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**Promises!
Promises!
Promises!**

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Series: God's Living Legends II



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Promises! Promises! Promises!

Promises! Promises! Promises!

We live in a world of promises. A world in which we are bombarded with so-called bonafide guarantees...guarantees that do not always deliver what they promised.

Young people are promised that if only they will use UltraLite toothpaste, they will find themselves gliding on the seas that lead into the harbor of matrimonial bliss. It's a promise. Older people are promised that only if they will coat their dentures with Expo-dent, they will find themselves chewing the toughest steaks as though they were gumming a bowl full of jello. It's a promise.

Business men are promised that if only they will buy an IBX computer, they will find themselves humming their way to the golf course instead of sweltering in the recesses of their dingy office till the wee hours of the morning. It's a promise. Women are promised that only if they will use Mold Power Sudsies for Dudsies can their clothes spring out of the washer, creases intact, colors fast, grease spots gone, and ah-ha...without embarrassing static cling. It's a promise.

Promises! Promises! Promises! Perhaps you've had this happen. You're sitting down to eat. The phone rings, and it's a semi-automated promise from one who is offering you the moon and some change if you will only take a few hours of your unneeded time and drive to Cascading Springs Subdivision, high on a hill overlooking Incredible Lake Village. All you have to do is look. And they PROMISE that you will win a new Mercedes, a \$25,000 boat, a mink coat, or a Colombian cocoa-colored plastic wastebasket. Now which of those you will win, they won't tell; but if you will just visit, you will win something. It's a promise.

Promises! Promises! Promises! The world is filled with promises. Parents promise their children, "If you'll just be good till Mommy's through watching television, she'll buy you some ice cream." Children promise their parents, "If you'll let me play at Eddie's house for ten more minutes, I'll come right home and do my homework." Employers promise their employees, "Just work another year and I guarantee you'll get a promotion." Salesmen promise their clients, "If you'll only sell MY product, your business will double."

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But the problem with promises are four-fold.

1- Promises build expectations, expectations that cannot always be met; and those unfulfilled expectations often lead to bitterness.

2- Promises are only as good as the integrity of the one who makes them. A promise from someone who does not keep his word is worthless.

3- Sometimes even with the best of intentions, it is simply impossible to deliver what you...promised!

4- And finally, promises are sometimes miscommunicated. And what the promisor meant and what the promisee *thought* was meant turn out to be decidedly different.

As an example of the first problem, mommy promised little Susie that if she'd just exit the premises until "Search for Yesterday" was over on television, mommy would go get her some ice cream. Mommy, however, forgot that she didn't have the car, and didn't have a dime. So she passes it off, says, "Some other time," and forgets about it. But Susie doesn't forget. She feels betrayed, and she never is sure from then on, if mommy will keep her promises.

The second problem is that promises are only as good as the word of the promisor...and sometimes promises are made by unscrupulous people who will say anything to get you to do what they want. You bought that 1973 Wearymobile from Yakkin' Yukon's Used Cars and were promised it had a new motor. It did! The fan motor was new; the engine had gone 230,00 miles. You go back, and Yukon's long gone, and so is the \$2,000 you gave him. You believed a promise from someone whose word was not good.

Thirdly, you remember, sometimes people are just unable to deliver on a promise they made in good faith, like that well-meaning repairman who *promised* he'd be right over to stop the flood that was pouring out of your broken pipe. But his truck broke down, his boss left town with the keys to the other one; and as you float down the street on your dining room table, you realize he made a promise he was unable to keep.

Or maybe your unkept promise was the result of problem #4. Your true love had a cold and was a little hard to understand. You

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thought he said he was going to give you a mink coat...what he said was that he was going to give you a pink goat. And because of poor communications, you are the disappointed recipient of what you construe to be an unkept promise.

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The world is filled with unkept promises. The result is a world filled with cynicism, selfishness, and mistrust, a world in which hardly anybody believes anybody will keep their word.

But the Christian, upon receiving Christ, enters into a whole new sphere of life. And part and parcel of that new life is a book full of promises...promises that have never been broken. With God's promises, there need never be unnecessary expectations that lead to bitterness. The giver of these promises has never failed to keep His word.

I Kings reminds us,

There hath not failed one word of all His good promise, [not ONE!...] (I Kings 8:56b NKJV)

Not only that, but Romans adds:

And being fully convinced that what He had promised, He was also able to perform. (Romans 4:21 NKJV)

With God, there need be no communication problems...He has given to us an interpreter, a counselor, to make sure that the promises He makes, are the promises we can claim. John states:

However, when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth [He'll make it plain!]; (John 16:13 NKJV)

We now possess a world of promises that WILL be kept. Now we can live our lives in the total confidence that there is someone who always keeps His promises, and what promises they are.

