

REMNANT CHURCH SERMON NOTES – ROMANS 9: 1-3
PREACHED ON AUGUST 2, 2026, BY REV. B.B. ANUM-HIGHER

1 I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit— 2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel.

➤ **INTRODUCTION**

- The apostle Paul ended chapter 8 on such a glorious note. He told the Christians in Rome and all of us that our salvation is secure, that the love of God for the true Christian is forever, and that nothing can separate the true Christian from the love of God. Paul searches the universe for every possible threat to the believer's security and declares that every one of them is powerless before the love of God in Christ. Paul seemed to have reasoned immediately after these statements that someone among the Roman Christians would have asked, "Paul, what about the Jews, the Israelites who are your own people? The majority of them have rejected Christ and are outside of Christ? Are they not separated from God's love in Christ Jesus?" Paul took a break from his teaching to focus on the Jews and to address questions like these. Chapters 9, 10, and 11 address the Jews and their rejection of Christ.
- It's been 11 months now since we began a series on the Letter Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome, and before we consider the text before us, I want to remind you of the divisions of Paul's letter. The Letter has four divisions. The main theme of the Letter is in chapter 1:16-17. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. 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." So Paul's main theme and subject is the Gospel. He stated that in the Gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed.
- The first section is from chapter 1:18 to 3:20, where Paul speaks about man's lack of God's righteousness, which has been revealed in the Gospel. The second section is from chapter 3:21 to 8:39, which we concluded last week. In the second section, Paul speaks about how God has provided the righteousness men lack. Now we are starting the third section from chapter 9 through chapter 11, and the focus of the apostle is on the refusal of the Israelites to accept God's righteousness or the rejection of the Jews of God's righteousness. The fourth and last section of the Letter is from chapters 12 through 16, where Paul gives us several ways to apply its content to our lives. Paul knew that the Word of God must be applied, not just heard, and he guides us in that direction in the last five chapters, starting with chapter 12.

➤ **THE TRAGEDY OF THE JEWS.**

- When Paul stated the main theme of this Letter in Romans 1:16-17, he clearly indicated that God's salvation came first to the Jews. He wrote in verse 16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile." There seems to be a special provision in the purposes of God for the nation of Israel. God, in His purposes of salvation, has some specific role for the nation of Israel to play. In both the Old and New Testaments, God designed that the Jewish people would be His evangelists in bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles. God's ancient people were to be a light to the Gentiles to illumine them as to the way of salvation. But the fact did not seem to support this claim, both at the time of Paul and over the past 2000 years. For about 2000 years now, most of the Jews have not believed in Jesus, and for about the same 2000 years, most of the followers of Jesus Christ are the Gentiles.
- The majority of Israelites have rejected Christ, the Savior of the world. The Jews, who were the first recipients of the message of salvation, were in unbelief and apostasy. The nation of Israel was the first nation out of all the nations of the world to receive the way of salvation. God laid everything about His salvation before them, but they rejected this salvation, they rejected this offer, and were blinded to it. Paul sees the Jews' unbelief and apostasy as tragic. It is always sad when even ordinary people fall into calamity, but it is always a great tragedy when someone in a higher position does.
- For example, almost every week, people fall into sexual sin. Adult men and women in Iowa who are not married come to a consensus to commit sexual sin almost weekly. The laws of Iowa are silent on this type of thing, and in most cases, the police may not press charges against two consenting adults who engaged each other sexually. It is not the same in Iowa for a counselor, therapist, and a pastor. A pastor can be criminally prosecuted for having sexual contact with a member of their congregation. Iowa has specific criminal statutes that apply to clergy and counselors. A person in a position of trust or authority — including a pastor providing pastoral counseling — who engages in sexual contact with a congregant can be charged with sexual exploitation by a counselor or therapist. This offense is a felony, and consent is not a defense. In the wisdom of the law, the pastor has all the advantages of training to act better than other people in society. The pastor is held to a higher standard because of his privileges of knowing better.
- I watched some of the recent World Cup matches with my children, and in some, we were heartbroken to see our teams lose. When your team or favorite player came so close to winning and then missed that opportunity to win or score, it hurts greatly. When a person comes so close to a great blessing and misses it, we think that such an experience is a terrible curse. It is always a tragic thing when someone goes through so much pain to acquire something and then

misses it. Imagine you were walking along an unknown path and had been warned about a trap ahead for several days before your trip, but when you finally began, you fell into it. Won't that be very sad? This is the tragedy of the Jews.

