# The Grand Opening of Romans Chapter 8…

**Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."**

This statement made in the letter by the Apostle Paul to the church of Christ in Rome is one of the most thrilling statements in the Bible for Christian people. In it we find assurance through divine inspiration that we can know that we are truly saved. That, unfortunately, is a question that many in this world struggle with today, and here we have it answered simply for us.

The Holy Spirit through Paul tells us in this short and glorious passage…**"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus…"** meaning that those who are in Christ are saved, that they will be given the victory over the second death and will not have to suffer through an eternity in hellfire… and those people can know that this is so for a fact. That is truly wonderful… and is the greatest thing we could ever hope to have revealed to us. Such a statement in the bible should make our hearts sing with joy when we hear or read it.

But that is not all **Romans 8:1** is saying. In this "simple" short passage… this one single verse of the New Testament… we find a couple of attachments. "Qualifiers" if you will… that make the criteria for salvation crystal clear to those who have studied the Word of God. I am talking about the latter half of the passage, which says, **"to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit".** Now there are the qualifiers… and they bring the first part of the passage into a much more clear focus. This qualifying clause gives us the guidelines for the reception of the "no condemnation" reward, meaning that there are strings attached… you **do** have to do something. Clearly we can see here that there are things that we must do as human beings to receive the "no condemnation" verdict from the "Righteous Judge."

I want to dive into this verse of scripture, pull it apart and examine it idea by idea… statement by statement and see how the rest of the scriptures support it… as time permits. I want to use this means to define how we can know what our status is in regards to salvation, what God's word says about finding salvation if you have not already done so, and how once we are saved…**we can know that our salvation is assured**… with no questions or doubts.

Lets look now at the beginning of the passage and define the meaning in it… It says:

**"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus…"**

No condemnation for those who are "in Christ Jesus" means that those who have obeyed the gospel and have put on Christ in baptism are not condemned. The act of baptism is the means of putting on Christ Jesus… of being put into Him. As Paul tells us in **Galatians 3:27**…

**"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."**

Paul clearly states that when we are obedient to the Gospel command of baptism…we actually put on our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ… and again by the Apostle Paul we are told in **Romans 6:3**:

**"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?"**

Paul again talks about baptism in his letter to the church of Christ at Colosse. When he wrote to the Colossians he spoke of being baptized into Christ and he adds some additional information. Let's read what he says in **Colossians 3:1-3**…

"**If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."**

Paul speaks here on being raised with Christ from the waters of baptism… and as in the Romans passage we just read… he also refers to the death to sin that we undergo when we are baptized. But he also refers to another aspect of baptism… that of being "**hidden with Christ**". The meaning of this reference here is this… when God looks at us… and we are "in Christ", having obeyed the commandment to be baptized… He sees only Christ, not us. Therefore God does not see our sins… because they are hidden… He sees only His precious Son.

Baptized believers are the ones who are "in Christ"… no one else is "in Christ"… and that is an important point. To further explain the meaning of the phrase "in Christ" we must look back in the Gospel… at the commandment of baptism, which is the means or the action by which we are put "into Christ". We are told about baptism in many instances in the scriptures. For our purposes of explanation this morning, I want to focus on several of those instances in which the scriptures tell us about baptism.

To start with, in the book of Acts, in the second chapter, the Apostle Peter preached the first great sermon of the Christian era. He preached to the Jews and proselytes of many nations that had gathered in Jerusalem for the observance of feast of Pentecost. During this sermon, the crowd heard the Word of God preached by the power of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Peter was able to convict many of his listeners that they were guilty of sin during this sermon… especially of the sin of having crucified the Son of God. Their agonizing response to this sermon was to put a question to Peter. We find that question in **Acts 2:37** and it reads:

**"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"**

The answer to that question would forever change the way men are put into a relationship with God. Peter and the Apostles had been given the "**keys to the kingdom**" by Christ in **Matthew 16:19.** As Peter next spoke, he inserted that key and unlocked the door as he gave them the answer to their question. In **Acts 2:38** we read:

**"Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."**

Peter laid out the criterion right here in **Acts 2:38** for becoming a Christian, and to come into the possession of Christ. He told us that we have to do two things:

1. **Repent of our sins**…
2. **Be baptized for the remission of our sins** …

Peter not only tells us what we have to do, but he also tells us of the benefits of obedience to these commands given in **Acts 2:38**. Let's examine the benefits for a few moments. Peter made it clear that one of the benefits that comes when we are baptized is that we receive remission of our sins. Not just forgiveness, but REMISSION… which is much better than just forgiveness. The meaning of remission is that our sins are not seen by God… **period**. As we saw earlier in the passage from **Colossians 3** because we are "**hidden with Christ**"… having been put "**into Christ**" through baptism… our sins are wiped clean. God now views us as sinless, and He is able to do this because of the sacrifice of His Son Jesus on the cross…because of Christ's shed blood…. and because of our obedient response to what we are told to do in **Acts 2:38**.

Christ made reference to the significance of His shed blood when He said in **Matthew 26:28**:

**"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of**

**sins."**

Under the New Covenant we are washed clean of our sins by the blood of God's Son through the washing of baptism. Let's look at how a passage in the book of Revelation illustrates this point. Turn with me to **Revelation 7:13-15**, and let's read what the apostle John tells us:

**"Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them."**

John is describing people… Christian people… who obeyed the gospel during their lives while on earth… who were standing before the throne of God clothed in white robes. We are told that their robes were white because they had been washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Let me ask you, how do you think their robes… their spiritual clothes… were washed in the blood of the Lamb… Jesus Christ? Their robes… their spiritual clothing… became white through the action of the washing of baptism… which is the same as the "**washing of regeneration**" mentioned in **Titus 3:5**… this is where they came into contact with the blood of Jesus Christ…that is what cleansed them… that is what gave them remission of sins. It is the same for us.

These scriptures illustrate so well that your sins are not remitted until you are baptized. Let's look quickly at two more passages on baptism that also produce that conclusion. In **Acts 22:16**, Ananias states to Paul…

"**And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord**."

Now let's look at **1 Peter 3:21**… **"There is also an antitype which now saves us--baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ…"**

You are not "washed in the blood of the Lamb", and your robes are not made white, until you are baptized. God is so holy that sin cannot exist in His presence, and we must be washed clean in baptism before we can know God and be in a relationship with Him… before we can become His child. It is that simple.

Please also notice that in **Acts 2:38,** Peter did not say "Repent for the remission of your sins and then be baptized". No. He made it very clear that remission of sins comes in the obedient act of baptism. That is why it is a command. You cannot have the remission of sins, as promised in the Gospel, unless you are baptized first… for that said purpose. Many religious teachers today… some of them in the Lord's church… are not teaching this **the way it should be taught according to God's Word**. These men would all teach that you can have your sins remitted through prayer and asking Jesus to come into your heart, and that then you need to be baptized… or in some cases they even tell you that baptism is not necessary… because after all… you are forgiven already of your sins. By these teachings they make the command of baptism an option… they take away it's power to save us… which is made clear in the scriptures, and **they deny the blood of Christ which bought them**… all in one breath when they teach this. Baptism is not an option, and to teach that it is… well, that is a lie of the worst kind… because of how it misleads the many sincere people who believe this lie, thus denying them eternal life, because they are following a man-made doctrine and not the doctrine of Christ and the Apostles.

To teach this is also a perversion of Gospel... which we will discuss later.

By the way, I want to make one more point on baptism… because it is such a misunderstood, and incorrectly taught subject in the secular religious world. That point is this… that the word "baptize" by definition… from its Greek root word… means to immerse and refers to immersion in water and nothing else. It is not sprinkling, or praying, or a rush of emotion that you get… baptism is going all the way under water, to be washed…we are immersed… for the remission of our sins… and this is done also in order for us to come into the possession of Jesus Christ.