That, of course, is the subject of today's lesson as we continue our journey through the life of the Living Legend we've come to know as David. It is entitled "Promises! Promises! Promises!"

I- THE PRELUDE

The prelude to our study is simply an update from the Jerusalem Gazette telling us what has happened since we last looked at our Living Legend. As we left David last week, he was fresh from a victory over the Amalekites, a victory that not only saved David, but his men and their families as well.

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Our friend Saul, meanwhile, the King Kong of the Royal Order of Unmerciful Monarchs, had just witnessed a grade C charade at the hand of a witch, no less, and having believed he had heard from a dead prophet, he fell on his face, claiming he was dying from hunger.

Now we don't have time to walk with David through every day of his life. This is a biographical overview, and we must scan the incidents in his life in order to major on those that reveal certain aspects of his character. But so the story will have some semblance of continuity, we'll just use our wide-angle lens to give you a panoramic sweep of what has taken place between last week's lesson and this one.

If we were reading from the Jerusalem Gazette and just looking for headlines, they might have read like this,

KING COMMITS SUICIDE;
DEFEATED MONARCH ENDS IT ALL

And another,

JONATHAN FOUND DEAD; COUNTRY MOURNS

Another,

DAVID ANOINTED KING OVER JUDAH
SAUL'S SON ISH-BOSHETH REIGNS IN ISRAEL

Again,

ISH-BOSHETH SLAIN
DAVID ANOINTED KING OVER ALL ISRAEL

This was followed by a frontpage story headed by this banner,

KING DAVID SUCCEEDS
ARK OF GOD RETURNED TO JERUSALEM AT LAST!!!

That, in a nutshell, is what has taken place since we left our legend on the outskirts of Ziklag, encouraging himself in the Lord. Now David wears the crown of king over all of Israel; Saul and all of his sons are dead; and the ark of God has been returned at last to its rightful place in Jerusalem. There our story takes up in II Samuel, chapter 7, where we will read of what may well have been the most meaningful event in all of David's life.

David's Proposal

II Samuel 7 reads,

Now it came to pass when the king was dwelling in his

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house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies all around,

That the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains.”

And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.” (II Samuel 7:1-3 NKJV)

It’s a very special time in King David’s life. 1) He wasn’t fighting anybody. There was peace. “The Lord had given him rest from all his enemies.” 2) He not only had the kingdom at last, but a place at last, to call his home. David had spent years in caves, on the run, hiding from King Saul, running for his life. Now he was secure in his own house of cedar. At last he had peace, at last he had security, at last he had a place to call his own.

It’s interesting how much you can appreciate that when you haven’t had it. We take so much for granted. David didn’t. David knew that neither peace nor a place were things you presumptuously assume will be yours. But what’s even more interesting is that as thoughts of gratitude filled David’s heart, they were not self-centered thoughts that concerned themselves that at last David had gotten what he deserved. They were thoughts of humility. David compared his fine new dwelling place with that of the ark of God, and he saw no equity. “I dwell in a house of cedar, but God lives in a tent. This simply will not do.”

So David’s motives were to glorify God. God had prospered him, blessed him, and protected him; but God, it seemed, hadn’t taken the time to build Himself a house.

David does a good thing. He seeks counsel from a prophet. He calls in Nathan, and says, “Nathan, it’s just not right; I’m living in luxury, God’s living in a tent. I want to do something about it.” Unfortunately, Nathan gave the kind of counsel most of us give, particularly if it’s to someone we don’t want to antagonize. He said, “Dave, that’s a neat idea! Why don’t you do that.” The implication was, David, if you think that’s God’s will it must be God’s will.

God’s Refusal

But our wonderful God has a way of gently correcting and redirecting His children when they are filled with good intentions but misreading the will of God.

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But it happened that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying,

“Go and tell My servant David, “Thus says the LORD” “Would you build a house for Me to dwell in?”

For I have not dwelt in a [any] house since the time that I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day, but have moved about in a tent and in a tabernacle.

Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?”

(II Samuel 7:4-7 NKJV)

The first three verses represented David’s well-meaning proposal. Verses 4-7 represent God’s gracious refusal. God did not scold David for his offer. He simply declined and, in love, explained why.

God said, “Nathan, go ask David why he needs to build a house for me to live in. Ask him if he remembers my needing a house before. Ask him if I’ve ever complained to any of Israel about not having a permanent place in which to dwell.