- Among all the nations in the world, the Jews received all the information about the salvation God offers through Jesus for 2000 years before the incarnation of Jesus, but when He finally came, they rejected Him and the salvation He offered. They got so close to the salvation of God from their sin, they had so many opportunities, and everything about salvation was within their grasp. Not only that, they suffered deeply throughout their national life for God's salvation. They were persecuted for several years because of their desire to preserve the true religion and wait for the coming of the Promised Messiah, who is Jesus Christ. However, when the Messiah finally came, they were the very people who rejected Him.
- Apostle John writes in John 1:11-13, "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." He came to the Jews, but they missed it. After 2000 years of suffering for the Gospel, they missed it. Do you remember what Jesus said to the woman at Sychar? "For salvation is from the Jews." What Jesus meant was that in the historic purposes of God, salvation comes through the revelation that God has given to the Jews, His ancient people. It is through them that the whole world is to hear of the glories of God's salvation, but generally speaking, they have rejected the Gospel.
- Paul summarized the problem of the Jews in chapter 10:1-3. "Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness." The Israelites have sought to find another way of salvation from God's way. Paul's dilemma was that the people God had chosen to reveal His salvation to the Gentiles had themselves rejected the Gospel. The immediate question that arises is this: "What about God's plan?" "What about God's promises to the nation of Israel?" Paul is going to unfold God's answer to these questions in the next three chapters we will be considering.

➤ **PAUL, A MAN IN ANGUISH FOR HIS PEOPLE.**

- Paul began this section on the nation of Israel by revealing how their rejection of Jesus Christ has affected him personally. How did this missed opportunity affect the apostle Paul? Listen to what the apostle wrote in verse 2. "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart." Paul was heartbroken for the Jews for coming so close to salvation and then missing it. He was filled with despair

and sorrow. These were his natural brothers and sisters. He has close ties with them, and their unbelief brought distress to his heart. The spiritual condition of his people has greatly affected the apostle.

- I must admit that I felt ashamed and sad about myself while studying this letter last year, and I immediately prayed to God to give me, Maricel, and our children the heart of the apostle Paul. In these three verses, we can learn from the apostle a very useful piece of information about our evangelism. Paul was crushed in heart to discover that people he was closely tied to by a special bond were outside of Christ and on their way to hell. To Paul, the greatest danger any man or woman can face in this world is the danger of being outside of Christ. My brothers and sisters in the Lord, “Do you feel this intense pain that touches your heart when you think about people outside of Christ?” Paul did.
- This has always been Paul’s reaction to the lost. He knows how terrible hell would be, and he seems not to wish that for even his worst enemies. During his second missionary journey, Paul went to Athens in Greece. Paul, as a tourist, did not delight in the beauty of Greece, their culture, and magnificent architecture. Luke writes in Acts 17 about how Paul felt in Greece and uses a medical term to describe his condition. Paul had an emotional heart attack upon seeing the many idols. Paul’s distress in Athens stemmed from the city’s rampant idolatry. In Acts 17:16, it is noted that while waiting for his companions, Paul was greatly troubled by the multitude of idols present in Athens, a city known for its rich philosophical heritage but also for its deep-seated pagan practices.
- The apostle immediately acted. His emotional heart attack prompted him to engage in discussions with local philosophers, where he confronted their beliefs with the message of the Gospel. What do we see around us in Pella? Don’t we see people, even church people, engaged in all kinds of idol worship here in Pella? An idol is simply a good thing turned into an ultimate thing. An idol is anything that pulls your trust away from God and onto itself. What are some common idols we see around us?
- The pursuit of material wealth has elevated possessions to a status that overshadows one’s commitment to God. Jesus warned, “No one can serve two masters....You cannot serve both God and money” (Matthew 6:24). In our former church, an elder happily told me about how his wife would let them miss a church service for entertainment and leisure. Vacation, movies, music, sports, and hobbies can bring enjoyment, but they become idols when they consume our time, resources, and emotional energy at the expense of devotion to God. They become idols if they displace time for prayer, worship, and service.
- Technology and social media have become an idol for many people. Smartphones and social platforms offer quick communication and information, but can also entice hearts away from godly focus. Individuals might measure self-worth through “likes,” shares, or followers rather than their identity in God. Technology, used wisely, is a tool; used obsessively, it risks becoming an idol. What about career ambition and success? Professional goals are valuable, as

they promote diligence and responsibility. Yet if career ambition becomes the supreme pursuit, it can displace God's rightful place. The problem lies not in diligent work but in idolizing achievements, titles, or acclaim above honoring God.

