

## Living By Faith? Really?

Written by K B Napier

Wednesday, 15 September 2010 11:24

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This is one of those 'quickie' notes, more musing than teaching, but it has a serious aim. If you are a person who says you 'live by faith', then please take note of what is written here (I speak to myself as well as to you).

Back some years ago I was sipping tea and eating a cake at one of the usual after-meeting times in the church where I was a member. As I chatted to the person next to me, one of the other members sauntered up and began to talk to the lady behind me. Because he was a bit deaf, he tended to talk loudly, so I wasn't eavesdropping! I heard him tell the lady that he would dearly love to go to a particular Bible week, but that he had no money. Then he said, *"I live by faith, you see, so I'll leave it in God's hands."*

Then he sauntered away to join someone else, to repeat his story all over again.

Now don't get me wrong. I liked the man. He had a great personality and he was quite genuine in his beliefs. Even so, his statement (that he 'lived by faith') made an impact on me. But, not for the reason you might think.

Perhaps readers can tell me otherwise, but I don't think I have ever told anyone that I 'live by faith'. (Tell me if I have, but be assured that I do not recall saying it). Yes, I wait in faith on God. I pray that He will provide whatever is necessary for my personal life, for my pastoral duties and the ministry. But, to say 'I live by faith' is superfluous, for **every** Christian should be 'living by faith'! To 'live by faith' is simply to trust in God. At times, He answers by providing through other human beings. I have experienced that myself.

What am I getting at, then? Well, think about it, friends. Let's go back to our after-meeting gentleman and analyse what was **really** going on....

Why do you think he was **telling** everyone that he 'lived by faith'? Knowing the man, I can say that he was not being pretentious or pretending to be extra-pious. Let us look at the results. I remember him telling me that he was 'amazed' by the way 'the money always seemed to be given' to him for this or that need. I had to smile, because there was nothing amazing about it at all and, I dare say, nothing divine or miraculous about it, either!

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Put it this way - if you go around telling everyone that you 'live by faith' and, at the same time, you tell them you need this or that, **what** do you think is the inevitable outcome? What will happen is that those you tell will feel a pang of conscience (or even guilt) and will give you the money!! Note that the man **always** received his money from the very folk he talked to about his need at the time. That is either coincidence, or it is the result of low-key salesmanship. Maybe he didn't realise what he was doing, but it was nothing *less* than salesmanship, and he never failed to hook his customers (who he knew to have money)! (No apology offered by me: readers ought to know by now that I am direct in what I say).

***If we tell others we 'live by faith' and then we tell them what we need, we are really asking them for money. Go on, think seriously about it for a moment. If we were truly 'living by faith' it is unlikely we would go around telling everyone about it, because faith is trust in God, not in man.***

Lots of ministries tell us they 'live by faith'. So do many preachers and others. Then, when things get tough, they repeat their claim to supporters and (hopefully) money comes back in again. But, that's not living by faith, is it? Be honest about it. No, rather, it is getting into a panic and telling other Christians, so that they will give you money! (Nothing wrong with that, in itself).

It is true that God works through others, but there are ways and means. In my ministry, for example, I have told readers of our needs. But, we do not manipulate people with what are, really, emotional statements. Nor do we say we are 'living by faith', because, to us, **all** Christians 'live by faith'. Let me be frank with you. For a number of months following my loss of job in August 1995, I was hardly 'living by faith'. If anything, I was feeling very down and lacked motivation. My spiritual life was merely ticking over (which contrasted sharply with my previous few years of fast-moving activity). Yes, I still had faith, but it was at a very low ebb, believe me! So, was I 'living by faith'? No, I was a very poor specimen, if I was!

After thirty years of silence, a ministry colleague persuaded me to let him tell readers of my situation. I reluctantly did so, but only after a friend in Bournemouth chided me and said I had an 'introverted pride' by not placing others in my confidence. I must admit the response was marvellous and I no longer felt so alone! A very small handful of folk sent me gifts. One or two of them send regularly, even though one is on an old age pension and another is unemployed. The total amount is not much, but it prevented me from becoming bankrupt and homeless, and enabled me to pay vital bills. *But at no point did I plead that I 'lived by faith'*. I do not want to burden others and I do not want to say something that is unscriptural. I have no problem with telling others about my situation, because I have nothing to hide

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**or**

to boast about. I refuse, however, to apply emotional blackmail.

So, if you are on a low income and do the Lord's work, please think carefully before you tell others you *'live by faith'*. It is rather like telling others you 'do not steal'...when that ought to be taken for granted anyway! As scripture says, why do we seek praise for something we should be doing anyway? If we truly 'live by faith' we rely only on God and trust in His provision, whatever it is. This goes for me as well as for you. By all means tell others of your situation... but leave the rest to God. Do not spoil it by making emotional statements, and do not hide desire or panic with the words *'living by faith'*. God knows what is happening in your life - let Him deal with it.

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