

What is Most Important in Life? (Genesis 15:1)

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The telephone rings, and the young mother answers. The voice on the other end says: "Honey, it's mom. I called because I know that you're busy with the three children, and I want to give you some help. I'm going to stop by to clean the house, take care of the baby, and prepare dinner for when the boys get home from school. I want you to get ready to go to my beautician, I paid her already, she is going to give you 'the works,' your appointment is at 1:00. Give George a call at the office and tell him that you will meet him at Chez Jays for dinner, on me..."

The young mother suddenly interrupts and asks "George, who is George?" "Your husband." says the caller. "My husband's name is Fred." She replies. "Is this 555-3212?" "No this is 555-2212" "I'm sorry I have the wrong number" says the now embarrassed caller. After a pause, the young mother asks, "Does this mean that you're not coming over?"

Of course, it's important to get a break from everything occasionally. But we should never break from living the Christian life. This means we should ask ourselves what is most important in relation to our Christian living. What matters most in life is what God tells us is most important in life. What God shared with Abram long ago in Genesis 15:1 reminds each one of us what the most important things are in life and what matters most in life! We need a refresher course on this. Since God Himself spoke these things to Abram, we should pay attention to them. We should not pass them off as something which is irrelevant to our day and time. God's Word is eternal and we should put our life on pause and just stop and remember what is most important in life!

Genesis 15:1

"After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: *I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*"

God called Abram by name (“Fear not Abram”). This is a scene of tenderness with God calling Abram’s name. It no doubt brought Abram prostrate before God and encouraged him greatly. God knows our name and He is very interested in our lives! When God called Abram's name, Abram knew, above all else, that he truly belonged to God. God was looking after him and caring for him.

Since Genesis 15 begins with the words “after this,” it is clear that the promise of God given to Abram in these verses relates to what has gone before. The specifics of the promise relate to the battle against the four kings described in Genesis 14. Sodom’s king and his allies were defeated by four pagan kings with their armies. Sodom was overrun, and Lot, his family, and his possessions were captured. News of the battle came to Abram. When he heard that Lot had been captured, Abram set out to rescue the family. Abram defeated the invaders and recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people (Gen. 14:14–16). The King of Sodom wanted to give Abram a reward but Abram refused the reward.

At this point, Abram knew he was in great danger and on the hit list of the four Kings. He had attacked with a small force, but he had won and recovered the spoils. They must have been furious, and Abram must have been wondering about the consequences of his heroic rescue of his nephew. While he was wondering, scared of the repercussions of these pagan Babylonian kings, God came to him with a promise of protection and blessing, precisely the promises and help he needed. And from these promises Abram discovered “What is Most Important in Life.”

God is never late! He is always on time! In God’s response to Abram during his time of fear and confusion, Abram discovered, and we also can also discover, “What Matters Most in Life.” God’s response to Abram gives us a very clear understanding of the most important things in life. So, let’s state our proposition for this study very clearly.

God tells us what is most important for our Christian life.

There are four significant matters of importance.

If you get these, you will make it through your Christian life victoriously.

1. The Word of God - "Word of the Lord came to Abram"

Genesis 15:1

"After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: *I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*"

God's Word came to Abram in a vision but today God's Word comes to us directly from the Bible which is the word of God (Titus 2:5; Heb. 4:12).

1 Thessalonians 2:13

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

When we read, study, and meditate upon the Bible we are actually listening to the very words that God has given to us (2 Tim. 3:16). And it's through the Scriptures that God speaks to our hearts. If you are trying to hear God's voice, then turn to the pages of the Bible and let Him speak to you once again. Of course, we will not hear His voice in an audible way, but in an inaudible way, as we allow God's Word to speak to us. It's amazing but we have God's very own words in the book that He has given to us. Today if we want to hear His voice we must turn to His word and rededicate ourselves to listening to God's direction and receive help through the Bible.

When Abram heard God's Word, he found comfort, hope, rejoicing, and spiritual strength. If I am looking for these things outside the Bible, I won't find them! At least not the true definition and Biblical understanding of these blessings. I find refreshment, revival, and renewal in God's Word. This means we must keep our nose and hearts in God's Word in order to experience God's spiritual blessings and remain on the right track.

Charles Spurgeon said:

"Backsliders begin with dusty Bibles and end with filthy garments."

