

**REMNANT CHURCH SERMON NOTES – ROMANS 1: 17**  
**PREACHED ON OCTOBER 19, 2025 BY REV. B.B. ANUM-HIGHER**

**17 For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”**  
Romans 1:17

➤ **INTRODUCTION**

- Last week, we studied Romans 1:17, and I intend to revisit it with you this morning. As I mentioned, this verse is the foundational verse of the Christian Reformation. After Martin Luther had discovered the meaning of this verse, he not only became converted to Christianity, but it led to the Protestant Reformation in the 16th Century. I firmly believe that every Christian must thoroughly understand this verse because it provides a clear foundation for understanding the rest of the Bible.

**“For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” Romans 1:17**

- Paul tells us that it is only by faith in Jesus Christ that anyone can have the righteousness God demands to be saved from His wrath. Most Christians will tell you that they have faith, but does it mean that everyone who professes to have faith is a Christian? The Bible tells us that this is not the case. There is a great misunderstanding about faith among Christians.
- Jesus tells us in Matthew 7:21-23 that **21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day, many will say to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and do many mighty works in Your name?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.’**
- The visible church, the church on earth, even though it is full of people who have made professions and confessions of faith, is made up of both true believers and false believers. Many people identify with the church but are false believers. They are false believers because their faith is not genuine. Their profession of faith is not a true saving faith.
- According to Jesus Christ, so many people think they are Christians, but they are actually outside of Christianity. A faith that is not genuine cannot bring the righteousness God demands.
- The church began with false professors of faith, even Judas Iscariot was a disciple of Christ, and it will be like that till the end of this world. False believers will always be present in the church, but it is our duty to examine ourselves to determine if our faith is genuine or not. We must possess the faith we have professed. The Devil is at work, deceiving many by producing a false faith in them.

- This morning, I want to distinguish between genuine faith and false faith as found in Scripture. God loves us and wants to safeguard our souls by warning us against a false faith. I will begin by first considering what faith means and then outline the characteristics of both false and true faith.

## ➤ **FIRST – WHAT IS FAITH?**

- Faith is created when a sinner hears the gospel of Jesus Christ. Faith alone in Christ is God's appointed means for salvation for everyone who believes. Faith comes after hearing the gospel. No one can be saved by hearing motivational speeches, even from the greatest "preachers"; salvation does not come from entertaining and man-centered gospels. Charles Spurgeon once said, "If you meet with a system of theology which magnifies man, flee from it as far as you can."
- **What then is faith? How do you describe the faith that saves?**
- The author of the Book of Hebrews shows that there are three essential qualities in every true saving faith.

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 2  
This is what the ancients were commended for. Hebrews 11:1-2

1. A Belief (Mind): Faith is a belief or trust in God. You have to believe in the person and work of Jesus Christ or the gospel to have faith created in you. **6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. Hebrews 11:6.** This is the intellectual component where one believes with the mind. Abraham was commended for his faith because he left his home country, family, and everything to go to a land he didn't know, and he did that because God asked him to do it, and he believed God and His Word.
2. A Persuasion (Heart): The true saving faith is demonstrated when the person is emotionally convinced of the gospel and its promises, such as the promise of a bodily resurrection and eternal life. The author of Hebrews listed several ancient figures, including Noah, Abraham, and Enoch, and commended them for their faith. He commended them for being emotionally convinced of the promises God had given them, even though none of them saw it. **Hebrews 11:13 "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth."**
3. An Action (Will): Faith without action is a dead faith; it is a false faith (James 2:26). In a true saving faith, the person acts on that belief, the gospel. The heroes of faith listed in Hebrews welcomed or embraced the promises and acknowledged that they were only foreigners or pilgrims on earth; they had a place prepared by God for them. They did not let worldliness and the culture of

this world disrupt their focus on where they were going after their time on this earth had ended.

- The true saving faith, therefore, goes beyond a confession and profession with our lips that we believe; it must transform us, changing the way we think and the place we put Jesus Christ in our lives. A true heart repentance always accompanies true saving faith.

