

**PROMISE 5:
USEFULNESS
TO GOD**

• *An example of someone who persisted in believing no matter what!*

• *Contributing to the forward movement of God's kingdom*

• *As the children of Abraham the promise is ours too*

**PROMISE 6:
SIGNIFICANCE**

• *A central part in God's programme of salvation*

• *God stands by his servants*

Another assurance to Abram consists of the promise of usefulness to God. God said, *'...and so you shall be a blessing'*. Abram will become a channel of blessing to others. The words are actually a command: *'And be a blessing!'* It is a Hebrew way of making a very emphatic promise; it means *'...and so you certainly shall be a blessing'*.

Abram must respond to God in faith. If he persistently follows what God is saying to him, the child Isaac will be born, and from Isaac will come Jacob, and from Jacob will come the nation of Israel, and from the nation of Israel will come Jesus, and from Jesus will come every kind of blessing. We can become a blessing to others by being an example of faith. In Abram's case we see him taking God's word seriously, holding on despite mistakes, believing God when God's word to him seems quite impossible, trusting God's promises when circumstances seem to point in the opposite direction, overcoming the depression that comes when expectations are extremely delayed, refusing to be discouraged. Abram is a blessing by the sheer goodness of his example not as a super-saint but as one who persisted in believing no matter what!

We can become a blessing to others by contributing to the forward movement of God's kingdom. God had a plan for bringing salvation to the world. Abraham played a part in it – a big part. But we all have parts to play in carrying forward God's kingdom. Jesus must reign until He has put all enemies beneath His feet. But He reigns through us, through persistent believers.

We are children of Abraham! Be a blessing! Be a giant of faith! Trust God amidst delays and difficulties, discouragements and dangers, depressions and demons! And the promise to Abraham is ours too: *'you certainly shall be a blessing'*.

Another promise to Abram is what I might call the promise of significance. The promise is that Abram will become so important in the plans of God that God will bless or curse according to how we relate to Him. *'... I will bless those who bless you... the one who curses you I will curse'*¹.

Abram is central in God's purpose to bring salvation. So anyone who resists what is happening in and through Abram is resisting God. Abram's faith is carrying forward God's programme of salvation.

Jesus said to his disciples: *'Anyone who receives you receives me, and anyone who receives me receives the one who sent me'*¹. Anyone who is forwarding God's gospel, as Abram was and as Jesus' disciples were, is representing God. God will stand by him. When someone attacks God's servant, it is like attacking God. Equally when someone blesses one of God's servants because he is God's servant, then the one doing the blessing is himself blessed. He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward. He who receives Abram will receive Abram's reward. This is the blessing of Abraham. When we are people of faith, as Abraham was a man of faith, we gain the greatest significance conceivable. God stands by us. Woe to the person who curses us! What blessing there is for those who bless us because they receive what we have to say, what we are doing for God. *'Do not touch my anointed'*, says God, *'and do my prophets no harm'*². God

¹ 12:3

¹ Matthew
10:40

² Psalm
106:15

• *Curses and blessings*

shows special displeasure at the ill-treatment of His servants, and special pleasure when His servants are honoured. Anyone who blesses God's servants are likely to find that they themselves are being blessed by God. When Abimelech threatened Abram and his seed he himself was threatened ^{☞3}; when he blessed Abram ^{☞4} Abimelech and his wife and his servants were themselves blessed through Abram's prayers ^{☞5}. Something similar will be true in the lives of those who follow in the footsteps of Abram's faith.

☞³ Genesis 20
☞⁴ 20:16
☞⁵ 20:17–18

PROMISE 7: INFLUENCE

• *God's will is that the blessings of salvation should come to the whole world*

Abram was also promised influence among the nations. God says: 'And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed'.

It has always been God's will that the blessings of salvation should come to all the world. There is only one God, and the human race is one in sin. God has one plan of salvation, and that one plan of salvation was coming into being through Abram. It was for all nations. Abram was not yet a Jew; he was not yet circumcised. He himself was simply a pagan from Ur. If he could be saved, anyone could be saved. Through the promise that Abram's seed was coming, there was blessing for anyone who accepted the promise. There was blessing immediately for anyone who had the same kind of faith as Abram had.

• *A saviour through Abram*

Five times in Genesis 1–11 the narrative uses the word 'curse' ^{☞1}. Five times the word 'bless' comes in Genesis 12:1–3. God's purpose to send a Saviour through Abram is God's answer to the curses falling upon the world through the three rebellions of Genesis 3:1–7, Genesis 6:1–8 and Genesis 11:1–9.

☞¹ Genesis 3:14, 17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25

• *The blessing is ultimately in Jesus*

But the blessing ultimately would be in the person of Jesus. In Him there are treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. In Him is wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Out of His fullness comes grace upon grace ^{☞1}.

☞¹ Colossians 2:3; 1 Corinthians 1:30; John 1:16
☞¹ Genesis 12:4

• *Abraham responded in faith*

These are the promises that are presented to Abram. God invites Abram to believe them and start travelling towards the promise land. 'So Abram left, as Yahweh had told him' ^{☞1}. He responded in faith.

• *The same promises are for us*

They are the same promises which belong to us. We too are promised some kind of territory to be occupied for God. We too shall experience multiplication, personal blessing, a name for faithfulness, usefulness to God, significance, international impact. 'Go forth', says God, 'and I will do it for you. By faith and patience, inherit the promises'.



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