Several beautiful thoughts come from this brief response of God’s

1- God honored the intent of David’s heart. He didn’t scold him or punish him. He *instructed* him.

2- God, however, didn’t just sit back and say, “Well, what’s the difference? I could always use a house; and David means well.” God does care about the details of what we do, especially where the ministry is concerned. He doesn’t just sit back and idly watch as we wander off into well-meaning tasks that may be good, but not His will. He gently tries to redirect us into the way that we should go.

3- God always takes us back to His Word. He asks the question...When did I say to do that? It sounds neat, but is it a response to my Word or to your desires? Do you want to do the will of God? Search the Word of God.

4- There are times to build and times not to. There are times to sow and times to reap. There are times to speak out, and times to remain silent. This was not the time, and as we shall see, David was not the man to do it. Beware, lest you take a principle,

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and determining a need, go out and do in your energy what you determine is needed, without waiting on God for His answer, and for His timing!

5- God wanted David to know His will. He was eager to reveal it. We sometimes treat God as though He were playing hide and seek...as though He enjoyed teasing His children, keeping them in suspense, making them wonder if He has a plan at all. Once God saw that David had a plan, God saw that David knew His plan. That's the heart of our wonderful God.

God's Proposal

Now look at God's proposal in verses 8-17. To steal a trademark from a famous auto manufacturer, you might entitle this passage "God has a better idea".

We could easily divide this section into three parts. God's *preparation* in verses 8-9, God's *national promise* in verse 10, and God's *personal promise* in verses 11-17.

The Priceless Preparation

First look at the preparation: how God prepared His king to receive the promise:

Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel.

And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who are on the earth.'" (II Samuel 7:8,9 NKJV)

When God speaks to man, it seems imperative for God to begin by reminding man that all he is and ever will be is a product of a product called *grace*. God lovingly reaches into His bag of brushes and sweeps across the canvas of David's remembrance a picture of a hillside outside of Bethlehem where a ruddy lad is quietly tending his father's sheep. God often tries to do that with us. We simply do not always turn to see the picture. He often whispers to us, "Do you not remember who you were, and where you were, and what you were, when I reached down from those hallowed halls of eternity and touched you? You were a nobody headed nowhere where eternal things were concerned.

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you

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that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you (John 15:16 NKJV)

God isn't sitting in Heaven, counting His blessings that you enlisted in His army in the nick of time and have come to save His Kingdom from certain ruin. You were out on the hillside tending sheep; in the market place making money; in the home building your life on wood, hay, and stubble; when a loving, merciful God called your name, and in love said, "I have something I want to do for you." You didn't come to save God; God came to save you!

David, a few years ago you were a lonely shepherd, tending sheep. Now you are the king of the King's Kingdom. Do you remember how you got here? Verse 9 tells you...God was with you wherever you went. He destroyed your enemies right before your eyes...you're not a warrior come to deliver God. God is a God of mercy come to deliver you. And *He made your name great*. Oh, men in the ministry, women in the ministry, whether in pulpits, on television, in places of great power and acclaim, GOD made your name great. When He found you, you were nothing. He took nothing to make something, that all glory and honor and power would be His. Men build ministries, and buildings, and organizations and name them after themselves and say in the process to a confused world, "Look what I have done for God." What they have done for God is steal His glory.

David, you were an unknown shepherd and you would still be, God is saying in love, had not I called you, and led you, and protected you, and made your name what it is.

II - THE PROMISES

The National Promise

Now, God makes a promise to the nation Israel,

Moreover, I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, (II Samuel 7:10 NKJV)

Here God makes an amazing promise to Israel. The scene shifts from what David can do to give God a home to what God will do to give Israel a home. God is the provider. And He has provided for His people a place that they one day can call their own. He said He would bring them back to that home, and He has. He said

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there will come a time when they will never again move from that home (and they won't). And He said the day is coming when the children of wickedness will afflict them no more. That day is not yet here. But, ah, one golden daybreak, Jesus will come. And one bright morning, the glory of His presence will descend upon the mount of Olives, and He will set up a Kingdom, and His people will dwell in the land He has prepared for them, and the children of wickedness will afflict them no more. Some of God's promises have been fulfilled; some of God's promises are being fulfilled; some of God's promises are yet to be fulfilled; but beloved, *all of god's promises will be fulfilled*. Mark it down. Underline it. If God says it will happen, *it will come to pass*. Not one word He has spoken will fail. Not one. The grass will wither, the flowers will fade, but the word of our God will abide forever.

