

Had you been around Abram prior to when the LORD came to him, as recorded here in Genesis 15, you might be surprised to hear that Abram was afraid. If we look back at the previous chapters everything was going well for Abram. After leaving Egypt, "Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold." He had a great military victory over four kings and their armies. And he was blessed by the priest of God Most High, Melchizedek, the king of Salem. Why, *after this* as Moses wrote, would God come and say *Do not be afraid, Abram?*

To find the answer to that we need to look back further than the previous two chapters. The source of all fear is sin. After sin entered the world God wasted no time in allaying Adam and Eve's fear with a promise. The promise was that the seed of Eve would destroy all sin and in doing so all fear. That promised child had not yet come by Abram's time and the promise was repeated and repeated to all the faithful who lived between Eve and Abram. That promise was given to Abram before all of his success. The LORD told Abram, *I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you... and all peoples will be blessed through you.* But some years had passed and Abram was already well along in years and fear set in.

Abram revealed his fear. "*O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?*"... "*You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.*" The LORD's promise had not been fulfilled. If his promise was no good then what could Abram trust in? How could he not be afraid?

And so the LORD came to Abram. *I am your shield.* The LORD would protect Abram from fear. "*This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.*" The cause of Abram's fear was his childlessness. So the LORD promised to prevent that as Abram's shield. He says, this thing you are afraid of will not happen. I

will prevent it. I will protect you. *I am your shield.* And just as Abram hadn't done anything to receive the promise in the first place he doesn't do anything to receive these comforting words. The LORD gave the promise, and repeats the promise, and protects against anything that would hinder the promise. He says the same to you, the same promise of protection. *"Do not be afraid, dear Christian, I am your shield."*

The LORD's promise is not just to prevent things from happening. He also promises to give. He says *Do not be afraid, I am your very great reward.* The LORD assured Abram of this as he took Abram outside of the tent. *"Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them."... "So shall your offspring be."* The LORD would keep his promise that a great nation would come from Abram and such a great nation that they couldn't be numbered. Abram had no need to fear that the LORD's promise would pass him by. The LORD was a great reward for Abram and a nation as numerous as the stars would come from Abram's own body.

This great family of Abram's was to be a blessing to all the earth. God who was speaking and promising is the God who would become a son in that family so that all the peoples of the earth would be blessed. This promise is not just that Abram would have a son but that the promised seed would come, that the Christ would come to repair all that sin had undone. This promise centers on the seed, on Christ.

Abram understood this promise as pointing to Christ. As Jesus himself said, *Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.* The LORD was his very great reward. Abram looked forward in faith knowing that there was no reason to fear. The promise would be fulfilled, the Christ would come, would be Abram's descendant, and all nations would be blessed through that descendant. Abram believed that promise and was justified, was considered righteous, perfect, by the LORD.

But what about you and your fears? What about your fears that the damage done by sin cannot be undone, that your sins are so horrible they cannot be forgiven? What about your fears that your children won't grow up the way you want, or that there won't be enough money to retire on, or that dinner won't be ready on time? The list of fears could go on and on. If your focus is on what you have done or what others have done to cause these problems, or if your focus is on what you must to fix the world, those fears will rule your life. You will walk around with shoulders slumped and a constant sigh coming from your mouth 'How will this ever work out?!' Don't put all your trust in your ability to fix your problems and don't think that anything you or anyone else has done is so huge, so horrible, that the LORD is not able to help.

*Do not be afraid* the LORD is *your shield and your very great reward*. He will and does protect you and he is your reward. So many blessings have been showered, rewarded to God's people: family friends clothing shoes house home land cattle and all you own. You have all you need and more to live on this earth. And so much more than these wonderful earthly blessings you have the LORD himself as our reward. You have Christ, crucified and risen for you, the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

You have the promises of God. You hear, take, eat, and drink them hear in the church and we hold to them by faith, not doubting but believing. Christ was born into Abram's family. He was crucified for the forgiveness of your sins and he is alive. Yes, Abram. Yes, Thomas. He is alive. See my hands. He is alive. Do not be afraid dear Christian, Christ is your very great reward.

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.