

REMNANT CHURCH SERMON NOTES – ROMANS 1: 17
PREACHED ON OCTOBER 12, 2025 BY REV. B.B. ANUM-HIGHER

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. **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 1:16-17

➤ **INTRODUCTION**

- Paul gave two main reasons why he was eager to preach the gospel of Christ in verses 16 and 17 of chapter 1. His first reason in verse 16 was this: he was not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes. The gospel as written in the Bible is the very power of God. It is the power that resurrects spiritually dead people, making them spiritually alive. Today, we will look at the second reason in verse 17.
- Paul was not ashamed of the gospel, not only because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes, but also:

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

- These two verses – 16 and 17 can be described as the summary of the entire Book of Romans. The chapters that follow are basically an explanation of these two verses. These two verses are also foundational to the Christian Reformation in the 16th century.
- Martin Luther, a German teacher and a Catholic monk in the Augustinian order, initiated the Protestant Reformation, which began in 1517 when he challenged the Catholic Church's teachings.
- The Protestant Reformation began in Wittenberg, Germany, on October 31, 1517, when Luther published a document he called Disputation on the Power of Indulgences, or 95 Theses. He invited people to debate with him about his 95 ideas, based on his understanding of these two verses. These ideas were deemed controversial because they directly contradicted the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- The Catholic church had a practice of buying or earning forgiveness, but Luther believed and argued that salvation is a gift God gives to those who have faith, after he had discovered the meaning of Romans 1:16-17. As we mark the 508th anniversary of the Reformation this month, I am thankful to God that we are studying these two verses in October, in commemoration of the event that changed the history of the church.

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

- Paul tells us that in the gospel, God made a revelation about His righteousness. **What then is a revelation?** A revelation means making something known. It is making known information, an idea, or a thing that was previously hidden or not clearly understood—making the hidden information bare for all to see.
- Paul tells us that in the gospel, the righteousness of God is now made bare, now clearly seen; it is no longer hidden in shadows and types. This means that the righteousness of God has always been there, but it was concealed and hidden.
- The keyword in our text is righteousness, and we will study it under six headings. Before we proceed, I want you to be aware that throughout the Bible, the concepts of righteousness and salvation are often linked together. Salvation from the wrath of God to come and righteousness are like Siamese twins; they are tied together. Being saved means you have the righteousness of God, and having the righteousness of God means you have been saved.
- We have examples in the Psalms and Isaiah.

✓ The Lord has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. Psalm 98:2

✓ 13 I am bringing my righteousness near; it is not far away; and my salvation will not be delayed. Isaiah 46:13a

✓ 5 My righteousness draws near speedily; my salvation is on the way. Isaiah 51:5

✓ 6 But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail. Isaiah 51:6

➤ **FIRST – RIGHTEOUSNESS IS GOD’S CHARACTER**

- We all have a character that our family and friends can say about us. God also possesses a moral character, which is righteousness. Righteousness is His nature. He is absolutely consistent with His character.
- Everything God does is governed by righteousness; that is His standard for looking at things. Righteousness is how God thinks, deals with Himself and others, and judges, among other things.
- Jesus described God as righteous in **John 17:25 - “Righteous Father, though the world does not know You, I know You, and they know that You have sent Me.**

➤ **SECOND – RIGHTEOUSNESS IS WHAT GOD DEMANDS OF HIS CREATURES**

- Righteousness is not only God's character; He also demands righteousness from us.
- Parents typically have a set of standards they want their children to adhere to. God also has demands for all His creatures, and He does it in two ways:

1. **In the giving of His Moral Law.** In Exodus 20, which we read earlier, God told His people, 'This is the way I want you to live your life in My world.' The Ten Commandments are God's demands for living. The first part (four) tells us about how God wants us to relate to Him, and the second part (six) deals with how we relate to other people. So when you hear the Ten Commandments read, remember that they are the illustration of the righteousness of God, and that is what He demands from each of us. The Psalmist tells us that "He rules the world in righteousness and judges the peoples with equity." – Psalm 9:8
2. **Secondly, He demands righteousness in His judgment.** God did not create us and then abandon us to live our lives as we please. He did not create us and then permit us to live our lives governed by the culture of the day. In the same way, he did not save us and then leave us to live our lives as we please. He regulates our daily living, worship, and mission here on earth. He tells us that a day is coming when all the nations, when everyone will stand before Him to be judged, and righteousness will be the standard of His final Day of Judgment. The standard of judgment will be whether you have lived according to His righteousness.

