



GREAT AND PRECIOUS

LIVING TOWARD THE PROMISES, PART 2

T. M. MOORE

A ReVision Study from

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Great and Precious
Living toward the Promises, Part 2
Copyright 2016 T. M. Moore
Susie Moore, Editing and Finishing
Cover image: Bing images

Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Contents

Welcome to <i>Great and Precious</i>	4
1 People and Promises	5
2 Promises: Guaranteed!	7
3 Promises of Blessing	9
4 Promises of Greatness	11
5 Promises of Provision	13
6 This Way to the Promises	15
7 Jesus, the Promises: Yes!	17

Welcome to *Great and Precious*

Welcome to *Great and Precious*, Part 2 of a 5-part series on *Living toward the Promises*. All people live toward promises, toward some hope or ideal of life and goodness which they feel they must achieve.

God offers us exceedingly great and precious promises, promises of blessing and bounty, promises that can make us a blessing to all the people around us. We need to understand these promises and learn to desire them as the guiding hope of our lives.

Then we'll be able to live toward the promises of God, and to find in Jesus Christ the fullest and most joyous realization of all God holds out to us.

Don't rush through these studies, Take one lesson at a time, reading the Scriptures and narrative aloud, and pausing to reflect on the questions and *next steps* provided. Look for lessons you can implement so that your life begins to reflect more of the indwelling presence of Christ.

If you're in a group, make sure you prepare for each study by reading through the lesson in advance and answering the questions in writing. Encourage your fellow group members to prepare well and participate actively (Col. 3.16). Make sure you come away from each session with something to implement in your walk with and work for the Lord.

These studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We are happy to provide these studies at no cost. If you find them helpful, please consider making a contribution to support the work of the The Fellowship of Ailbe.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 People and Promises

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. Hebrews 8.6

Image-bearers, not animals

Christians should be careful about acquiescing in the easy way that evolutionary thinkers classify human beings as just another – albeit higher – form of animal. Humans are not animals. We are the image-bearers of God, and, as such, there is much to distinguish us from animals.

For example, consider our orientation to everyday life. Whereas animals perform their daily routines – hunting, mating, raising their young, and whatever else animals do – largely on the basis of genetic predisposition and past experience, human beings take an altogether different approach to life. Animals are *instinctive* in their behavior; human beings are *anticipatory*.

By this I mean, animal behavior is guided, for the most part, by built-up experience and genetic inheritance – what animals have known and done in the past, and how their genetic make-up predisposes them to act.

On the other hand, while people are not unmindful of past experience, and can benefit from or be harmed by it, and while we also have a unique genetic make-up, humans tend to be oriented in their behavior toward the future. People live each day for the prospect of what they hope to gain, not merely what they've always known, or how their genes incline them to act.

That is, people are motivated by promise.

God understood this, as He called His exiled people, through Jeremiah, to look to Him for a future and hope full of great things and mysteries they'd never previously known (Jer. 29.11; 33.3). People live toward promises.

That is, human beings engage in relationships, choose careers, settle in communities, make friends, take up avocations, choose their investments, and do practically everything else on the basis of what they hope or expect to *gain* from their actions – what those actions *promise*.

It is built into the human soul, as image-bearers of God, to live toward the future and the prospects and hopes of what our decisions and actions may produce. One of the primary points of schooling, indeed, of all child-rearing, is to hold out the prospect of what their lives can be and to encourage the young to dream and work toward their dreams.

The problem of a faulty worldview

Problems arise, however, when the promises we envision and pursue are based on a faulty worldview. If we believe that everything we can have in life is determined by what we know about ourselves and our strengths and limitations, coupled by what we suspect – from experience – the opportunities for us may be, then the promises we pursue will be constrained by our finite understanding and limited experience. We'll always be guided by the mantra, "Well, I've never done that before."

It's not surprising, therefore, that we often find that our promises, once realized, are not as bright and satisfying as we'd hope they would be. Whereupon we set off in search of other, *better* promises – very often with the same result.