So far we have established that one of the benefits of following the commands found in **Acts 2:38** is that our sins are remitted through the act of baptism.

Peter also mentioned a second benefit when he said:

**"…and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."**

That is an important gift… because it is the Holy Spirit, which seals us against the day of redemption and identifies us children of God. You are not a Christian if you do not have the Spirit dwelling in you and you cannot have the Spirit dwelling in you unless you have been baptized for the remission of sins in order to receive it. The Spirit cannot dwell in the sinner; only those who have been washed clean in the blood of the Lamb are fit dwelling places for the Holy Spirit. The scriptures wholly support the truth of this doctrine. Let's look at some of those scriptures now, keeping in mind that Paul was writing only to baptized believers… the faithful Christians that made up these various churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Ephesians 4:30… "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." From this passage we can know that the Lord seals us with the Holy Spirit for redemption… we are sealed to be redeemed on the last day… the Holy Spirit is the mark of the Lord upon His children.

**<u>2 Timothy 2:19</u>…"Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: The Lord knows those who are His…".** From this passage we again learn about the Spirit sealing us, and by this seal the Lord knows who are His.

**<u>Romans 8:16</u>…"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God…".** Again here we learn that the Spirit marks us, and bears witness to God that we are His children.

**<u>1 Corinthians 3:16</u>…"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"** Here we are told that we are the temple of God, and that the Holy Spirit dwells in us.

One more thing… The Holy Spirit intercedes for us in our prayers to God in ways that we need Him to… but He does it in ways we do not understand. That is referred to in **Romans 8:26-27**.

So this benefit of receiving the Holy Spirit through obedience to the Gospel of Christ… and submission to the command of baptism… is a very important one as we can see. For if we do not have the Holy Spirit we are not God's children. If you have not been baptized the way that Peter has commanded in **Acts 2:38** and for the purposes that he stated**,** then you do not have the gift of the Holy Spirit.

So let's sum up the points on the act of baptism:

- It puts us into Christ… as we saw in **Galatians 3:27**
- We are also baptized into His death… as we saw in **Romans 6:3**
- We are "hidden with Christ"… as we saw in **Colossians 3:1-3**
- It gives us remission of our sins…as shown in **Acts 2:38**
- It washes away our sins… as we saw in **Acts 22:16**
- It now saves us… as we saw in **1 Peter 3:21**
- It brings us into the possession of Christ… as we saw also in **Acts 2:38**
- It also imparts to us the gift of the Holy Spirit which dwells in all those who are Christians… again as we saw in **Acts 2:38.**

Baptism does all of these things… so it's relevance to our study of the first part of the passage in **Romans 8:1** is this; when this scripture tells us:

**There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus…"**

It is telling us that baptism and obedience to that command… as the scriptures have defined it… is essential to being "in Christ"… if you are "in Christ" then you are not condemned… you are saved.

Now think for a moment on this concept… this half of the passage in **Romans 8:1** is also saying to us that there is most certainly **condemnation for those that are not "in Christ".** Those not "in Christ" have not been cleansed of their sins, and they are not marked with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit cannot intercede for them in their prayers and strengthen them… as He does for the children of God. He cannot do that for anyone who is not "in Christ". So those who are not "in Christ" cannot walk "**according to the Spirit**"… as we are all commanded to do… by the second part of our study verse… because they ***DO NOT HAVE THE SPIRIT.*** Consequently there is nothing spiritual about them in God's eyes. How many times have we heard the comment "he or she is such a spiritual person" from people in the world around us? That is such a misunderstood phrase when viewed through the lens of the truth found in God's word. People in general have no concept of what a spiritual person is. Most of them think that is someone who is reflective, thoughtful and maybe is religious in some way. That is not God's definition of "spiritual". God's definition of someone who is spiritual is… someone who has obeyed His Son's command to be baptized for the remission of sins and to receive the Holy Spirit… someone who has obeyed the Gospel of Christ and someone who walks in the way of the truth. The people who do this… are the spiritual people of the earth, because they have the Spirit. No one else does.