5 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed. Romans 2:5

➤ THIRD – RIGHTEOUSNESS IS WHAT WE LACK

- Righteousness is the character of God. Secondly, righteousness is what God demands of His creation, and thirdly, righteousness is what we and all human beings do not have.
- Man originally possessed the righteousness of God. Adam was made perfect in God's image; he was created holy, and he reflected God's righteousness. Adam was able to commune with God because he possessed God's righteousness. Genesis 1:27.
- Every human being after Adam has inherited his fall from righteousness to unrighteousness. We have inherited his sinful nature. Paul will tell us later in **Romans 3:23 that "23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** God's glory refers to His greatness, majesty, holiness, and righteousness. In other words, because of Adam, we have all sinned and lost the righteousness of God.
- Think about this: the very thing God demands from us, we do not have. For most immigrants and visitors to the USA, a visa is required to be allowed entry. Imagine a group of visitors coming to the port of entry or the airport and being asked to show their visa, but unfortunately, they didn't have one. Immediately, they would be placed on the next flight to be sent back to the country from which they had flown, because they lacked what the US government required to enter the nation.
- The Bible tells us that the righteousness God demands from us is the very thing we all lack.

10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one;" Romans 3:10

- Paul wanted to make sure that none of the believers misunderstood him, so he clarified his point, saying that not even one person in the whole universe possesses the righteousness God demands. "There is no one righteous, not even one;"

➤ **FOURTH – WE DON'T KNOW WHERE AND HOW TO GET RIGHTEOUSNESS**

- Since "There is no one righteous, not even one;" Romans 3:10, what then do we do to get this righteousness? Where do we go to get it? How do we get it?
- The Catholic church says you can get this righteousness through baptism, good works, sacraments, and divine grace.
- In other religions, people travel to holy sites with the hope of getting this righteousness. Some engage in generosity (giving of charity) and caring for those in need to attain righteousness.
- But none of these good works could attain the righteousness God demands. The songwriter tells us this: "Not the labors of my hands can fulfill Thy law's demands; could my zeal no respite know, could my tears forever flow, all for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and Thou alone."
- How can a man/woman/child who does not have God's character of righteousness appear before Him and be judged according to His righteousness? This is therefore the main problem of man. Our problem is not because we are unhappy, lonely, disappointed, struggling with diseases, or finances.
- Our problem is this: there is a righteous God in Heaven who demands righteousness from us, but we do not possess this righteousness and do not know how or where to obtain it. We are therefore guilty before Him. The whole world is guilty before Him, and we are going to face Him in judgment based on righteousness.
- Our primary need in this world has something to do with our eternal destiny; we must possess the righteousness of God, or we face eternal damnation in hell. The very thing we don't have is what He demands from us. There is no hope for mankind because the only solution to our problem, the only way we could escape hell, is to possess the righteousness of God when we stand before Him on the Day of Judgment, but we don't have it.

➤ **FIFTH – GOD HIMSELF PROVIDES THE RIGHTEOUSNESS HE DEMANDS**

- Since we do not know where or how to get righteousness, God gives it to us as a gift.

17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ! Romans 5:17

- By God's mercy, the righteousness He demands from us that we do not have or know where and how to get it from has been provided to us as a gift in Jesus Christ.
- **How does this happen?**
- There is a divine exchange where our unrighteousness is laid on Jesus and His righteousness is laid on us. Our sins are placed on Him, and His perfect obedience to God's Commandments is put on us.
- There is a double imputation. The believer's sins are imputed to Jesus, and Jesus' righteousness is imputed to the believer. Instead of the sinner receiving the just punishment for his sins, God punishes Jesus on behalf of the sinner. The righteous character of God demands that He punishes sin even when His beloved Son Jesus Christ bore the sins.
- This means in the sight of God, Jesus has become the sinner and suffered the wrath of God on the Cross on our (sinners') behalf. Also, in the sight of God, we (sinners) have become righteous people because we have been clothed with Jesus' righteousness. Jesus Christ bore the wrath of God for our sins and turned it away from us.
- In this transaction, God played two roles, or He had two goals in mind. He is a just God and won't leave sin unpunished, as He punished Jesus Christ for the sins of others. He is also the justifier of sinners. He declares believers justified and no longer counts their sins against them. Paul summarized it in Romans 3:26

26 It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

- Sin must always be punished because God is a just or righteous God; but either the sinner is punished for his/her sins or Jesus is punished for the sinner's sins. Someone has to be punished for our sins; either we suffer the wrath of God ourselves or Jesus Christ suffered for us.