What shall we do? We will pursue promises – it's who we are and how we live – and our promises, once they

are realized, are likely to leave us looking for more promises.

The promise of better promises

But what if the promises held out to us are not those of our own devising or dreaming? What if the promises we embrace, and around which we order our whole lives, are offered to us by God? Those would indeed be “better promises.”

God understood that His people, captive in Babylon, might soon lose all hope and either fall into despair or turn to lying prophets for comfort. He knew they did not consider their prospects very bright, and that the promises they were clinging to were simply too small. Which is why He came to them promising things greater and more glorious than they’d ever known before. God gave them great and precious promises to sustain and guide them, and He does just the same for us.

We might expect promises made by God to be such as would help us realize the fullness of our potential as His image-bearers. Such promises would be designed to draw us along in a life-long journey of seeking, knowing, and enjoying God Himself. These would be better promises because they come from an infinitely powerful and faithful Being, Who loves us and knows us better than we know ourselves, and Who is able to do exceedingly abundantly more than we could ever dare to ask or think (Eph. 3.20).

As it happens, Jesus Christ, the Word of God, does offer *better promises* for all who have entered into a covenant relationship with Him by grace through faith. And His promises, offered within the worldview of His Kingdom, are not just *better promises* but exceedingly great and precious promises, as we shall see (2 Pet. 1.4).

For reflection

1. What are some promises that typically guide people today? What are they hoping for and striving toward in life? Where do such promises originate?
2. Why do people often find their promises to be unsatisfying?
3. What role do the promises of God play in your walk with and work for the Lord at this time?

Next steps – Preparation: Make a list of all the promises that lead or drive your life. Share these with a Christian friend. How certain are you that these are the promises you should be pursuing?

2 Promises: Guaranteed!

Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all... Romans 4.16

Precious and very great

Human beings are made to live by promises. Our focus on promises determines the choices we make in every area of our lives. Living by promises is part of what sets us apart from the animals as image-bearers of God. We live our lives *toward* the hopes and expectations we hold out for ourselves – the promises we believe our actions will achieve.

But very often, because our worldview is faulty or compromised, those promises can elude or disappoint us, leaving us flat and unfulfilled, and looking for more and *better* promises. Jesus, the Scriptures tell us, offers better promises to those who trust in Him, who live within the framework of God's covenant and a Biblical worldview, and who hope in the glory of God.

Peter describes the promises of Jesus as “exceedingly great and precious,” and says that, as we lay hold on these promises, we actually participate in the very life of God (2 Pet. 1.4). Living toward the promises means living toward the knowledge of God and life in His presence.

Now *that's* an amazing promise!

Since God has in Himself all life, power, beauty, goodness, truth, joy, pleasure, and fulfillment, there can be no higher promise than that which enables us to partake of Him. This is what Jesus offers – life with God, immersed in His glory, every day, all day, in every aspect of our lives, forever and ever. No set of promises drawn from the most imaginative human thinking can even begin to compare with this!

And, as we shall see, that promise comes with a written guarantee.

Seeds of life

But surely we need more details? How can we understand this promise, and how can we begin living toward it? The Apostle Paul shows us where to look to understand and grasp the exceedingly great and precious promises of God. In the promises God made to Abraham are the seeds and outline of the full and abundant life everyone seeks, and for which everyone conjures up promises they hope will satisfy their deepest longings.

The better promises of Jesus, first offered to Abraham, do not come from our own imaginations; they are held out to us by grace, and we lay hold of them by faith. The better we understand the life which Jesus offers, the more we will rejoice in the grace of God so magnanimously provided, and the more we will desire those precious and very great promises as our own.

The Bible is full of promises. For many years in my Bible reading I would underline all the promises of God with a green pen. I was truly surprised, after several years of doing this, to see *how much* of the Bible is offered to us in the form of promises. God wants what's best for us, and He knows better than we, of what that consists.