Christ told us something that needs to get our attention in the book of Matthew… turn with me to **Matthew 7:21-23…**

**"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'**

Christ, in this illustration of the Judgment Day wherein He will be the "Righteous Judge", is telling us that many people… who sincerely believed that they were doing the right things will be lost… and He is speaking to the sincerely religious and misguided people that we encounter every day in every walk of life. Christ says that they will be lost because they practiced lawlessness, meaning they did not obey the laws of the New Covenant… which is that set of commands Jesus gave us to follow for our lives. They either ignored them or added to them. Also there is no way that Jesus Christ would have said this if anyone who calls on His name will be saved… and He makes that abundantly clear, because the people He is making an example of

in this passage… obviously believed in Him and thought they were doing right… but they weren't… because they did not do the things they did… **<u>in the way that He told them to do it</u>**.

Christ is telling us that we must obey the commands of the Gospel as He has given it to us or be lost. That sounds restrictive… because it is restrictive… we have to obey the divine design for salvation. There is no other way.

Let's go further now into our study of the passage in **Romans 8:1**. When the waters of baptism cover us over…. we are buried with Christ into His death, and we come up from the water… we are raised to walk in a different way from the old ways that have characterized our past lives. **<u>Romans 6:4</u>** illustrates this for us when we read it. It says:

**"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."**

Now just what is this "**newness of life**" we are supposed to be walking in? It is the same thing as the concept of walking "**according to the Spirit**" in **Romans 8:1**. Which leads us to the beginning of our focus on the second half of the verse we are studying this morning.

We have established that if you are "in Christ" there is no condemnation, but the passage does not stop there. It continues on to say… **"…who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."** What that means brothers and sisters is that **there is** condemnation for those who are "in Christ" who do not walk "according to the Spirit"… because they "walk according to the flesh". This means that it is possible to be put into Christ in baptism… to have gotten that part of obedience right… and to get the rest of it **<u>WRONG</u>**. This flies completely in the face of the misguided doctrine proposed by John Calvin of "once saved… always saved". It is very possible to have obeyed the Gospel… to have your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life that is talked about in Revelation… and to fall away. Let's look at some of the scriptures that bring this point home.

The Apostle Peter tells us in **<u>1 Peter 5:8-9</u>**… "**Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world."**

The Apostle Paul says in **<u>2 Timothy 4: 2-5</u>**… **"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things…".**

The scriptures are full of admonitions like this from Peter, Paul, James, John, these two passages are but examples…why did these divinely inspired men make these exhortations to faithfulness when writing to the Christians they were addressing in their letters if salvation could not be gained and then lost? If we are saved, and cannot then lose our salvation… then what does it matter how we behave… why do they admonish us to stay faithful? Does this idea not sound absolutely ludicrous?

Paul again said in **<u>Romans 11:21-22</u>** … **"For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off."**

Paul is telling the Roman Christians that if God did not spare the nation of Israel, His chosen

people, for their unfaithfulness, that He will likewise not spare those of us under the New Covenant for unfaithfulness… He says if you are unfaithful… if you do not "**continue in His goodness"**… "**you will also be cut off**". Meaning that we can lose our salvation by not being faithful. The doctrine of "once saved… always saved" is shown to be what it is by God's truth… it is a lie perpetrated by men who are teaching false doctrine and anyone buying into this will also be "**cut off**".

One more point needs to be made in relevance to our study. As we saw earlier in our reading of **Ephesians 4:30** … This passage makes it clear that those who have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit…can grieve the Holy Spirit. This is quite dangerous as this next passage illustrates.

Paul tells the church of Christ in Thessalonica in **1 Thessalonians 5:17-19** that they need to**…"pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit."**

The important point for our study here is… we learn that the Spirit can be quenched.