## ➤ **SECOND – MARKS OF THE FALSE FAITH**

- Paul had told us in Romans 1:16 in our previous studies that the true faith saves. He was not ashamed of the gospel because in it there is a power that leads to the salvation of everyone who believes, everyone who professes a true faith in Jesus Christ. The opposite is also true; a false faith does not save, it kills.
- It is not always obvious to know if your faith is false. The people Jesus described in Matthew 7:22 seemed to be shocked that their faith was not genuine. This would be their response to Jesus on the Day of Judgment: **22 On that day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and do many mighty works in Your name?'**
- They probably had made a profession of faith before the congregation, served in church leadership, and had done many great works for the advancement of the kingdom of God; yet, they would end up in hell because their faith was not a true saving faith.
- **How can this be possible?**
- I will use the story of Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8 to explain how a fake faith develops.
- Philip, one of the first deacons of the church, was one of those forced to flee persecution (Acts 8:1) from Saul and the Jews, ending up in Samaria. He preached the gospel in Samaria, and so many people believed. Among the people who believed was a man called Simon, who was a sorcerer in Samaria.
- This Simon had a fair degree of local fame. He was honored as one who not only has the power of God; they said of him, **"This man is the great power of God."** The Samaritans wrongly assumed that because Simon had real spiritual power, it was from God – yet that wasn't the case. However, Simon's power came from Satan, not God. Sorcery is condemned in the Bible because it is associated with occult, magical practices – and often with the taking of mind/mood-altering drugs.
- Let's hear Luke tell us about this man:

**9 Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, 10 and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is rightly called the Great Power of God." 11 They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. 12 But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized,**

both men and women. 13 Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. Acts 8:9-13

- Simon was convinced by Philip's preaching and the amazing miracles he performed to the point where he declared his belief, was baptized, and continued with Philip. Simon became a follower of Philip and his ministry.
- Philip was also convinced that the believers, including Simon, had a genuine saving faith and, accordingly, baptized them.
- Simon gave many outward evidences of a true conversion. He expressed belief in Philip's preaching, so Philip received Simon as a follower (Acts 8:13). Simon also attended the meetings of Christians – regularly in church (Acts 8:18).
- For Simon to be baptized means he abandoned his sorcery; he probably publicly professed his faith in Jesus Christ, so Philip could not tell whether Simon's belief was false or insincere.
- The ministry of Philip in Samaria was communicated to the apostles, so they sent a delegation to go to Samaria to confirm what they heard:

14 When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. 15 When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. 18 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money 19 and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." Acts 8:14-19

- The Samaritans were born again and had received the Holy Spirit at the time of conversion, but were given special gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit at the laying on of hands by Peter and John. When Simon saw the miracles performed by the two apostles as they placed their hands on them, we are told that he offered them money to have the same ability to perform miracles.
- Simon's motivation for practicing sorcery was to be regarded as a great man among the people. Simon, now a "believer", had not abandoned his motivation to be a great man. He wanted to be a great man by purchasing the Holy Spirit. He was motivated by self-interest and personal power, even when he claimed to be a believer.
- Simon only became a Christian because he intellectually believed the message of Philip. Philip had enough evidence to prove to the people of Samaria that Jesus was the Savior because He had resurrected and ascended to heaven, and many people witnessed these events in Jerusalem. Simon seemed to have no objection to Philip's message, so he intellectually put his faith in Jesus Christ.
- However, an intellectual belief and assent to the truth do not make someone a Christian. The true saving faith comes with three essential qualities.
- Simon had to show by his obedience to God that his faith was genuine.

- Luke tells us that Simon also converted because he saw the large crowd converted, and he was motivated to join them. He was caught up in the revival and went along with the crowd. His heart was not truly converted though.
- This was Peter's response to him:

20 Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! 21 You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Acts 8:20

- Peter declared that Simon the sorcerer was not yet a Christian. This was a man who had believed, was baptized, joined the church and attended services regularly, was amazed by Philip's miracles - yet was not actually a Christian.
- Like Simon, the sorcerer, many people who have not truly converted view spiritual gifts as commodities to be bought and sold. They admire some preachers and desire to be like them, so they enroll in a seminary to become ordained pastors. Some ask their denominations to give them the license to preach when they actually have no business shepherding God's people.
- Joining a church does not make you a Christian.
- Making a profession of faith does not make you a Christian.
- Baptism, whether as an infant or an adult, does not make someone a Christian.
- Being interested in spiritual gifts and miracles does not make someone a Christian. It was clear that Simon did not truly desire the Holy Spirit for himself, but rather the ability to impart the power of the Holy Spirit to others at his will, thereby giving him great spiritual authority.
- Pride can also lead to a false faith. A proud person might give an outward display of faith because it is the "right" thing to do in the eyes of others, but in the secret place of their heart, they may fail to submit to Jesus Christ.
- When I was with a Pentecostal church in Ghana, we would hold crusades where, after the preacher had finished preaching, we would ask people to make a quick decision to come forward and lift their hands in surrender to God. This led to so many people coming forward and declaring that they had believed. This could be the experience of Simon, the sorcerer. As we can see from the story, responding to pressure from an evangelist to make a quick decision does not always result in a genuine conversion. You will always find certain people being carried along by a religious movement when, in fact, they have not truly been converted.
- Last Monday, during our family worship, I told our children that salvation is a personal matter; they must personally put their faith in the person and work of Jesus to be saved. Mom and Dad cannot do that for them. I explained to them that they do not automatically become Christians because they attend a Christian school and have Christian parents.
- While growing up in a Christian home comes with great privilege and religious advantages, it also has its own dangers. So many people who were brought up in a Christian environment assume that they are Christians by default, but it is not