Further, He is able to provide what He offers because His power to make good on His promises is not constrained by the limits of human imagination or might. God offers us exceedingly great and precious promises – promises powerful enough to enable us to partake of His own being and life. He shows us the way to make those promises our own. And He guarantees that, if we will pursue them above all other

promises, we will know Him and enjoy and *partake* of Him in His Kingdom and glory.

The promises to Abraham

Look to Abraham, in the first instance, for with him the promises of God are reduced to their simplest form – three sets of two promises, six promises over all. We read these promises in Genesis 12.1-3: *Now the LORD had said to Abram:*

*“Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father’s house,
To a land that I will show you.
I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*

These promises provided a powerful incentive for Abraham to leave his former life behind, journey to the land where the promises would be realized, and devote the rest of his days to seeking and following the Lord. And as we see from the Apostle Paul, those same promises are held out to us as well.

But we must pursue them in faith – with understanding, patience, and complete faithfulness.

Get these promises, set your heart and strength to attain them day by day, and you will begin to know the fullness of the good, happy, fruitful, and peaceable life that only the Biblical worldview can provide.

For reflection

1. Meditate on 2 Peter 1.4. Peter mentions a *precondition* for living toward the promises of God. What is it? What does this mean, and how should we practice this in our daily lives?
2. The land of promise was to be the staging-ground for Israel to live toward the promises of God. This was Israel’s Personal Mission Field. Have you identified your [Personal Mission Field](#)?
3. What does it mean to be blessed of God? What does it mean to be a blessing to others?

Next steps – Preparation: Read Genesis 12.1-3. How would you summarize the promises God made to Abram (Abraham)? Are any of these promises part of the promises you seek each day? Share your thoughts on this with a leader in your church, and ask him or her to pray for you as you work through the rest of this series.

3 Promises of Blessing

I will bless you

And make your name great...” Genesis 12.2

Compelling promises, indeed

The promises God offered to Abraham, vague as they seem at first glance, must have been very compelling. To the people of God, captive in Babylon, these promises must have seemed like a lost opportunity – at least, until God came with *better* promises to revive their hope. To Abraham, a wealthy man with a bright future, these promises must have been very enticing, indeed.

Abraham was from a prominent family and worshiped the local deities along with all his neighbors in Ur of the Chaldees. Life was good, and, as Abraham saw it, it could only get better as he followed in the promises he and his family had known for generations. Abraham had it all, or so it seemed.

But having it all in Ur of the Chaldees apparently wasn’t all it was cut out to be. Something in Abraham longed for brighter prospects, bigger challenges, better promises. For when God appeared to him in his native land and spoke His exceedingly great and precious promises to Abraham, he did not hesitate to abandon everything he knew and loved in order to go in pursuit of the promises of God.

We are, or should be, just like Abraham. The promises we conjure from our puny, finite minds – though they be ever so expansive and full – cannot satisfy the deep longings of our souls. We’ll always want more, because *that*, as image-bearers of God, is what we’ve been made for – more, precious and exceedingly great *more*. That’s what Abraham longed for in Ur of the Chaldees, and it’s what God held out to him there. And to us, now.

What did God offer Abraham that so enthralled and captivated him?

Six promises

God made six promises to Abraham. We read about these in Genesis 12.1-3. These six promises are extremely significant, and still matter very much today. For, as Paul tells us (Rom. 4.16), these exceedingly great and precious promises are offered to all who, like Abraham, are willing to set aside their own comparatively puny prospects in order to receive the grace of God and follow Him in faith.

The promises to Abraham can be paired into three sets. The first set of promises relates to the idea of blessing. God promised that He would *bless* Abraham, and He also promised that He would make him a blessing to others.

Now at first glance we might be inclined to say, “But hey, wasn’t Abraham already about as blessed as you can be? Rich? Set for life? Esteemed by all?” All that is true, but it wasn’t exactly what Abraham wanted. Nor is it what human beings, in the depths of their souls, earnestly desire, although many of us spend a good deal of time and energy seeking precisely this.