We are warned not to do this, because just as thirst goes away when it is quenched, so the Holy Spirit goes away when it is quenched… and that my brothers and sisters should be the most frightening thing that can happen to a Christian. If we lose the sealing of the Spirit against the day of redemption, we become worthless in God's eyes… fit only for everlasting destruction. We must feed the Spirit of God within us and not quench it. The presence of the Holy Spirit is the most valuable thing we have as Christians… we must not lose it.

Let's sum this point up… we see in many places in the scriptures that just because you are put "in Christ" that does not mean that you cannot fall out of Christ… if you walk "**according to the flesh**" and not "**according to the Spirit**". Faithfulness to the teachings of Christ is what is required to stay "in Christ." Most people sadly do not get this truth today… Our duty as Christians… our commission by our Lord and Savior is to prevent this from happening wherever we can, starting with our own lives.

To go further into our study of **Romans 8:1**, let's now work on defining what walking "**according to the flesh"** really means**.** Paul tells us in his letter to the church of Christ in Galatia what the works of the flesh are considered to be.

Turn with me to **Galatians 5:19-21** which says… "**Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."**

I am not going to go through all of these… I believe that most of us understand what these works are and how they manifest themselves in our lives and the lives of those in the world around us… all we have to do is watch the news to see these things. But I do want to focus on a few of these works that maybe we don't think about every day. Let's take a look at:

**Idolatry** This is placing anything on this earth before the Lord God. No matter what it is. Man was created to bring glory to God and to serve Him… that is our whole purpose for existence, and yes… it is the answer to the meaning of life. Putting anything before God, whether it is our family, our job, our money, our possessions, our free time, or ourselves… is unacceptable in God's eyes. Let me also say here that God is not looking for "one hour a week Christians", He is

looking for people to become His People… who will bring every thought into captivity for Him… when Paul said to "**set your mind on things above**" in **Colossians 3…** he did not say to do it 50% of the time. When Paul exhorted us in **Philippians 4:8** to think of "**whatever things are true, whatever things are noble**…" he did not prescribe that we do it a certain percentage of the time, we are to do this all of the time. Solomon in **Ecclesiastes 12:13** tells us… "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." We need to hear this message and bring our behavior in line with it. Nothing should ever come before God in our lives… nothing should ever come before serving Him. No matter what it is.

Now let's look at:

**Selfish Ambitions, Dissensions, and Heresies** … Are three things that we don't think about every day and these "works of the flesh" present some interesting directions in thought. Selfish ambition is essentially the same thing as pride and covetousness. These terms can all be applied to men who have put themselves above God in their ambitions by perverting His truth. When the ambitions of men supercede God's will… that is a fundamental cause of dissensions and heresies.

Let me expand on this for a moment. This selfish ambition that men are easily given to, in other words, our pride, can be seen in the multiplicity of the denominational organizations that exist in the religious world today. It can be seen in the way men conduct themselves with regard to the authority of God's word. Whether we are talking about the manner in which these religious organizations worship the Lord in unauthorized ways, teach false doctrine on salvation, the way they are not scripturally organized, or in the way they call themselves by the names of men, methodologies, or man-made doctrines… all of these things… are wrong… they represent men putting themselves above God and His divine authority as the **Lord Most High**. The Apostle Paul plainly told the saints in Rome about such people. He made his comments that they might be warned when he said in **Romans 16:17-18**:

**"I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people."**

These people serve their own selfish ambitions… by creating dissensions and heresies for others to follow that they… themselves… may be glorified, and those of us who walk "according to the Spirit" are to keep away from them. By the way, the naïve people that Paul is referring to here are the sincerely misguided people who are led astray every day by false teachings and false teachers. False teachings are lies invented by men… that are intended to discount or even to twist the scriptures. **2 Peter 3:16** demonstrates this and the Apostle Peter warns us of such men and such lies. In the passage Peter is talking about the writings of Paul and he says this…

"**in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures."**

Peter states clearly that some of Paul's writings are hard to understand… and he says that those that twist the scriptures do so to their own destruction. Notice also how he says that people who do this are untaught and unstable. They have never studied the word of God… so as to know it… and I am not talking about a cursory reading… if they had studied and meditated upon God's Word… they would not twist the scriptures. Those who twist the scriptures have not sought the priceless truths, the greatest of treasures… with all their hearts. They do not love the truth… they walk according to the flesh.