- Another idol is relationships and family. While loving family and friends is virtuous, placing them above one's relationship with God can become idolatrous. Self-Worship and Individualism can also become idols. Self-placing personal desires, comfort, preferences, and highly individualized "truth" above God's instruction is always dangerous. Any worldview that elevates self above the Creator risks falling into the trap of idolatry.
- Politicians and celebrities can become idols. Admiration for public figures-musicians, actors, politicians, social-media influencers-can quickly become unbalanced. Placing undue trust in or craving approval from celebrities can turn them into modern idols. In the same way, passion for a political party or ideology is not inherently wrong. However, when it supersedes commitment to God's commands or when one's identity is primarily shaped by political allegiance rather than Scripture, it drifts into idolatry. Proper civic engagement must not overshadow the command to love God wholeheartedly.
- Don't we see around us here in Pella this modern-day, sophisticated, and even church people worshipping idols? How do we deal with all these idolatries in our city? Why don't we have the emotional heart attack Paul had? What could be wrong with us? Why are we not greatly distressed that people we work with, shop with, attend church with, and engage daily with are on their way to hell? I think we don't have the heart attack Paul had because there is something wrong with our witness. We see people outside of Christ and on their way to hell, and feel indifferent and no agony in our hearts for the lost. Apostle Paul had an emotional heart attack when his own people were outside of Christ.

➤ **PAUL CLAIMS TO SPEAK THE TRUTH.**

- In verse 1, Paul used three expressions to establish his integrity regarding how he felt about his people. He wrote, "I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit." First, he claims that he speaks the truth in Christ, to whom He was united. Secondly, he said, "I am not lying." Thirdly, "my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit." Here is Paul calling on the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to establish his point that he was in great sorrow and unceasing anguish of heart for his people, for their rejection of Christ and the Gospel.
- How I wish and pray that God would put a burden for the lost in the heart of each of us, like the apostle. The danger of being outside of Christ is this: every non-Christian has no life in them, they do not know what life is all about, and they do not know that they are outside of God's grace. The sad part is that if they continue to be outside of Christ between now and the time of their death, they are going directly to hell. Does that not trouble you for the lost?

- Why was Paul so concerned to assure the Roman Christians that he was speaking the truth? Because Christianity stands or falls on the truth. Why are you a Christian? There may be many reasons, but the greatest reason is this: it is true. Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God and the only Savior of sinners—and that is true. He died to satisfy the righteous wrath of God against sin—and that is true. He rose triumphantly from the grave on the third day—and that is true. By his grace, we are enabled to do all that he commands—and that is true. He possesses all authority in heaven and on earth, and one day he will return to raise the dead and judge the living and the dead—and that is true. The great question confronting every person is whether they will receive the truth revealed in Christ or reject it in favor of lies and bear the consequences of that decision.
- The Bible emphasizes the importance of speaking the truth. In the ninth commandment, God declares, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” Truthfulness is not optional for God’s people; it reflects the character of the God who cannot lie. We see this vividly in the account of Ananias and Sapphira in the early church. After selling a piece of land, they claimed to have given the entire proceeds to support the work of the gospel. In reality, they had secretly kept back part of the money while pretending they had sacrificed everything. Their sin was not that they retained some of the money, but that they deliberately lied in order to appear more devoted than they really were. Peter declared that in lying to the church, they had lied to the Holy Spirit himself, and God’s judgment fell swiftly upon them. The incident stands as a solemn reminder that the God of truth calls his people to walk in truth.
- You will remember the terrible consequences that can follow when people tell lies. There was a man named Naboth who owned a vineyard that had belonged to his family for generations. King Ahab coveted it and sad when Naboth refused to sell his inheritance, even to the king. Jezebel then arranged for false witnesses to accuse Naboth of blasphemy. On the strength of their lies, he was arrested, tried, condemned, and executed, and Ahab seized the vineyard for himself. Such are the dreadful consequences of bearing false witness. The same evil was repeated at the trial of our Lord Jesus Christ. Corrupt witnesses were bribed to testify that they had heard him speak blasphemy. Their false testimony secured the verdict that led to his crucifixion. How much depends upon telling the truth! Paul was a man committed to truth. As a Jew and a leading Pharisee, he revered the law of God, and with respect to its outward demands, he could testify that he had been blameless. He was not a man given to deceit or falsehood.
- What possible advantage could Paul have gained by inventing stories about Jesus Christ? If the gospel were a fabrication, what did it earn him? It certainly did not make him wealthy. Throughout his ministry, he lived in simplicity and often in poverty. What did his proclamation of Christ actually bring him? Paul himself answers that question in 2 Corinthians 11:23–29, where he recounts imprisonments, beatings, floggings, shipwrecks, danger, hunger, sleepless nights, and continual hardship endured for the sake of the Gospel. No one