The *blessing* God offered Abraham appealed to him even more than all his success and prestige. This is because the blessing of God involves being drawn into a deeply personal, all-transforming relationship with God Himself.

And that’s not something money or prestige can buy.

Blessed of God

To be blessed of God is to be known by Him, loved by Him, and bound to Him in intimate love, joy, pleasure, and service that makes everything new in our lives. To be blessed of God is to enjoy His favor, to share in His very being, and to know lasting joy and pure pleasure in His presence. To be blessed of God is to commune with Him, to receive His Word and share our deepest needs and concerns in return. The prospect of such blessing captured Abraham's imagination and led him to leave every other promise and prospect behind to go in pursuit of it. Abraham set aside the material and social promises of Ur of the Chaldees to live toward the promises of God, beginning with the promise of blessings. Abraham experienced this blessing truly, but only partially – really, in his own experience, but mostly only in prospect. The fuller blessing of what God promised Abraham had to await the *better promises* which are all embodied in Jesus Christ.

It was precisely to *this* promise of blessing that God pointed the people of Israel in Babylon, that they might seek and find *Him*, and the blessing of His favor.

We may know the blessing of God more fully than Abraham did by trusting in Jesus Christ. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Who connects us with God and enables us to partake of Him. We are truly blessed only when we know God like this – personally, intimately, really.

And from that condition of *being* blessed, God promises us, as He did Abraham, that He will use us to help others know this great blessing as well. Central to full and abundant life is knowing and loving God, living day by day with Him in a relationship of forgiveness, renewal, hope, power, and glory, in which we receive what He graciously offers and, by faith, obey what He requires.

This is the way of blessing – to be blessed of God, and to channel God's blessings to others as well. And blessing is the doorway to all the promises of God.

For reflection

1. What do you think of when you hear the word *blessed*?
2. Why is knowing God the *supreme* form of blessing?
3. How should we expect to know the blessing of God in our day?

Next steps – Conversation: In what ways do you experience the blessing of God? Would you say that seeking this blessing is high on your daily agenda? Why or why not? Should it be higher? Share your thoughts with a Christian friend.

4 Promises of Greatness

*"I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great ..."* Genesis 12.2

The beginning of God's promises

The God of heaven and earth, Who made the vast cosmos and upholds it by His power, invited Abraham to become His friend and companion, to dwell in His presence, and to know the fullness of joy and pleasure that *only God* can give. God promised to bless Abraham, to make friends and enter a bond of peace with the patriarch, and then to use him as a way of extending that bond of peace to others as well.

This is the promise God held out to His people in Babylon, only with the prospect of greater blessedness than they'd ever known.

This *blessing* of God – blessed to be a blessing – is the beginning of God's promises. All those who share the faith of Abraham begin their quest for God's promises just here: reaching out to receive God's blessing with a view to offering that blessing to others.

We cannot enter the worldview of the promises of God unless we come through this door of blessing. In being blessed our sins are forgiven through Jesus Christ and the scales are removed from our eyes, spiritual scales that keep us from seeing the beauty, goodness, and truth of God. Being blessed leads to blessing others.

Greatness times two

In the second set of promises God graciously offers to make of Abraham a great people and to give him a great name. If we have entered the blessing of God we can claim this second set of promises for ourselves as well.

Two senses of *greatness* are in view here.

The first sense of *greatness* God promised to Abraham has to do with the people who through him will be blessed of God. They will be a "great nation" – very numerous. As we read elsewhere in Scripture, God says those who follow in the blessing of Abraham will be as many as the sand of the sea, the dust of the air, the stars of the sky.

It was this blessing of increase that God recalled to His people in captivity, and commanded them to pursue diligently.

Abraham was not to be blessed of God in isolation; rather, he would become the father of countless millions down through the ages who would receive the grace of God and, in faith and obedience, become blessed to be a blessing as well.