so. Everyone must personally believe the gospel to be saved. Salvation is personal.

- Last year, a woman told me that she became a Catholic because she had to do so to marry her boyfriend, who is a devoted Catholic. Politicians have become Christians to get people to vote for them, for a social benefit. Some teachers have joined churches because it was a requirement for applying to teach at a Christian school. Joining a church because you want to marry a Christian, teach at a Christian school, etc., may lead to a false faith in Christ.
- False conversion or false faith also comes through the experience of an emotion. Feeling a certain way and having a particular emotion often misleads others into thinking they have been truly converted and therefore possess a true saving faith. Some great speakers have moved their listeners to tears, and the same happens in the church. A charismatic pastor could describe the experience of Jesus on the cross in such a way that might lead others into uncontrollable tears. This is an emotional response only to the truth that came as a result of the speaking abilities of the “preacher,” but may not lead to a transformation or a true saving faith.

### ➤ **THIRD – MARKS OF THE TRUE FAITH; THE FAITH THAT SAVES**

- In Isaiah 51, God addressed His people, the godly, and from that, we see some marks of the man or woman with true saving faith.

1 "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the Lord:

7a "Hear me, you who know what is right, you people who have taken my instruction to heart:

- The man or woman with true saving faith will pursue righteousness. Paul had informed us that in the gospel, God has given us righteousness through Jesus Christ as a gift. The person with a true saving faith will not continue to live a disobedient life after his conversion, but will be exclusively attached to God; exclusively devoted to God's purpose; and will be exclusively obedient to God's will. They have a holy dissatisfaction with themselves and with their present condition and want to do the maximum for God. In other words, they will seek and hunger for righteousness as Jesus declared in **Matthew 5:6: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."**
- Secondly, the man with a true saving faith will seek the Lord. They want to know more about God. They know that their eternal destination is to be with God, so while they are on earth, they desire to learn more about Him.
- Thirdly, they know what is right and what is wrong. They possess a certain God-given discernment about what is right and wrong, what is good and evil, and what is from God and what is not. Wisdom and discernment come from God. They can identify false teachers and false teachings because they are exclusively devoted to God's will.
- Fourthly, the person with true saving faith has the law of God engraved on his heart. Like the Psalmist, they have hidden God's Word in their heart that they



might not sin against Him. (Psalm 119:11). They take seriously the Word of God by meditating on it.

- Lastly, they are teachable. They have an ear to hear God's Word. They have a teachable spirit. They are discerning in knowing what God's Word is, and they do not hesitate to listen to it. The person with a false faith will not allow God to speak to them about certain things; they may be open to God speaking to them about many things, but on some issues, they will turn a deaf ear. Secondly, the person with false faith will not allow God to speak to them through certain people. They are limited to hearing God's Word from certain people, a select group, and will turn a deaf ear to others.

### ➤ **HOW CAN YOU TELL IF YOUR FAITH IS TRUE OR FALSE?**

- Simon the sorcerer was clearly deceived into believing that he was a Christian. The people described in Matthew 7 by Jesus were deceived into believing that their great Christian service was an indication that their faith was genuine. We can also be deceived by our own hearts, thinking that our church attendance, Christian service, baptism, and other actions are evidence that we genuinely have saving faith.