Did Israel deserve so noble a promise? No more than David did. In Deuteronomy 7, God reminded them of that, lest they be exalted above measure:

“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.

The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any people, for you were the least of all peoples;

But because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers,

(Deuteronomy 7:7-8a NKJV)

That's why God chose you, Israel. Because He loved you. That's why God's hand is still upon you, Israel, because He keeps His Word. How easily Israel forgets. How easily WE forget.

The Personal Promise

Now the scene shifts in verse 11 to God's precious promise to a man who had been an unknown shepherd on a hillside, a man God had in His incredible sovereignty taken from the plains to the palace, from the leading of sheep to the leading of men. Now God addresses David. This is a personal promise to a man after God's own heart.

Since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house.

“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers,

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I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men.

But My mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you.

And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.”

According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David. (II Samuel 7:11-17 NKJV)

So we go from a national promise to a personal promise; a personal promise made to a lowly shepherd made king. God says, David, you want to build me a house? David, I'm the builder. And I'm building a house for you, a kingdom for you, a heritage for you that you cannot even in your wildest dreams imagine.

“David, I'm going to build for you a kingdom that will never end—a house not made with hands. Your son, Solomon, and My son, Jesus, will inherit that throne. Solomon for a season; Jesus for eternity. Solomon will build me a house, not you, David. In I Chronicles 22:8 we read why. Solomon will build me a house, God said, and it will last for a season. Jesus will build me a house, and it will last forever.”

“And David, this is an unconditional promise, with conditional blessings. (We'll look at that a bit in the next lesson.) In other words, nothing you can do will keep this from happening. In that sense, it's unconditional. I have said it; it will come to pass. But within the context of the promise are conditional benefits. David, you will sin, and I will punish you with the rod of men and with the stripes of the children of men. Jesus will not sin, but He will take upon Himself the sins of the world, and the stripes of the children of men, but by those stripes they shall be healed.”

“But, David, my mercy will not depart from you as it did from Saul. Because your house and your kingdom will be established forever, and your throne will be established forever.”

You say, oh, if only God would give me a promise like that. He has! He has placed in your heart a kingdom that will never end.

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He has given you His very nature, planted within you His own Spirit,

By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these [promises] you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

(II Peter 1:4 NKJV)

The problem many of us have is that we do not understand how to partake of those promises. In our next study we are going to look at the promises, the principles, and the problems. We must close this lesson, however, by looking at the posture. For this I believe, is *where we fail* in the process of possessing the promises. It is not so much our lack of knowledge of the Word, as it is our lack of understanding the nature of God, and thus our failure to approach Him in the posture He designed for us that keeps us from possessing these great and precious promises that obviously are ours, just as certainly as these promises were David's.

III- THE POSTURE

Look now, how David responded to these incredible words from God.

Then King David went in and sat before the LORD; and he said: "Who am I, O Lord GOD? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far?"

And yet this was a small thing in Your sight, O Lord GOD; and You have also spoken of Your servant's house for a great while to come. Is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?

Now what more can David say to You? For You, Lord GOD, know Your servant.

For Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart, You have done all these great things, to make Your servant know them.

Therefore You are great, O Lord GOD. For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

And who is like Your people, like Israel, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people, to make for Himself a name—and to do for Yourself great and awesome deeds for Your land—before Your people whom You redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, the nations, and their gods?

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For You have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever; and You, LORD, have become their God.

“Now, O LORD God, the word which You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house, establish it forever and do as You have said.

So let Your name be magnified forever, saying, ‘The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel.’ And let the house of Your servant David be established before You.

For You, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, have revealed this to Your servant, saying, ‘I will build you a house.’ Therefore Your servant has found it in his heart to pray this prayer to You.

“And now, O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are true, and You have promised this goodness to Your servant.

Now therefore, let it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue before You forever; for You, O Lord GOD, have spoken it, and with Your blessing let the house of Your servant be blessed forever.”

(II Samuel 7:18-29 NKJV)

I believe that Satan has done two things primarily to cripple the power of the church by stealing as it were the keys to the promises of God. The first is faithlessness. By faithlessness I mean those times when we either do not know His promises or we do not believe His promises; so rather than embarrass God, or embarrass ourselves, we ignore His promises.

The second is even more prevalent in evangelical circles. It is the sin of presumption. The misappropriation of the promises of God either by taking them out of context or by assuming a posture before God that makes us God, using the promises as clubs with which to beat a trapped deity into submission. It is to that last problem that we address ourselves in closing. I believe it was David’s attitude in the presence of God that prepared him to receive those promises. God prefaced the promises with a clear statement of who He was relative to who David was, and David understood that. My concern for myself, and for you, is that we understand that, before we go on, in the later studies, to practice possessing the powerful promises that are ours.