One more illustration about the ambitions of men superceding God's will… this one illustrates the notion of needing to love the truth quite well and pulls from the Old and the New Testaments. In **2 Thessalonians 2: 10-12** we read this passage about loving the truth and what

happens to those who do not. Paul is talking here about the Lawless One to the Thessalonians and he says that he will come**…**

**"…with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."**

Folks when we read this passage… please note that Paul is not referring to some distant future… he is referring to the **HERE and NOW** in his day and in ours… and he is not saying that God will cause them to believe the lie… he is saying that they will believe it because they do not **LOVE THE TRUTH…** and that because of this… God, through His providence… will allow this lie… this error… to work upon them... meaning that He will not prevent it… He will give them up to it. All of this because they were not of a mind to love the truth… **WITH ALL THEIR HEARTS.**

In the Old Testament we have a chilling example of the damage that believing a lie can cause... **J. W. McGarvey**, one of the great gospel preachers of the past, used this illustration to good effect and it is quite applicable here. In the book of **1 Kings chapter 13**… we are told the about the young prophet from Judah who is sent out by the Lord to rebuke the image worship that is being performed at Bethel by King Jeroboam… who was a man of very selfish ambitions.

Let me digress for a second and just say that Jeroboam was a perfect example of the type of man of whom we have been speaking, a man who had set His will over that of the Lord's, and lead the Ten Tribes of Israel who followed him into sin… the account of that is found in **1 Kings chapter 12**.

Now back to the young prophet… as the scriptures tell us he was sent to rebuke this image worship that was going on due to Jeroboam's selfish ambitions and Israel's unfaithfulness. He arrived just in time to see Jeroboam dedicating the altar at Bethel to this image. He spoke the words the Lord had given him to say and the altar was destroyed… Jeroboam tried to have him seized… but God "withered" Jeroboam's arm so that he could not pull it back to his body when he pointed at the prophet to direct his seizure by the people. No one dared to seize him on the King's order because they saw what God had done to Jeroboam and to the altar of the false god. Jeroboam in his panic, asked the prophet to ask the Lord to heal his arm… the prophet did so and the arm was healed.

Jeroboam then offered him a reward, but the prophet had been told by God not to accept anything from any of them, not even to eat or drink, or even to leave by the same route he arrived. He relayed this in a stinging rebuke and then left… He did exactly what God told him to do, exactly as God told him to do it… this wonderfully obedient man rejected the king's offer and left. This is a marvelous example to us of someone forsaking the expediencies that man is so given to… he could have taken away a reward from the king… he could have been glorified and honored by the people and the king as a prophet of the Lord… he could have accepted the invitation of the king to dine with him… in the hopes that he could turn the king's heart back to the Lord… but he put off the reasoning and expediencies of men… to obey the Lord. He just left.

Now here is where the story gets interesting… there was an old prophet in Bethel… and he had kept his mouth shut about what was going on around him with the image worship… he was so overcome with admiration for what the young prophet from Judah had done that he chased him down the road and caught up to him, with the intention of bringing him back to his house in Bethel to break bread. He relayed this to the young prophet… who then told the old prophet what the Lord had told him to do… or not to do. The old prophet then concocted a lie that was calculated to overcome the young prophet's instructions from God… he told him the he was a prophet as well and that an angel had spoken the word of the Lord to him… and that he was told

by God through this angel… to fetch the young prophet back to Bethel to eat and drink with him. The young prophet believed the lie and did so.

As they were dining the Lord spoke through the old prophet… and condemned the young prophet for his disobedience… God told him that because of this disobedience… "your corpse shall not come to the tomb of your fathers". The meal ended, sadly I am sure… the young prophet departed, heading down the road… most likely wondering what this meant.