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21

- If you want to know the future anguish unbelievers will go through, look at Jesus on the Cross. The Cross illustrates or is a picture of God's wrath being poured out on a sinner. Jesus was paying the full price for sin so that all those who will trust in Him will freely be credited or imputed (possess) with the righteousness God requires of all human beings.
- **So how does a sinner possess this righteousness? How do I have this righteousness God demands?**
- Not by any good thing you did or I did or we will ever do; not by any religious rituals we engaged in; not by any holy places we visited; not by our faithful attendance to church; not by our profession of faith and certainly not by our charity works, but only by God's gift, only by His great mercy.

- Salvation is God's merciful work for sinners, so we are debtors of mercy alone. For this reason, Paul said he was not ashamed of such a gospel. The gospel is the only way sinners like us could face God's final Day of Judgment without any fear. There was no hope for us, except by the gift of the gospel.

➤ **SIXTH – HOW DOES THIS GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS COME TO US**

“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

- There is only one way by which this righteousness from Jesus Christ is brought to us, and it's by having a true saving faith. It is by trusting in Jesus Christ. Faith is simply a trust in Jesus Christ. When we understand our hopelessness and come to Jesus for His righteousness, it is called faith.
- Who is a Christian? Who is a believer? A believer is the man or woman who has received the righteousness God provides through Jesus Christ by faith alone. Paul tells us that this righteousness is revealed nowhere else but in the gospel.
- This means you need first to hear the gospel before you can have faith. The hearing of the gospel comes before faith. Later in this letter, Paul will tell us that

“faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.” Romans 10:17

- God creates faith in our hearts when we hear the gospel preached. Faith is not created in our hearts when we hear motivational speeches, when we hear good advice, and when we hear man-centered gospel. Faith comes when Jesus Christ and His work are presented to us in the gospel, and the message captures us.
- Most people take pride in their hard work to accomplish something in their career, business, education, or other endeavors. We love it when we put in so much effort to earn a degree, promotion, etc. Our human pride loves to do so much to get something great. However, this is not the case with our salvation. God in His mercy has made the way to heaven easy so that everyone who believes might be delivered from His wrath to come.
- It is by faith alone, it is by believing; you don't need to take an exam to pass; you do not have to pay money to be included; and there are no listed qualifications you have to meet. God, in His mercy, has made it accessible so that both the young and the old can benefit from it. It has been simplified so that both the highly educated and those with no formal education can benefit from it. It is the same for both the rich and poor, biblically sound, religious, atheist, healthy, and frequently ill, white, black, and others.
- This is how easy God has designed the entry into heaven. Still, human pride finds this way of attaining God's righteousness insufficient and has turned away from the gospel, or is ashamed of it and wants to add to it or take away from it to make it appealing and attractive to the culture of the day.
- From the very beginning of the church, Jesus communicated to us that by faith alone is the way of attaining the righteousness of God. The thief on the cross, although it's an isolated case, was Jesus' way of telling us that it takes faith alone. The thief on the cross also teaches us that salvation is available to

anyone, regardless of their past sins, who turns to Jesus with sincere faith, even in their final moments.

- Here is Jesus hanging on the cross with two criminals. Despite Jesus's vulnerable state on the cross, the thief recognized and believed that Jesus was a king with a kingdom that transcended earthly power.

Luke 23:42-43: "Then he (thief) said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.'

- The thief recognized Jesus as more than an earthly king, believing in His true kingdom and in His ability to save, even from the cross. Here on the cross with Jesus, a thief who has lived a horrible life, who probably did not know anything about justification, sanctification, and glorification. He probably didn't know the Books of the Bible, couldn't memorize any Scriptures, yet when he expressed his faith in Jesus Christ, he heard these words:

Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43.