Our posture is step one to possessing the promises. David begins his prayer by saying:

“Who am I, O Lord GOD? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far?”

(II Samuel 7:18b NKJV)

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David did not begin by beating God over the head with His promise. David began by falling on his face in unworthiness before the God of creation and seeing God as He is; and seeing himself as he was, he wondered how God could stoop to make such a promise to such a sinner as he. Can you not just hear David in Psalm 131:1?

LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, Nor with things too profound for me. (NKJV)

Or in Psalm 144:3,

LORD, what is man, that You take knowledge of him? Or the son of man, that You are mindful of him? (NKJV)

Do you want to learn to claim the promises of God? Then stop going to God, armed with those promises, as though you had the eternal creator of Heaven and Earth in a corner, and instead fall on your face before Him in awe at who He is. As David sees God, in verse 19, he quietly mentions the promise, and he is in shock that the omnipotent, omniscient God of eternity would choose the likes of him to receive a treasure so rich as this. That's how you claim a promise, on your face before a holy and sovereign God, who, because He loved you, saw you tending your sheep, or making your living, or crying your eyes out, and tenderly called you and magnificently changed you, and made a name for you, by giving a name to you, the name of His only begotten Son, full of grace and truth.

Then, in verse 20, David acknowledges that God knows everything. He hasn't chosen David because He doesn't know David's heart and David's sins. He chose him in spite of it, and that drives David even further to his knees. "Thou, Lord God, knowest thy servant." It isn't that you made a mistake, Lord, David is saying. You knew what you were getting, and still you chose me...and David is aware of Grace. Never for a moment, does he assume God sees such great potential that He is forced to bless David. "For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things", David says. God you're doing it because you love me; and you will do it because you always keep your word. That's perspective.

And in verse 22, David worships God with all his heart. He says this:

Wherefore thou art great, O Lord God; for there is none like

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thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. (II Samuel 7:22)

Now David is ready to possess the promises; now and only now.

In our next study, we will see how David did that and how we do that. But for now, I want us to focus on only one thing, and it is this:

Before you can lay hold of the promises of god, you must learn to bow before the awesomeness of god and worship.

Only then, will you see Him as He is. And only when you see Him as He is, will you see yourself as you are. And only when you see yourself as you are, are you ready to lay hold of all of the heavenly treasures God has laid at your feet.

May I make a suggestion? Spend next week meditating on the greatness of God and who He is. Ponder carefully II Sam. 7:18-19. Scan the Psalms, underlining the attributes and the majesty of God, stopping each time you do to worship Him for that quality of His being.

Ask God to remind you of who you were and where you were headed when He found you, and called you, and chose you, and saved you. You were nothing, headed nowhere. Now you're a child of the King, headed for eternal glory. Remember HE gave you His name. He established your ministry; He has blessed your testimony, touched your family, multiplied your fruitfulness. He did not call you because of your greatness; He called you because He loved you, and He keeps you because He honors His Word.

Would you like to claim the promises of God?

Then, first, learn to approach Him as David did—in utter humility, in total dependence. In absolute awe. In literal disbelief that a God such as He would choose to give to a sinner such as you promises such as these.

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Like sparkling jewels, reflecting the light of Heaven, they have been laid before us. Oh, God, may we see that glory is not in the promises; nor is it in the claiming of them. The Glory belongs to the one who gave them. To Him, be praise and honor and glory forever!

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Promises, promises, promises,
Oh, how precious, how priceless His trust
That from the very depths of His heart
He's bequeathed such gems to us.

Promises, promises, promises,
They are ours to take and to claim
An ocean of love in specific terms
He offers in Jesus' name.

But, ah, what makes the difference
Lies not in what promise we know
What matters in claiming these jewels so rare
Is the manner in which we go!

Have we learned to approach the Master's throne
With the kind of respect and awe
That cries "mine eyes have seen the King!
And I'll never forget what I saw".

I've seen the King; O praise His name
Such glory no tongue can tell
And seeing His matchless, marvelous power
I've seen myself as well.

Oh, God, I cry; I'm nothing!
What right have I to ask?
And in that moment God says, "Child;
Now you are ready at last".

Ready to humbly bow at His feet
Worshipping as you pray,
Quietly claiming each promise He's given,
Day after day after day.

Promises, promises, promises
They abound from His living Word
But the promises will not really be ours
Till He is really...LORD!

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