We do not claim or enjoy the promises of God alone. They to whom the promises come through Jesus Christ are a great nation, transcending every culture, age, language, and political boundary. In the better promises of our Lord, we are never alone; we are citizens of a royal priesthood and a holy nation – a people of God's own possession (1 Pet. 2.9, 10). We are a great people, citizens and ambassadors of an eternal Kingdom, and we share together in the great blessings of God which are ours through Jesus Christ our Lord.

God promised Abraham that this great nation would also have a *great name*. That is, they would be influential,

persuasive, the kind of people who determine the way of things and who make lasting contributions of blessing to culture and society. Abraham was promised a kind of greatness he would never have been able to know back on the ranch in Ur of the Chaldees. God promised to make him more numerous and influential than anyone who had ever lived.

Because Abraham would be the friend of God. Abraham would share in God's bond of peace. God's name would be his, and God's blessings would flow through him to all the nations of the earth.

Yeah, promises like that get my attention, too.

Fulfilled in Jesus!

God has fulfilled this promise today among the followers of Jesus Christ. For two millennia the Good News about Jesus has swept across the face of the earth and the pages of history, creating a family of multiplied billions who know the blessing of God and are reaching out to extend that blessing to others. The Christian faith has been the single largest religion in the world since the days of the early Church, and it continues to grow and multiply year by year.

Make no mistake: Present challenges and conditions notwithstanding, the community of those who share in the blessings of God through Jesus Christ is a great nation, a people of enormous and growing influence, a people who fear no one and nothing, and who are determined in their course of life to know all the exceedingly great and precious promises of God.

Those who know these promises, moreover, trusting in Jesus and bearing witness to Him, demonstrate in a multiplicity of ways the reality of the persuasive and transforming power of His Name.

Promises of blessing and greatness: These are precious and very great covenant promises, indeed.

For reflection

1. How does your church indicate that it holds these promises of *greatness* to be very precious?
2. What are some ways believers can influence their Personal Mission Fields for blessing?
3. Can you think of at least two ways believers can become more numerically *great* in the world? In what ways does your church equip you for this kind of greatness?

Next steps – Preparation: Does your church equip its members for greatness, according to the promises of God? In what ways? Talk with a church leader about these questions.

5 Promises of Provision

*“I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”* Genesis 12.3

God on his side

Thus far we have seen two pairs of promises that outline the exceedingly great and precious covenant promises of God, first declared to Abraham, recalled to Israel in captivity, and now available to all who share the faith of Abraham by believing in Jesus Christ as our covenant-keeping Savior and King.

A third pair of promises so enticed Abraham that he preferred them to the comfort and security of his wealthy and successful existence in Ur of the Chaldees. These relate to the way that God intended to protect Abraham, to provide for him, and to ensure a legacy for him throughout the course of history.

As a blessed people, a great nation with a powerful name and blessings to spread around, Abraham and his descendants would attract the attention of many nations and peoples. Some would be eager to support and assist Abraham; others would threaten to dominate him. But God promised to bless those nations that treated him favorably and to curse all those who treated him with dishonor.

God, that is, promised to meet all Abraham’s needs and to care for him intimately.

A legacy of blessings

In this dual promise we can discern God’s determination to protect and provide for Abraham, as well as for all those who would follow by faith in the pathway of divine promise. The additional promise that Abraham would be a blessing to all the families of the earth encouraged him to believe that his greatness and power to bless would reach around the earth and down through the corridors of history. His would be a secure and far-flung legacy of blessings.

That same legacy of promises is ours to claim today, beginning in our own spheres and callings.

It’s no wonder Abraham left his secure home and country to follow God’s leading in pursuit of these promises. The prospect of an eternal relationship of friendship with God, of being able to extend that relationship to others, of being the first of a vast and numerous people who know the blessing of God, of having the powerful Name of God with which to persuade and influence others, the promise of God’s care and provision, and of an ongoing and globe-spanning legacy – these exceedingly great and precious promises certainly dwarfed anything Abraham might have been able to dream up by himself.