willingly embraces such suffering for a message he knows to be false. Most thoughtful people would agree that Paul was neither a conspirator nor a deceiver with some hidden political or revolutionary agenda. He was utterly convinced that the message he preached concerning Jesus Christ was the truth, and because he believed it with all his heart, he was willing to suffer whatever the cost.

- **Paul not only says he is speaking the truth but also that he is speaking “in Christ.”** He is not merely presenting the reflections of an honest and upright man, nor is he simply offering conclusions drawn from his own experience and judgment. Certainly, his words come from a brilliant mind, a disciplined scholar, and a man of unquestioned integrity. Yet there is something greater still. Paul speaks as one who is united to Jesus Christ. Christ is in him, and he is in Christ. That union explains why his teaching carries such authority. The words Paul writes are the words of Christ's appointed apostle, so that behind every faithful declaration of Paul stands the authority of the Lord Jesus himself. In the Upper Room, Jesus promised precisely this. He told the apostles, “When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears... He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you” (John 16:13–14).
- The Holy Spirit would therefore guide the apostles in proclaiming and recording the truth. They would write exactly what the risen Lord intended them to write. We even see this divine supervision on the Isle of Patmos, where John was about to record something but was commanded, “Do not write it.” God governed the entire process of inspiration. A world lost in darkness and confusion needed the truth, and Christ promised to provide it. In effect, he was saying, “I will bring my truth to the nations through my chosen apostles. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, James, and Jude will faithfully proclaim my message, and through their writings I will speak to my church.” By the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Christ gave his apostles the truth and preserved it for us in the New Testament.
- Jesus also taught that to receive the apostles' message is to receive his own. When Christians listen to the apostolic Scriptures, they are hearing the voice of Christ himself. Through that inspired Word, he delivers us from ignorance, error, and confusion, leading us into the knowledge of God. Is this not how Christ receives the glory as men and women become his disciples? Is this not one of God's great purposes in inspiring the Scriptures? So when Paul declares that he speaks “the truth in Christ,” he is affirming the inseparable union between himself and his Lord. There is no division between Christ's authority and the apostolic message. Paul himself recognized this. Writing to the Corinthians about worship and order in the church, he concludes with these remarkable words: “If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command” (1 Corinthians 14:37). What Paul wrote to the churches was nothing less than the command of Christ himself. The full authority of the Son of God stands behind the writings of his apostles.