We need to stay refreshed, refocused, and sometimes redirected by staying in our Bible and applying it to all our decisions and actions.

Jeremiah 15:16

“Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.”

Psalm 119:107

“I am afflicted very much: quicken me (make me alive again!), O LORD, according unto thy word.”

Psalm 119:133

“Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”

One who uses the Bible as his guide never loses his sense of direction!

Psalm 119:105

“Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

If we really want to know the will of God, the Bible will show us the right way to go. Don't take matters into your own hands.

George Herbert wrote:
“The Book indeed,
The Book of books;
On which who looks,
As he should do, aright,
Shall never need
Wish for a better light
To guide him in the night.”

Psalm 119:103

“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! *yea, sweeter* than honey to my mouth!”

Thomas Watson, an old Puritan writer said:

“Leave not off reading the Bible till you find your hearts warmed. Let it not only inform you but inflame you.”

If a Christian is careless in Bible reading, he will care less about Christian living.

Vance Havner is also on record as saying:

“The Word of God is either absolute or obsolete.”

You know, we must be like Abram, and just fall before God in great humility and listen to Him speak to us through His Word. As we study His Word, we hear our name mentioned in certain Bible texts and God speaks to us and says, “This is for you.” We must hear God’s tender voice in His Word speaking to our hearts. No, it’s not an audible voice in any way, but that still small voice communicating to our spirit the wonderful truths that He wants to share and impress upon our hearts. God does speak to us today, not through visions, trances, and audible voices, but in the quietness of our moments with Him in His Word and when we prayerfully consider His plan and will for our life. 1 Samuel 3:9 says, “Speak, LORD for thy servant heareth.”

“Speak, Lord, in the stillness,
While I wait on Thee;
Hushed my heart to listen,
In expectancy.
Speak, O blessed Master,
In this quiet hour;
Let me see Thy face, Lord,
Feel Thy touch of power.”

What we need most in life and what is most important in our lives is quiet time in His Word, allowing God to minister to our hearts, communicate to us, and draw us near to Himself (James 4:8). Perhaps you need to redevelop a healthy Biblical orientation toward problems.

2 Peter 1:4

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17

“All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof (*conviction*), for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished (*completely equipped, prepared*) unto all good works.”

God’s Word and its promises are sufficient to help us through every trial and test of life. It prepares us to face life. God’s Word gives us spiritual guidance, comfort, strength, and hope. Don’t lose focus of what is most important for your life. It’s God’s unalterable, sufficient, and life-changing word. Many times, we don’t give the Scriptures a chance to change our lives. We often look elsewhere and try and discover how to face life through other insufficient means that do not deliver. Yes, God’s Word is most important for living an effective and victorious Christian life. But there is another very significant and important matter that we must consider.

2. The Comfort of God - "Fear not"

Genesis 15:1

“After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward.”

When God says to Abram, “Fear not,” He was reaching out to bring comfort into Abram’s heart and life. We can possess comfort and spiritual rest instead of fear. The reason for experiencing God’s comfort and not possessing fear is explained in the remainder of the verse: “I am thy shield (*protection*), and thy exceeding great reward” (*provision*). Basically, God is telling Abram, “I will take care of you. I have your back.” We need to remember this when fear begins to overtake our hearts. God will protect our lives and provide for us when we pass through trials so that fear does not have to debilitate us from a spiritual perspective.

The battle was over, and the victory had been won against the Babylonian kings, yet Abram faces another kind of battle that can be even tougher to win. He faces the battle with fear. Perhaps he wondered if these kings would return in overwhelming forces and take revenge upon him and his family. God knew Abram's thoughts and revealed Himself by encouraging him to not be afraid. When we are afraid, the Lord can be a great comfort to us and help us overcome our fears. The comfort that comes from God's protection, peace, and personal blessings being showered upon our lives can drive away the fears from our hearts and lives.

2 Corinthians 1:3

"Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort."

Fear Not! Fear cannot exist and overcome us when we are experiencing the comfort of God's protection (shield) and provisions (reward). The words "fear not" appear here for the first time in Scripture and are spoken by the Lord. God has not given us the spirit of fear. God encourages us over 180 times in the Bible to not be afraid.