He did not have long to wonder… a lion met him on the road and killed him. Here was a man, a brave, courageous and righteous man… someone who did not give into the expediencies of self ambition… who had been overcome by a lie and was punished… the scriptures tell us then that he was buried in the old prophet's tomb… by the old prophet… who found him on the road based on reports he had heard. The old man knew the young man had disobeyed the Lord… and when he had buried him… he mourned him, and instructed his sons to lay his bones… upon his death next to those of the young prophet's. A sad memorial and a poor atonement for the ruin his lie had brought about.

Now let's sum this up… this incident is given to us in scripture as an example to warn us against believing lies. In our reasoning we may feel that the less guilty party here was the one who was more severely punished… the sin of lying is well catalogued in the scriptures… it is well known by all of us and no particular instruction to us is needed on the sin of the old prophet… but we need more instruction on believing lies over the word of God, so this illustration has been given to us. It is the reason Christ and the Apostles focused on it so much in their teachings… the thrust of the illustration is just this… young prophet disobeyed the direct Word of God. Yes, he was deceived… and oh what a deception it was coming from a fellow prophet… but it comes down to this… he believed the deception, based on the word of a man, who claimed an angel spoke to him. He should have kept to the Word of the Lord at all costs… and did not do so. That was his sin. Paul tells us simply in **Galatians 1:8**… **"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed."** We are to believe no lies… no matter who they come from…and we… each of us… are to be able to discern the difference between God's truth and a lie. We are accountable for that to the Lord.

God has told us how to worship Him, God has told us how to be saved according to His redemption plan for mankind, God has told us what the church is, how the church is to be organized and governed and what it's mission is, and God has told us who we belong to if we are His… we do not belong to man-made religious organizations if we belong to God. **Men need to keep their selfish ambitions and their sense of expediency in check… their only ambition… their only expediency… should be to hold to the truth and to please God by doing so.**

As we have seen here in **Galatians 5** we have stated for us plainly…the divinely inspired examples of the **"works of the flesh"…** as Christians we need to stay away from all of these things and their variations… in order to avoid walking according to the flesh, and so causing us to lose our precious gift of salvation in Christ Jesus, because as Paul warns us at the end of the verse in **Galatians 5:21**… "**those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."**

Now let us finish up our study of **Romans 8:1…** by defining what the last phrase of the verse means when it mentions those who walk **"according to the Spirit". First of all… as we mentioned earlier… only those who have the Spirit… can walk "according to the Spirit" in their lives.** For those who have the Spirit what this means is growing in spiritual maturity through the study of God's word… it means bringing every thought into harmony with God's will… it means realizing that He knows everything and is in observance of everything you do… it means knowing with all your heart that He cares about everything that happens to you… and

that He watches carefully how you negotiate each of the curves in your life… as well as how you negotiate the smooth and straight spots. It means thinking on things on heavenly things… not on earthly things as Paul mentions in **Colossians 3**. It means bearing the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. You can measure your maturity in Christ and your walking according to the Spirit by looking diligently at your life and seeing if the fruit of the Spirit is there.

Paul tells us what the fruit of the spirit is in **Galatians 5:22-23… "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."** I would challenge each of us… in the next few moments to examine your life and compare… your behavior… your thoughts… your habits… to each of these aspects of the "fruit of the Spirit". All of us… if we truly examine ourselves will be found wanting in some way.

**Do we love God**…with all of our hearts, and souls, and strength… do we love our fellow man no matter who it is… and want only his or her benefit all of the time… do we love ourselves? If the answer is no… to any of these… then we are not loving enough.

**Do we live in a state of joy**… realizing what God has done for us through His precious Son, Jesus Christ… realizing the blessings of life that God has given us and the fact that… each day… each minute we are here… we have a new opportunity to serve Him and bring glory to Him and to Jesus Christ… through our lives on earth? If not… then we are not joyful enough.