And they’re greater and more precious than anything *we* might be able to conjure as well.

Abraham believed God

But laying hold on those promises in the day-to-day grind of trusting in God was not always a smooth road. There were many temptations and a few blind alleys, wrong turns, and botched opportunities. But Abraham persevered, his mind firmly set to gain what God had offered, and to settle for nothing less. He believed God, the Scriptures tell us, and so conformed his daily life in all its details *toward* the realization of God’s promises. It took time for the first of God’s promises to be realized, but then the floodgate cracked open, and the blessings continue pouring through today.

As Abraham believed God and lived toward His promises, so also God commanded His people in Babylon. They were to seek Him, to hope in His promises, and to live toward those promises by being a blessing to the

people among whom they lived. God made better promises to Israel in Babylon – great things and mysteries they had never known – and He has made even *better* promises to us who believe in Jesus Christ.

We who share in the faith of Abraham are also encouraged to reach for these same great and precious promises. The promises made to Abraham are *our* promises, all of us who believe in Jesus Christ. For in Christ all the promises of God are “Yes!” and “Amen!” (2 Cor. 1.20) And He makes those exceedingly great and precious covenant promises even better than they were because they are guaranteed by His life, death, resurrection, and reign at the Father’s right hand.

Jesus *guarantees* God’s covenant. Nothing can separate us from Him, or from the better promises He offers, so long as we look to Him in faith and persevere, day after day, in living toward the precious and very great covenant promises of God.

We can know life as God intends it, life in all its fullness of meaning, purpose, joy, power, and peace. But we will only know it when we set aside our own promises and go in pursuit of God’s.

For reflection

1. How do you see that God is faithful to His promises of provision and protection, even in our day?
2. God’s promises moved Abraham to leave his “comfort zone” and strike out in unfamiliar directions. What would our lives look like if we lived toward the promises of God like Abraham did?
3. What does Paul mean by saying that *all* the promises of God are “Yes!” and “Amen!” in Jesus? How should knowing this guide our walk with and work for the Lord?

Next steps – Conversation: Blessing, greatness, provision: great promises, indeed! Talk with some Christian friends. What is their approach to aiming for, living by, or laying hold on those precious and very great promises?

6 This Way to the Promises

He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. Romans 4.20, 21

The way we live

No matter what you do in life, you will pursue promises. It's the way people live. As an image-bearer of God, you are oriented toward the future, toward what you hope and long for, and that to which you aspire. You *will* set your mind and heart on a raft of promises – things and conditions you believe will provide you with the maximum happiness and wellbeing – and everything you do, every day of your life, will strain toward the realization of those promises.

But we can never out-conjure God when it comes to promises. He offers us exceedingly great and precious promises – the promises made to Abraham – and invites us to come, by faith in Jesus Christ, and receive the grace of those promises, and the fullness of life with God. God invites us to *partake of Him* in a bond of righteousness, peace, and joy that nothing can overthrow and that is richer, fuller, and more durable than anything the world can offer (2 Pet. 1.4; Rom. 14.17, 18).

So how do we lay hold on the promises of God? How do we live toward the promises, so that we may enjoy this full and abundant life He plans for us? What's the way into these *better* and precious and exceedingly great covenant promises of God?

Paul tells us briefly how we can begin to organize our lives around the promises of God and focus our energies on realizing them more and more, day by day.

Understand the promises

First, we need to make sure we *understand* the promises of God, and that we see them as far greater and more precious than any other promises. Abraham struggled with this. He kept trying to make God's promises fit his fleshly experience and expectations. It took many years of waiting on the Lord, listening to Him, repenting of sin, and getting additional clarification before Abraham finally understood the enormity of what God was promising.