- **Paul adds the solemn words, “I am not lying.”** He wants there to be no doubt whatsoever about the truthfulness of what he is saying. On four separate occasions—in 2 Corinthians 11:31, Romans 9:1, Galatians 1:20, and 1 Timothy 2:7—Paul explicitly assures believers in Rome, Greece, Asia Minor, and even Timothy, “I am not lying.” Why does he say this? Because if Paul were capable of deceiving his readers, then we would simply be studying the opinions, emotions, and self-interest of a clever man. But if he is telling the truth—as he insists he is—then there is no better place for us to be than gathered around God's Word, and no better book for us to study than the inspired Scriptures.
- Here, Paul is describing the deep sorrow and unceasing anguish he feels for his unbelieving fellow Jews, and he wants his readers to know that these emotions are genuine. He is not exaggerating, pretending, or speaking for effect. His grief is real. But does this imply that he was truthful only on this occasion and might deceive people at other times? Certainly not. The apostle's commitment to truth was not occasional but habitual. His whole life was marked by glorifying God, delighting in him, walking by the Spirit, presenting his body as a living sacrifice, and speaking the truth in love. That was the atmosphere in which Paul lived every day. His life revolved around his union with the Lord Jesus Christ, and that fellowship governed every word he spoke and every action he performed. Because he belonged to the One who declared, “I am the truth,” Paul was committed to telling the truth at all times, by day and by night.
- **Paul also declares, “My conscience confirms it.”** Every man and woman created in the image of God possesses a conscience. It is God's appointed witness within us, approving what is right and condemning what is wrong. It serves as God's deputy, his spokesman, his watchman, his herald, and his inward preacher. The conscience is like the lamp of the Lord, constantly shining and exposing the true condition of the heart. Whenever Paul was tempted to distort the truth, exaggerate, embellish, invent, or withhold what was true, his conscience sounded the alarm. It was as though warning lights flashed within his soul, saying, “Paul, do not deceive.” His conscience continually distinguished truth from error in both his words and his conduct. It was tender, sensitive, and well-instructed. He dreaded grieving God and confessing deliberate sin, so he was careful to maintain a clear conscience before God and men.
- Paul therefore assures the believers in Rome that everything he has written is true: “My conscience confirms it.” There is a deep joy that belongs to a clear conscience. Yet not every conscience is reliable. Some are oversensitive, condemning actions that God himself does not condemn. Others are darkened, distorted, and uninstructed. Think of the conscience of a cannibal—it may approve what is morally evil because it has never been shaped by God's truth. A conscience is not infallible; it must never be violated, but it must continually be educated by the Scriptures and formed by the teaching of Christ and his apostles. Only a conscience instructed by God can bear trustworthy witness to

the truth. Truth and a good conscience are like two wings that enable the Christian to rise, press on, and persevere in his or her journey toward heaven.

- **Thirdly, Paul possessed a conscience that had been enlightened and instructed by God.** The same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus Christ from the dead dwelt within him. Paul walked in the Spirit, lived by the Spirit, and knew by the Spirit's inward testimony that he belonged to God. As he himself says in the previous chapter, the Spirit bore witness with his spirit that he was a child of God. The Spirit illuminated his understanding, strengthened him in his calling as an apostle, and sustained him through every trial—beatings, imprisonments, floggings, hunger, hardship, and suffering. He opened Paul's mind to understand the character of God and the riches of redeeming grace, so that what Paul wrote was precisely what God intended him to write. His letters were given so that ordinary believers, even Christians living in Pella 2000 years later, might know God, understand his gracious provision in Christ, and learn both what they are to believe and how they are to live.
- What Paul wrote was Spirit and life. His epistles are God-breathed because the Holy Spirit superintended every aspect of his preparation. God used Paul's years of instruction under Gamaliel, his time alone with Christ in the wilderness of Arabia, his fellowship with the other apostles as they recounted their experiences with the Lord Jesus, and his deep study of the Old Testament Scriptures. The Lord also shaped him through every providence, whether joyful or painful, every trial and every triumph. Through all these means, the Holy Spirit formed his mind, matured his judgment, and established his conscience, so that when Paul dictated this letter, what he said was the very truth of God, clear, trustworthy, and entirely without error.

➤ CONCLUSION

- Paul spoke the truth. The words that lie before us today are true and trustworthy. He spoke them as a man united to Jesus Christ, so that his message came with the authority of the Lord himself. Paul was not inventing religious ideas or expressing personal opinions; he was the appointed apostle of Christ. Therefore, receive his words for Christ's sake, because in hearing the faithful testimony of the apostle, we hear the voice of the Savior speaking through him. Paul was not lying. His conscience was clear before God, and he would rather have endured any hardship than carry the burden of a guilty conscience.
- His conscience had been enlightened, instructed, and governed by the Holy Spirit, so that what he preached and wrote was the very truth God intended his people to receive. Therefore, believe what the Scriptures declare. Trust in Jesus Christ revealed in the Bible, and in him you will find forgiveness of sins, peace with God, the truth about who you are, the purpose for which you were created, and the certain hope of everlasting life.