**Jeremiah 17:9 9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?**

- Therefore, the deceitfulness of the human heart can enable this deception to occur in individuals who are religious. Satan also has so many weapons in his weaponry, which include deceiving people into believing that true saving faith can be obtained through motivational speeches, entertaining sermons, man-centered gospels, Christian traditions, profession of faith, baptism, etc.
- However, a false faith will eventually reveal itself as it did in Simon's case, through his request to buy the power of the Holy Spirit. Simon remained unchanged at his core - as evidenced by his continued interest in power and self-importance. When Paul converted, he expressed a genuine saving faith and a genuine heart of repentance. He described himself as a slave of Jesus Christ, but Simon, the sorcerer, after his conversion, was still interested in power and self-importance. Simon still had a love for worldliness, even after his conversion.
- I had to part ways with one of my mentors in the ministry after he clearly demonstrated to me, through his words and actions, that he was careless about the Word of God, the mission of the church, and church leadership. A true saving faith will not have a reckless attitude towards the things of God.
- Historically, a true saving faith has always attracted persecution. The Devil knows who God's children are, and he will direct persecution in different forms their way. Sometimes it is severe, leading to death, illness, loss of income, reputation, and position of authority. Sometimes the Devil's attacks come in the form of flattery, selfishness, worldliness, and carelessness about the things of God. A false faith fears persecution, and most of the time, false professors of faith try harder to please people to be liked. It could be a spiritually fatal thing to go about life wanting to be liked by all. Jesus warns believers about this:

Luke 6:26 26 Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

### ➤ APPLICATIONS

Paul said he was not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes. He was eager to preach the gospel everywhere because in it the righteousness of God has been revealed by faith alone in Jesus Christ. What about you? How do you react when people who know you tend to make fun of you because you are a Christian? What will be your reaction when unbelievers tell you that you are missing out on the fun everyone seems to be enjoying around you?

How do you react when the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches challenge your faith?

Do you consider yourself someone with a genuine saving faith, or are you merely going along with the believers? Jesus Himself has said that there will be false believers in the church. Where do you see yourself this morning? Are you relying solely on your emotions, church attendance, or Christian service as evidence of a true saving faith, or do you believe in the true gospel as the means through which God creates faith in believers?

Peter told Simon the sorcerer that he had no part in the ministry because his heart was not right before God:

20 Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! 21 You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Acts 8:20-21

Where is your heart right now? What would God say to you if He returned today or you die and appear before Him in judgment? Is your heart right before Him? Have you believed in the person and work of Christ on the Cross for your sins?

The state of someone's heart and their motivation for believing in Christ is what really determines if they are a Christian or not.

Listen to how Simon responded to Peter:

24 Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me."

Simon's false faith even showed in his response to Peter's rebuke. He was motivated by fear of punishment rather than a genuine love for God. Simon only asked that the punishment not come upon him, rather than truly repenting of his sin. He doesn't see the enormity of his action, his sin. He doesn't hate the sin within him. He doesn't repent of offending God by his sin; he is only concerned about the discomfort of his punishment.



If you find yourself in Simon, the Sorcerer's position today, God, in His mercy, will accept you if you will only repent and put your faith in Jesus Christ alone. If you discover your faith may not be genuine, the solution is the same one Peter gave to Simon:

22 Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. 23 For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin." Acts 8:22-23

A false faith is an insult to God, and Peter treated it with the seriousness it deserved in Simon's case. He called his false faith wickedness and a captivity of sin.

I invite you to examine yourself today, this week, this month, this year, and every day the Lord gives you on earth if you are held captive by sin or by your true saving faith in Jesus Christ, which shows its fruit in obedience to God. A false faith does not lead to obedience. Titus 1:16 has this to say about a false faith: "They profess to know God, but they deny Him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work."

People with a true saving faith are captured by Christ in every area of their lives. They want to know what Jesus has said about their career choices, whom they should marry, and how they should relate to others, among other things. Where does Christ stand in your life? Is He the biggest thing in your life? Or is it something that you add on?

People with a true saving faith are exclusively attached to His person; they are exclusively devoted to His purpose, and they are exclusively obedient to His will. They are willing to do anything for Him. They are also willing to go anywhere for Him. They are also willing to work at any time for Him. True Christians don't settle for the minimum, but are eager to do the maximum for God.

Do you have the true saving faith with the three essential qualities?

Has your mind believed the gospel?

Is your heart persuaded that this world is not our home, we are just passing through, and that we will be resurrected in a perfect, imperishable, and glorious body like the resurrected body of Christ? We will be able to identify each other in our eternal home.

Do actions accompany your faith? Paul had told us earlier that the faith of the Roman Christians was reported throughout the world; that is, their obedience was reported throughout the world. May the Lord help and lead us and grant us a true saving faith!