an opportunity to bring the gospel to others, an obligation placed on us by our Savior. Despite his lack of opportunity to bring the gospel in person to the Roman Christians, Paul still used his letter to achieve the same. We have Facebook and many other media platforms, and can bring the gospel to everyone worldwide. There is no excuse for not sharing the gospel.
- Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He commissioned or commanded every believer to take the gospel to the unbelieving people we meet on our way. Like Paul understood, the gospel has been given to us to give to others, to share with our family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, schoolmates, etc. We are indebted to them as long as we do not do that. We are debtors to our unbelieving friends.
- Even in our day-to-day life, it is always a big deal when we keep to ourselves what doesn't belong to us. How much more with God? Why do we think keeping the gospel meant to be shared with others is okay? Keeping the gospel to ourselves is a heart issue; it is a sign that we are not lovers of mankind like Apostle Paul was. His love for others made him do anything to bring the gospel to others. His love for others made him work anytime to advance the gospel, and his love for mankind made him work anywhere to bring the gospel.
- We can be motivated to share the gospel, not only from Paul, but from the four lepers in 2 Kings 7. In the ancient world, soldiers had a way of attacking a city, and they did that by laying a siege around it. Laying a siege can be described as surrounding the city so that no one can escape it or go into it. They did that to cut food supply to the city so that the people in the city would starve to death.

- Israel was divided into two kingdoms – North (Israel) and South (Judah). The capital of the North was Samaria. During the time of Prophet Elisha, the ancient city of Samaria was surrounded by the Syrian (Aramean) army, cutting off all supply routes and pushing its inhabitants to the brink of starvation. The famine was so severe that mothers ate their children to survive (2 Kings 6:26-29).
- At the entrance of the city's gate sat four men who were lepers. They were outcasts forced to live outside the city walls due to their condition (Leviticus 13:45-46). They sat together, thinking about their future. They said, "Why stay here until we die? If we say,

"We'll go into the city,' the famine is there, and we will die. And if we stay here, we will die. So let's go over to the camp of the Arameans and surrender. If they spare us, we live; if they kill us, then we die" (2 Kings 7:3-4).

- So, they got up and moved towards the camp of their enemies, the enemy soldiers. But God, just as they had decided to go to their enemy's camp, caused a panic to come into their enemy's camp, and the Arameans imagined that they had heard the Egyptian army approaching from behind them. They fled for their lives, leaving behind all their food supplies, clothing, animals, weapons, etc.
- When the lepers arrived, they saw an abundance of food and ate all they wanted. They found clothing, gold, silver, etc. Their own people, the city of Samaria, had not treated them well, but they remembered that Samaria was starving to death. They told each other that even though Samaria won't let us in and left us outside the city gates to starve to death, we are not doing right by keeping this good news of abundance to ourselves.

8 The men who had leprosy reached the edge of the camp, entered one of the tents and ate and drank. Then they took silver, gold and clothes, and went off and hid them. They returned and entered another tent and took some things from it and hid them also. 9 Then they said to each other, "What we're doing is not right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. 2 Kings 7:8-9a

- They left at once and went to Samaria to tell them about the good news so they would enjoy the abundance of food, clothing, gold, and silver with them.
- The good news the four lepers had was to satisfy the physical starvation of the people of Samaria, yet they said to each other, "What we're doing is not right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves."
- We are blessed to have the greatest news of all time, the gospel of Jesus Christ, which satisfies the spiritual hunger of everyone who believes. We have far greater good news and must tell ourselves, too: "What we're doing is not right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves."
- Why keep such great news to ourselves? Like the lepers, let us go at once to our unbelieving friends, family, neighbors, and tell them about the great riches the gospel offers to spiritually starving people, sinners. **LET'S PRAY!**