

## No Condemnation? by Ben Nelson

Romans 8:1 states: “There is therefore now no condemnation...” This is surely one of the most brutally abused verses in the bible. This verse is given in counsel to those who complain about feeling guilty, and given as a rebuke to those who would dare to preach the Word of God in anything other than a hand patting and encouraging manner. Men have said to me that preaching must always build up the hearers, and never put “condemnation” on them. I have been told that any preaching that brings condemnation is ungodly, and must be of the devil, since the devil is the accuser of the brethren.

This is simply hogwash. It would take even the most uneducated reader about 20 seconds to see that this scripture is not a blanket lifting of all condemnation, but rather a beautiful promise based on clear conditions. If you were reading the King James version, you would see a glimpse of the conditions right in the same verse. But no matter what Bible you are reading, if you will read 8 verses you will see an entirely different message than what is most often preached from this passage. As is often the case, the context gives us the true meaning of the text.

Let’s take time to read the first 8 verses now.

<sup>1</sup>There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. <sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup>For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: <sup>4</sup>That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. <sup>5</sup>For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. <sup>8</sup>So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

So first the conditions to this freedom from condemnation: 1) which are in Christ Jesus; 2) who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. (If your Bible does not mention walking after the flesh, just check the end of verse 4.) It is not a promise to anyone who darkens the door of a church, or telephones a radio minister for

counsel, but rather to those who are in Christ Jesus, and walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. I am going to demonstrate here how these two conditions are actually one condition. The one who is in Christ Jesus walks after the Spirit, and the anyone who walks after the flesh is NOT IN CHRIST.

It is therefore critical that we discover what it means to walk after the flesh?

Look at verse 5 now “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh”. What is the mark of one who is after the flesh – they “do mind the things of the flesh.” What are the things of the flesh? Is Paul only talking about fornication, pornography, and adultery? No. Those things are certainly fleshly things, but the “things of the flesh” is much broader. Paul is talking about people who spend all there energy worrying about themselves.

These people constantly fret over finances. They constantly lust after things they can’t afford, or worse, buy things they can’t afford, with money they don’t have. This leads to more fretting about finances. These people care too much about how they look, what kind of clothes they must wear to impress their neighbors, co-workers, school mates, or even total strangers. They are worried about what others will think of them.

These people buy a car for the status of it, and not for the need of transportation. These people feed their flesh with every kind of evil thought and image. They get their ideas and opinions from the television, radio, and newspaper, instead of from the Word of God.

James calls them the friends of the world. They love the world and everything it has to offer. Their standards may seem high, but for the right price, they will do anything. One who minds the things of the flesh may be honest most of the time, and talk about this honesty, until it really costs him. When the truth, and keeping his promises costs him in money, or time, or status, stand back. Do you want to know if you are fleshly minded? How do you do your taxes? Will you lie if it will bring you down a bracket?

Verse 6 tells us that to be carnally minded is death, verse 7 says it is enmity against God, and verse 8 tells us that it cannot please God. Let’s look at the word enmity for a minute. The word enmity means active hostility and hatred. The carnal mind is actively hostile toward God.

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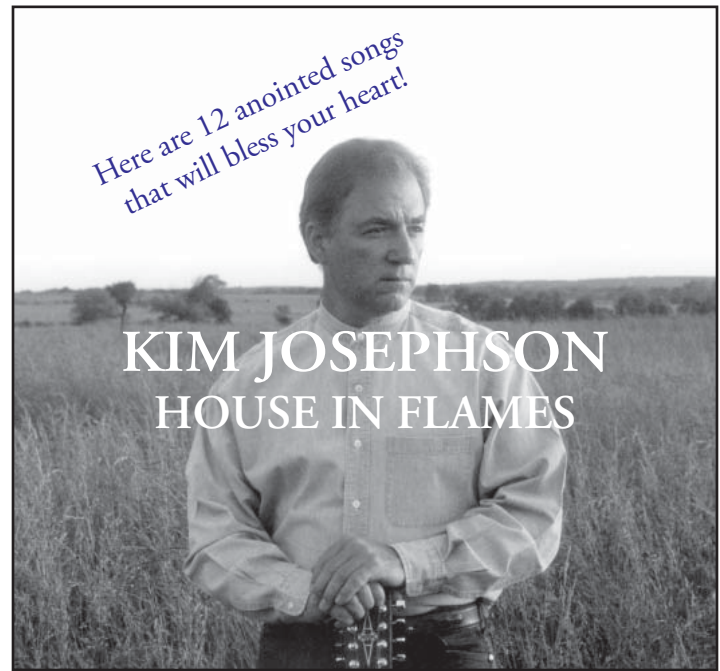
Hear me. If you are carnally minded, always looking to the arm of the flesh, and to the natural for help and satisfaction, then you are the enemy of God. You are God's enemy. This is why Paul concludes that your carnal mind cannot please God. You are at war with God.

Notice that Paul tell us that the spiritual mind is "life and peace," then draws a contrast to the carnal mind, which is death and war. James says it this way: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity [active hostility] with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4:4). And in 1 John, the beloved disciple states it this way:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John 2:15)

So understand this, if you are carnally minded you can count on condemnation. In fact, the wrath of God abides on you. You cannot please God, and are rather His enemy. The only thing that will please God is faith. (Heb 11:6) The faith that pleases God, simply put, is reckoning yourself dead and useless in your own salvation, and throwing yourself on the mercy of God. As long as you are solving all your problems, by your own machinations, and meeting all your own needs, acting as your own provider, you are living in the realm of the carnal mind.

It is time to put down the weapons of your warfare against God, (your lusts, your fears, and your self sufficiency) and repent before the Holy God you oppose. Put your faith in Him for He truly is worthy. Walk after the Spirit, and live.



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