So we too can have our aspirations and hopes muddled by mere self-interest, complacency, or doubt. We keep wanting to draw up our own promises, and we hope God will endorse them; and this causes us to lose sight of just how precious and very great God's covenant promises are. If we would know these promises, we must give ourselves to study, meditation, and waiting on God to expand our vision and understanding, until the greatness and implications of these promises become fixed in our minds and hearts, until we can *see* these promises coming to realization in our lives and Personal Mission Fields.

Give glory to God

Then, and every day, we must *give glory to God* for His promises – praising and thanking Him daily, talking the promises back to Him, and exalting Him for such great grace and mercy, rehearsing our plans and visions before Him with gratitude and praise, claiming some progress in His promises for each day. We can also glorify God by talking with others about His promises and urging them to lay hold on them as well.

As part of this, try to *envision, day by day, what your life will look like as you take the next step* toward one or another of God's promises. For each of the promises, every day, what's your "next step"? What will indicate progress in knowing the Lord and living in Him? Take this mindset toward laying hold on the promises, and you'll find a sure way into them for every area of your life.

For example, as Paul explains, Abraham was promised a child. Although he was well advanced in age, and he and Sarah had not had relations for many years (cf. Gen.18.11, 12), he knew what the next step needed to be, and he took it in faith – even though it must have seemed an unlikely course of action. What will the next step look like as you reach out to bless others, to persuade or influence the ways of things in your world, to trust God for His daily provision, or to grow in His blessings, to fill your Personal Mission Field with Jesus (Eph. 4.8)?

Act on the promises

The more clearly you can *see* what the promises will look like *incrementally and day by day*, the easier it will be for you to take the final step, and to *act as if those things you have envisioned were already real in your life*. If you were to know more of the blessings of God, how might you praise Him? Or how might you seek His counsel for more of your life? If you were to be a blessing to the people around you, what would that look like, and how can you live toward that vision today? Discern your course of action for living toward the promises each day, then act in obedience to God's promise, and the Spirit of God will meet you with power, right where and when you need it.

It's only as we *live* toward what God has *promised*, bringing our lives into line with *His* expectations, relying on faith to tap into *His* transforming power, and going into our daily lives believing that we already possess what God has promised for every area of our lives – it's only then that our feet will be on the path that leads to those promises being truly and amazingly ours.

Living by the promises day by day we move toward them more and more.

Study, praise the Lord, envision His promises unfolding in you, then act in the belief that He will do it. This is the way to lay hold on the precious and very great promises of God. This is the way to live in the bond of righteousness, peace, joy, and transforming power which is the covenant of our God.

For reflection

1. How would you explain the exceedingly great and precious promises of God to a new believer?
2. How do the promises of God relate to the Gospel of Christ and His Kingdom? Should we include some mention of these promises in the Good News of Jesus? Explain.
3. What can keep us from living toward the promises each day? How can we overcome such obstacles?

Next steps – Preparation: For each of the six promises of God, lay out a few “next steps” that can get you moving more steadily toward the promises of God. Write them out. Begin taking those steps, reviewing your progress at the end of each day. Share this exercise with a Christian friend.

7 Jesus, the Promises: Yes!

But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me, Silvanus, and Timothy—was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.. 2 Corinthians 1.18-20

A single focus

Frequently in Scripture, when God is referring to the promise relationship He has with His people, He summarizes all the benefits and blessings of that relationship with the phrase, “I will be your God, and you will be My people.” This, in essence, is what He promised to Abraham, as well as to Israel in captivity in Babylon.

This *covenant motto* captures the essence of the life of divine promises that we may enjoy by the grace of God. He binds Himself to us as our God, establishes us firmly in His peace and joy, and causes us to cling to and live for Him as His people.

Nothing, no other way of life, could be more fulfilling, more satisfying, more filled with righteousness, peace, and joy than the life we may have with God. He is all we need, the fullness of joy and pleasures forever more (Ps. 16.11).