Isaiah 41:10

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

Isaiah 43:1-2

"But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine. When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

My grandson likes to watch the old cartoon called "Underdog." It's a cartoon that features a superhero dog that goes around and saves the world from the bad guys. Underdog always would say, "There's no need to fear, underdog is here!" The same is true regarding God. There is no need to fear because God is here!

“When God is near, all the world seems far away.
When God is near, every fear is set aside.
When God is near, how can I stray? How can I falter?
I’ll stay upon the altar, I know my God is near.”

Jesus said in Luke 12:32:

“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

Two explorers were on a jungle safari when suddenly a ferocious lion jumped in front of them. "Keep calm" the first explorer whispered. "Remember what we read in that book on wild animals? If you stand perfectly still and look the lion in the eye, he will turn and run." "Sure," replied and his companion. "You've read the book, and I've read the book. But has the lion read the book?"

There are times in our lives when we can be overcome with fear. Fear of the future, fear of the unknown, fear of how to deal with a certain situation. But God has promised that He will replace our fear with peace and comfort. He will calm us and keep us from being overcome with deep anxiety and fear. Sometimes the Lord calms the storm. Sometimes he lets the storm rage and calms His child in the middle of the storm. What we need most in life and what is most important in our lives is to experience the comforting hand of God.

What else is vitally important for our Christian life?

3. The Protection of God - "I am thy shield"

Genesis 15:1

“After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: *I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*”

The promise of God’s protection was seen in this next statement. Abram did not need to fear the future and his enemies because the Lord would provide the necessary protection he needed. God is our shield and protector in life. This is sometimes true from a physical perspective. God can keep certain physical calamities from touching our lives. However, this is always true in the spiritual

realm. God is always a spiritual shield of protection even when He allows us to pass through trials. He can spiritually shield us with His peace, mercy, love, and strength as we pass through the tribulations that we often face in life.

“I am” is used in the next two phrases – “I am thy shield” and “I am thy exceeding great reward.” God’s “I AM” is perfectly adequate for man’s “I am not.” “Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10). God is the answer and antidote to our struggles and tests in life. He is the One who can bring us through each one of them successfully and victoriously.

I’m reminded of Genesis 17:1:

“And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I *am* the Almighty God (El Shaddai); walk before me, and be thou perfect.”

El Shaddai means He is the Almighty God who can take care of us and keep us moving forward in our Christian walk when life has taken us in an unexpected direction. It is El Shaddai that walks with us to give us His providential protection over our lives, shielding us from sin, worry, anxiety, fear, and depression. This occurs as we experience His Almighty strengthening touch upon our lives.

“El shaddai, El shaddai,
Age to age you're still the same,
By the power of Your name.”

Your life is only as big as your faith, and your faith is only as big as your God. If you spend all your time looking at yourself, you will get discouraged; but if you look to God by faith, you will be encouraged. He is there for you, as your shield, to protect you, cover for you, and fight for you. God, the Great I AM, the only true God, the One who is our complete sufficiency is the one who protects and gives security to Abram and to you and me today.

2 Corinthians 3:5

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.”

Sometimes it's easier to believe in God's power on a grand scale, creating the universe, sustaining it through time, reigning over the centuries, than it is to believe in His power to help us through some specific trial in our life.

Again, the word "shield" speaks of God's protection over Abram's life. Yes, there are times God gives to us physical protection as He did for Abram, and we thank God for those times He protects us from certain physical calamities. However, we must remember that the greater promise is that God always promises to give us spiritual care and protection as we face the trials of life. His strength, mercies, peace, and loving touch will be there to shield us as we face the difficult trials and times of life.

Psalm 33:20

"Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield."

Psalm 84:11

"For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Psalm 115:11

"Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield"

Proverbs 30:5

"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him."

"I feel the touch of hands so kind and tender
They're leading me in paths that I must trod.
I'll have no fear 'cause Jesus walks beside me
For I'm sheltered in the arms of God.
So let the storms rage high
The dark clouds rise
They won't worry me
For I'm sheltered safe within the arms of God.
He walks with me
And naught of earth shall harm me
For I'm sheltered in the arms of God."

“I am thy shield.” Protection and provision are blessings that the world is seeking and the politicians are promising whenever they run for office. Candidates offer voters protection from war and danger on the streets as well as provision for jobs, health care, education, and old age. Some of the promises are kept, but many of them are forgotten. However, the Almighty God is the only One who can offer you spiritual protection and provision and He keeps His promises!

