

“By Faith,” Hebrews 11:1-16  
Tom Johnson, August 8, 2010

There are thousands of voices all around us everyday calling us to live our lives by faith. All you need to do is drive down the expressway and read the bulletin boards calling you to live your life by faith.

Or turn on your television or radio. And you will hear the many calls for us to live by faith. The call to faith is always joined with a promise—a promise in something not yet seen so that we will look forward to a greater reality.

Get your education here and you will have a well-paid, happy career. Drive this car and you will experience great comfort and prestige. Put this perfume on—put this deodorant on and those of the opposite sex will flock to you.

The world stands in line with its products and its promises. They stand in line hoping we will believe—that we will live by faith in what they have to offer. They can make whatever promises they want to.

Some promises they make may come to reality—you may very well have a better career because of their education. You might actually feel on top of the world driving that sports sedan. You might actually lose weight on their plan.

But often times this call to faith in a promise of a greater reality betrays us. The time and money we invested in higher education has not given us our dream jobs. The transmission fails on our cars even while we are still making payments. People seem no more attracted to you now than when emitted your own “natural” body odor.

The fact of the matter is that every human being is living by faith in someone or something—there is some promise of a greater reality that they are living for and living toward.

Some of us live by faith in a promise of wealth. Some of us live by faith in a promise of health. The artist lives by faith in greater creative genius. The musician lives by faith in greater musical expression. The athlete in greater physical domination—the politician in greater public service—the soldier in greater peace—the student in greater academic performance—

These are all promises that we live by faith in and live in the hope that we will soon see realized. As the writer of Hebrews says, **“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”**

What makes God's call to live by faith so difficult is that in this life we may never see the complete fulfillment of God's promise—generation after generation of Christians never have realized and experienced God's promise in this lifetime.

Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah all lived their lives by faith and hope in God's promises. All of them died before seeing the complete fulfillment of what they lived for and lived toward. Because the promise God makes transcends this life and lifetime.

And so God is calling us to live by faith. He is calling us to live our lives believing that he is creator of heaven and earth—that everything in the universe is designed and made by him—

—he also wants us to live our lives in hope of a promise—the promise he has made. This is no promise on a billboard—that may or may not happen—this is no promise that may be here today but gone tomorrow.

This is the promise of his Son, Jesus Christ. It's the promise of the forgiveness of sins—something that is invisible—immeasurable—but something we have received by faith.

We have that peace that surpasses understanding because we know that God accepts us even though we are broken and fall short of who we are called and meant to be. We believe and experience—in part—this restored relationship.

This is the promise of eternal life—something that is invisible but something we have now. We have new life in Jesus. **“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new”** (2 Cor 5:17). Scripture also says, **“Whoever has the Son has life”** (1 Jn 5:12).

What God has ultimately promised is something very concrete and clear. The end of our scripture passage says, **“Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.”**

I could not help but think of Jesus similar words in John 14, **“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”**

I think I've mentioned one of my favorite TV shows before—Extreme Makeover Home Edition. The show builds brand new, beautiful homes for needy families—some who have experienced tragedies or deal with developmentally challenged family members.

One thing they do before they tear down the old house is send the family away on vacation for a week. They send them to Disney World, Hawaii, or the mountains. They are sojourners and travelers in a foreign land as their home is being prepared.

But even though they are far off and exiled from their homeland, there is great joy and excitement in anticipation of their new home. They laugh and celebrate as their old house and life is destroyed and they long to return home to see their new house.

There is joy and excitement because they have faith—faith in those who sent them away—faith in those who are building their new house—faith in those who bring them back home. And at the very end of the show, everybody shouts, “Move that bus!” to reveal the new home with shouts and cries of joy.

God has prepared for us a city—the New Jerusalem—a city full of riches, feasts, and restored relationships—a mansion with many rooms—a place where God will wipe away every tear from our eyes and we will no longer live in sadness and have to cope with a broken world full of broken promises.

We are citizens and occupants of this far-off city. We are tenants in this new building project Jesus is building in heaven. But we do not yet live there by our presence there—we live by faith.

But our joy and excitement are still high, because the Builder of our new home and city is the same Builder of the universe. We have new life. We have a new city that awaits us. We live by faith now. But one day we will live in the full reality of his new creation.