And in Jesus Christ, therefore, God has brought into a single focus all His exceedingly great and precious promises, and He invites us to enter them, enjoy them, live them out, and pass them on to others. Paul says that Jesus Christ is the “Yes!” of God’s promises. If we have Jesus, if He is in us and increasing, all the precious and very great promises of God will be ours, and to the “Yes!” of Jesus we will resoundingly and joyously declare our “Amen!”

Life in God’s promises

It’s difficult to describe or explain just how completely satisfying life in God’s covenant promises can be. Through Jesus Christ we know the blessing of an intimate relationship with the living God. We say, with the young child, misquoting his memory verse: “The Lord is my Shepherd; He’s all I want.” Knowing Jesus and living in Him is so completely satisfying and fulfilling, that not even the most untoward of circumstances can rob us of the peace and joy of His presence. He is with us always, and we are seated with Him in the heavenly places (Matt. 28.20; Eph. 2.6). What could possibly separate us from Him?

By Jesus, and in His power, we are commissioned to extend that blessed life to the whole world. We are part of a great company of like-minded people who are on a mission for Christ to further His Kingdom and increase His glory. We are His witnesses, ambassadors in His Kingdom, bearers of the Good News of the Lord’s forgiveness and life. Each of us has a [Personal Mission Field](#) where we have been sent as joy-bringers to the world. As we live toward Him, and the promises of God that we know in Him, we find the orientation and power we need to fulfill our *calling* to the world, and to fill our *corner* of the world with the presence of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1.15-23; 4.8).

We know the power of His Name at work within us, leading us to persuade others of their need for salvation, and we rejoice to be able, by His Spirit, to wield His Word with powerful effects (cf. Ps. 149; Heb. 4.12). He is with us always, and we are seated in heavenly places with Him; so we know He will provide our every need and guard us against those who would do us harm.

And even if we do suffer, it is never in vain, for affliction for the Name of Jesus brings comfort, strength, and increased assurance of His presence and love.

A legacy of praise

Thus, as we live toward and into the great and precious promises of God, we are able to leave a legacy of praise to God that extends from us to all the people we touch by His grace, and to all the people they touch, for generations to come (Ps. 45.17).

By His glorious saving work Jesus of Nazareth has been declared to be the Son of God with power, the Savior and Lord of all men, the focal point of God's promises, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. To know Him is to know God. To be filled with Him is to be filled with God, and to overflow with His righteousness, peace, and joy. To live for Him is to take up the life of great and precious promises, every day, in every situation, so that grace and truth, beauty and goodness, excellence and love pervade all we are and do.

In Jesus Christ the promises made to Abraham, and hoped for by Israel in Babylon – incredible and great as they are – are made *even better*, exceedingly great and precious, because in Jesus we partake of God Himself in ways Abraham or Israel were never able to know.

You're going to live by promises, for promises, in the hope of promises. And no promises are greater or more sure than those held out to us through Jesus Christ. Why not organize your life and prosecute your days in the direction of Jesus and His promises?

Why not make those exceedingly great and precious covenant promises your own?

For reflection

1. How do you expect to know more of the great and precious promises of God in your own life? In your Personal Mission Field?
2. How can believers help one another to keep focused on the great and precious promises of God?
3. How should we expect living toward the promises of God to bring the *shalom* and *blessing* of God to the people around us?

Next steps – Conversation: Talk with a non-Christian friend about the promises he lives for, the hopes to which he clings. Use that conversation as an opportunity to share the promise of Jesus Christ.

For reflection or discussion

1. Summarize the exceedingly great and precious promises God holds out to us through Jesus Christ.
2. Are these promises as *precious* to you as they should be? Explain.
3. How can you begin to use prayer, better planning, and perhaps a prayer partner to help you live more consistently toward the promises of God?
4. What are the greatest obstacles confronting you as you live toward the promises of God? How can prayer, planning, and prayer partners help you to overcome these obstacles?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned in this study of God's great and precious promises? How are you putting that lesson to work in your daily life?

Prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at www.ailbe.org to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship to help us extend our ministry and resources to others. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.