- ✓ Have you been allowing God to be your shield as you face some very difficult times in life?
- ✓ Have you allowed Him to take you in His arms and give you the spiritual aid and protection your need?
- ✓ Are you trusting in His spiritual provision as you pass through the trials that you are presently facing?
- ✓ Have you been trusting in God to protect your spiritual life so that you are not overcome by worry, anxiety, your enemies, and the Devil himself?

God is the believer's shield: his protector and defender. God Himself shielded Abram...

- from being hopelessly discouraged and giving up,
- from denying his faith and the promises of God,
- from being defeated by the enemies of life,
- from losing his soul to the spiritual enemies of God,
- from losing heart in the face of weakness, temptation, and trial.

So, God and God alone can shield the believer throughout life. He can shield or protect our thought life, our emotional life, and our daily life from debilitating worry and anxiety. This is the promise of His Word. It was the promise to Abram, and it is the promise to us today!

We need to be careful about something. Many of us can put our trust in other things. We can trust the government or our investments, our friends, family, wealth, or popularity, or man's secular writings and conclusions. But these things ultimately disappoint and fail us. Why? It's because we put our trust in those things which fluctuate and change. Here is good news! God never changes! Never!

Malachi 3:6

“For I *am* the LORD, I change not.”

When change happens in our life, we must remember that God does not change. If you want a real shield, trust God. He never changes. “I am thy shield.” Praise the Lord, He never changes! He’s always there! And He will be the same tomorrow as He is today! God shields us against our enemies, Satan, temptation, and bitterness. He can and will protect us if we avail ourselves of His help.

“I trust in God wherever I may be,
Upon the land, or on the rolling sea,
For come what may, from day to day,
My heav’nly Father watches over me.
I trust in God, I know He cares for me;
On mountain bleak or on the stormy sea;
Though billows roll, He keeps my soul;
My heav’nly Father watches over me.”

What if these four Babylonian kings would come back again and attack Abram? God told him not to be afraid. God emphatically said “I am your shield.” God would be with him. His power would be sufficient to protect him. God is our protector and defense. He watches over us and cares for us. The shield was put in front of the soldier while in battle. We are to let the Lord lead us and follow Him. The shield was held close in the time of battle. We too are to be close to the Lord. When not in battle, the shield was placed around the side or on the back of the soldier. The Lord is at our side also. He is always there to protect us, keep us, and maintain our victory and spiritual strength. Abram didn’t have to worry about another battle because the Lord would protect him.

What we need most in life and what is most important in our lives is the shielding protection of God. Nothing is more important than His spiritual protection and security that He brings into our hearts and lives. God *cares* for us, and He will be *there* for us (1 Pet. 5:7). He is our shield and protector. If we lose the sense and reality of God’s caring provision over our lives, then we will be missing out on what is most important in life.

4. The Blessing of God - "I am thy exceeding great reward"

Genesis 15:1

"After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: *I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*"

God's reward or blessing that He brings into our life will also dispel the fears that we face. Once again, it's the "I am" of God's presence and now His blessing (reward) that makes the difference in our life! It's not psychology, it's not discovering some new thing from a charismatic preacher on TV, it's not some new formula for life, or finding a secular program that will make a difference. It's God alone who makes our life fulfilling and rewarding.

How should we view this statement - "I am ... thy exceeding great reward?" First, God Himself is our reward. God as our reward speaks of Himself being a personal blessing to us. We need to remember that God's companionship, His life and presence and fellowship is our greatest blessing or reward! The best thing in all of life is our relationship with the true and living God. "I am" (God's presence is) your reward! When we have God we possess a great reward!

Abram may have been thinking about his refusal to take any reward for defeating the four kings and restoring the captured people and property to Sodom. But God emphatically said, "I am your very great reward." In other words, God was saying, forget about those things and be concerned with me! When we have the Lord we have enough. Abram was to be rewarded with God Himself, with all that God is, with His very own nature, life, fellowship, and worship (Ps. 4:4).

Exodus 33:14

"And he said, My presence shall go *with thee*, and I will give thee rest."