**Do we live in a state of peace**… knowing that God is watching over us… all of His children… in everything we do. Do we trust God to give us our daily bread… to give us what we need… if we seek His kingdom… or are we fretful and anxious over all of life's situations … over the future… over what the next month or year holds? If so… then we do not trust God enough and therefore we do not bear the aspect of "peace" in our lives… to the degree that we should.

**Are we longsuffering**… do we have patience with those who seem foolish or rude, or who simply don't think about the nature of the things they are saying or doing? Are we patient in traffic… are we patient with telemarketers or the insurance company… are we patient with our wives… our husbands… our children… our mothers-in-law… our friends… our brothers and sisters in Christ… or with those in the world who do not have our best interests or welfare at heart? Do we turn the other cheek? If the answer to any of these is "no"… then we are not as "longsuffering" as we should be.

**Are we kind**… to everyone… always… no matter how we feel or what we are doing? Can we manage a polite word and a smile to all those around us… no matter what the circumstances? If not… then we are not being as "kind" as we need to be.

**Are we faithful to God…** in everything we do? Or do we put our own self-interests above obeying… serving… and glorifying Him… in any way… in any situation? If so… then we are not exhibiting "faithfulness" in our lives to the degree that God expects.

**Are we gentle**… in all instances of our lives? Are our words couched in tones that offend or are they couched in tones of peace?

**Do we exhibit self-control**… or do we get angry easily? Do we successfully resist the urge to respond in kind to an ugly remark or an offense of any type? Do we successfully resist all of the temptations to walk according to the flesh? If not then we are not exhibiting the level of self control that God needs us to show as Christians… to make our lives attractive to others in the world… thus showing them Christ.

No Christian can read this list and not see places where they need to improve or change… the point is… we must improve and change. God does not expect perfection… we will not be perfected in the image of Christ until we join Him in Heaven… but God expects us to truly strive

for it… to grow towards it. If we feed the Spirit and do not quench it… meaning to study the word of God with diligence and then practice it's commands… these traits will grow to be more prominent in us every day. We must conform to the image of Christ as Christians… if we are "in Christ" then we must grow to be like him.

The Apostle Peter gave us a list of what has come to be known as the "Christian graces". They are found in **2 Peter 1:5-8**… let's read what these are**…**

**"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."**

These traits proceed from one another… notice that growth in knowledge is one of these "graces"…and we must give all diligence… we must persevere and struggle… to ensure that they grow in us daily.

Finally Jesus Christ told us this in the Gospel of John… turn with me now to this passage… **John 15:1-8** and let's look at our Lord's words to us**…**

**"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."**

**Christ is telling us that we must bear fruit to stay in Him… we must grow and display the fruit of the Spirit in our lives or be lost… the pruning He speaks of… are the trials in our lives that refine us as God's children… the trials that shape us to be fit vessels for holding heavenly things… beautiful spirits that are pleasing to God and Christ. He also is telling the world and us that you cannot bear the fruit of the Spirit apart from being in Him… the true vine… Jesus Christ. Now we see that being "in Christ" is vital to bearing the fruit of the Spirit, which is the same as walking "according to the Spirit". This concludes the lesson on Romans 8:1**… but I would ask one more question… mention one more thing that we must look at.

**We talked quite a bit at the beginning of this lesson on what being "in Christ" means… with regards to the commandment of baptism… baptism is where being "in Christ starts… there is where we begin our walk and our growth. I would ask you are you "in Christ"? If the answer is no… then let me urge you to put on the Lord in baptism today… to accept his Lordship in your life… and to have your sins remitted… washed away. If you are not baptized then you are unclean in God's eyes and only fit for suffering His condemnation as the Gospel has told us.**

Turn with me to **Isaiah 1:18-20…"Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."**

The mouth of the Lord **HAS spoken… and He bids you to come to Him, and be washed clean in the blood of the Lamb… won't you do that now if you need to?**

Likewise if you are a child of God and have been unfaithful… having walked according to the flesh and not the Spirit… you need to turn from that path to destruction… if you need the prayers of your brothers and sisters in Christ for that purpose… please let that be known.