- We learn from the salvation of the thief that salvation through faith alone in Christ is all a sinner needs to be delivered from God's wrath. This thief was accepted into heaven without the traditional religious acts, such as communion, baptism, or good works. The thief's salvation was based on a direct appeal to Jesus for mercy, demonstrating faith in Him.
- Peter tells us that this salvation by faith alone even amazes the holy angels. He wrote: "Even angels long to look into these things" 1 Peter 1:12.
- The angels are curious about the gospel, how God designed it, and how it was obtained. Why should you be ashamed of a gospel that even angels long to look into it?
- Imagine this thief in heaven having a conversation with one of the holy angels:
 - ✓ Angel: How did you get here?
 - ✓ Thief: I don't know, the man on the cross with me asked me to come, and here I am.
 - ✓ Angel: What did you do for Him to bring you here?
 - ✓ Thief: I actually did nothing; I only put my trust in Him while he hung on the cross and asked Him for mercy.
 - ✓ Angel: When were you baptized? Did you partake of the Holy Communion, did you do the profession of faith classes, etc? '
 - ✓ Thief: I don't know what you are talking about. I was only a thief and didn't have any fellowship with the believers. What even is baptism, communion, etc?
 - ✓ Angel: Then how did you get here? Please, let me understand.
 - ✓ Thief: As I already told you, I don't know. The man on the cross with me asked me to come here, and here I am. If there was any work to be done to get here, He did it all.
 - ✓ Angel: I still don't get it.
 - ✓ Thief: Mr. Angel, "I am A debtor to mercy alone, Of covenant mercy I sing, Nor fear, with God's righteousness on, My person and offerings to bring. The terrors of law and of God, With me can have nothing to do; My Savior's obedience and blood, Hide all my transgressions from view."

➤ APPLICATIONS

1. Paul was so excited about this gospel because in it, the righteousness he lacked —the righteousness we also lack — has been revealed. The very thing we need has been revealed in the gospel. In his previous religion, Judaism, Paul had tried everything to attain righteousness: he had separated himself from ordinary people in society (he was a Pharisee), and he had observed religious ceremonies and traditions, but none of them worked. He found out later that none of his self-righteous deeds had prepared him to face God's judgment, except to possess God's own righteousness, which comes only through the gospel of Christ. Maybe you are repeating what Paul tried but failed.

Are you here, listening to our video or reading the written sermon, and you are unsure about your salvation? Are you still working so hard to attain righteousness? Remember the words of the songwriter: "Not the labors of my hands can fulfill thy law's demands; could my zeal no respite know, could my tears forever flow, all for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and Thou alone." Nothing we do or will ever do can provide this righteousness God demands. He is the Savior and He alone. Why not act wisely today and come to Him with your unrighteousness and exchange it with His righteousness? Sadly, some people view God's means of salvation as insufficient and continue to strive to attain this righteousness.

2. Salvation by faith alone has always been God's means by which anyone could attain righteousness. Paul was not making up a new doctrine or teaching. It is the same for the people of the Old Testament, and it's the same for us. Paul quoted the Prophet Habakkuk to explain that God has not changed; His means of salvation has always been the same – faith alone.

4 "Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith. Habakkuk 2:4

Last week, I mentioned that the Bible divides people into three groups.

The first group has no connection to Jesus Christ; they are unbelievers.

The third group has a vital relationship with Jesus Christ; they are the believers.

Yet, there is another group that only has a formal/denominational/ecclesiastical connection to Jesus Christ. These are the religious people who are described as false believers. Jesus had many messages for people who have made a profession of faith but do not possess the faith. They are always in church but are only going through the rituals of Christianity. They know the Bible, creeds, and

catechisms, but do not have a true saving faith and a genuine heart of repentance.

If you only identify with believers but have not truly believed, the gospel is here for you. If you are counting on your faithfulness to your denomination to satisfy God's wrath, then you must be pitied. You can deceive others, but you cannot deceive God. The gospel has the power to transform a person who is only formally/denominationally/ecclesiastically connected to Jesus into one who is vitally connected to Jesus. It is by faith alone.

3. Paul was concerned for the salvation of the false believers of his day, the religious Jews, as he wrote in chapter 10, and I pray that we will not have any among us who trusts in their own righteousness than what God provides:

10 Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. **2** For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. **3** Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. **4** Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. Romans 10:1-4

4. Paul quoted from Habakkuk that the righteous shall live by faith. The righteous will have eternal life. The righteous will inherit heaven. The opposite is also true. The unrighteous will die. The unrighteous will have eternal death and regret eternally in hell.

Where do you belong? Will you live or die? The difference is by faith alone in Jesus. Those who will live have placed their faith in Jesus Christ, but those who will die have not done so or are counting on their self-righteousness.

On what grounds will Jesus Christ deal with you on the Day of Judgment? How will you answer if Jesus asks you on that Day: how have you fulfilled the Ten Commandments? What right do you have to enter my kingdom?

If your answer is not going to be by faith and faith alone in Jesus Christ, who exchanged His righteousness for your unrighteousness, then you are in danger of hell. Thanks to God, you have the opportunity today to believe in Jesus Christ as the gospel has revealed, and it is a free gift.

LET US PRAY TO THE RIGHTEOUS GOD AND FATHER