Second, God rewards us with many blessings in life that flow forth from our relationship with Him. Not only is God Himself our reward, He also rewards us with multitudes of physical and spiritual blessings. This would be true in Abram's life for he was in the Abrahamic Covenant of blessing with God (Gen. 12:1-3). But it's also true for those of us who are living under the blessings of the New Covenant.

When we have God we have everything we need to face our fears and life.

2 Corinthians 9:8 declares:

“And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work.”

God rewarding Abram is the New Testament equivalent of Philippians 4:19:

“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

Abram didn't need to regret losing the wealth offered to him by the King of Sodom because God would reward him in far greater ways. When we walk with God, we are rewarded in this life with His many physical (Acts 17:25) and spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3). We can be sure that God will bless us. This is why we sing:

“Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God has done!
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.”

God also says that Abram's reward will be very great (“exceeding great reward”). This means that God blesses us in ways that we could never imagine as we rely on Him and turn to Him for everything that we need in life.

Jeremiah 33:3

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”

Ephesians 3:20 gives us this promise:

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.”

Someone said:

“If you can explain what is happening, God didn't do it.”

The most important thing in life is that we are experiencing God in our life and the blessings that He wants to bestow upon us as we rely upon Him and live for Him (“I am thy reward”). Abram's response to God rewarding him was to point out God's promise of an offspring that had not yet been fulfilled in his life, which means a servant may end up as heir of the household. But God did bless Abram with a son who was in the line of messianic blessing.

Hebrews 11:6 reminds us:

“But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

Let us never forget something. As we seek God in our life, wanting to obey and please Him, wanting to live in fellowship and communion with Him, we will receive much reward. Sometimes our reward might be physical in nature, but we can be certain that our reward will always consist of God's spiritual blessings. God will bless (reward) our lives in proportion to how we seek Him, walk close to Him, and follow His will for our life. The important thing is that we keep seeking God's will, stay close to Him, and keep Him and His plan in the forefront of our life. It's then that we will receive His blessings.

Jesus taught in Matthew 6:33:

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

God knows how to add His blessings to our life such as the blessings of contentment, peace, joy, and all His physical and spiritual provisions. "I am thy exceeding great reward." Again, the reward is God Himself and the blessings He dispenses to us. This is what is most important in life – to experience God's presence and the spiritual blessings He wants to shower upon our lives. If we lose sight of the rewarding experience of possessing God's presence and all the blessings that flow forth from His life, then we will be missing out on the most important thing in life.

“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!”

What we need is the true blessing of God upon our life! We don't need pseudo experiences and emotional manipulation! We need a true manifestation of God's spiritual blessings. Sometimes what we think is God's blessing is only our own manufactured experience. God has promised to bless us but it's not through manipulation and the self-made, modern schemes related to secularism, humanism, Freudianism, or the charismatic emotionalism that is so prevalent today.

The Lord has promised to bless us with His presence and the spiritual blessings that flow from our relationship with Himself (Phil. 3:10). When God is all we have we will discover that God is all we need! God alone is to be our sufficiency and blessing in life. We are to draw upon His presence and the daily spiritual supply and blessing He brings into our lives.

What is most important to you? Is it your job, your position, your material things, such as your house, cars, guns, sports, golf clubs? Is it your bank account or some other earthly relationship that takes much of your time and attention? Take an inventory of your life today. If you want to really live the Christian life effectively and victoriously, and find God's true blessing, you must remember what the most important things are in life.

Genesis 15:1

"After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward."

God tells us what is most important for our Christian life. We have discovered four matters of importance in this Bible verse.

- The Word of God - "Word of the Lord came to Abram"
- The Comfort of God - "Fear not"
- The Protection of God - "I am thy shield"
- The Blessing of God - "I am thy exceeding great reward"

When it's all said and done and the dust clears, this is what really matters in life. Everything else is simply fillers and not the real thing.

Did you ever eat “fakin bacon?” It’s not real bacon. It’s as its name reveals, fake bacon. I’ve tried some of this stuff and it was totally fake. There was nothing real about it. The same is true when we try and find fulfillment, help, and victory outside the Word of God, the comfort of God, the protection of God, and the blessing of God. It’s not real. It does not last. It’s a substitute for the real thing. Beloved, don’t settle for fakin bacon! Go for the real thing!