**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**GENESIS-020. THE WORD THAT SCATTERS FEAR by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."*

*Genesis 15:1*

**1.**

Abram was now apparently about eighty-five years old. He had been fourteen years in Palestine, and had, for the only time in his life, quite recently been driven to have recourse to arms against a formidable league of northern kings, whom, after a swift forced march from the extreme south to the extreme north of the land, he had defeated. He might well fear attack from their overwhelmingly superior forces. So this vision, like all God's words, fits closely to moments needs, but is also for all time and all men.

**I. The call to conquer fear.**

Fear not.--

**(a)** There is abundant reason for fear in facts of life. There are so many certain evils, and so many possible evils, that any man who is not a feather-brained fool must sometimes quail.

**(b)** Reasons for fear in our relations to divine law.

**(c)** The only rational way of conquering fears is by showing them to be unfounded. It is waste of breath to say, Don't be afraid, and to do nothing to remove the occasions of fear. It is childish to try to get rid of fears by shutting the eyes tight and refusing to look formidable facts in the face.

**(d)** The revelation of God is the true antidote to fear.

**(e)** Fear not is the characteristic word of divine revelation. It is of frequent occurrence from Abraham till John in Patmos.

**II. The ground of the call in the Revelation of God as Shield.**

**(a)** As to outward evils, His protection assures us, not of absolute exemption, but of His entire control of them, so that men and circumstances are His instruments, and His will only is powerful. Chedorlaomer and all the allied kings are nothing; a noise, as the prophet said of a later conqueror. All the bitterness and terror is taken out of evil. If any fiery dart pass through the shield, all its poison is wiped off in passage. So there remains no reason for fear, since all things work together for good. Behind that shield we are safe as diver in his bell, though seas rave and sea-monsters swim around.

**(b)** As to inward evils, our Shield assures us of absolute exemption. Shield of faith. Faith is shield because it takes hold of God's strength.

**III. The ground of the call in the Revelation of God as Reward.**

Abraham had refused all share in booty, a large sacrifice, and here he is promised, A Reward in God, i.e. He gives Himself in recompense for all sacrifices in path of duty. The Lord is able to give thee much more than these. This promise opens out to general truth that God Himself is the true reward of a devout life. There are many recompenses for all sacrifices for God, some of them outward and material, some of them inward and spiritual, but the reward which surpasses all others is that by such sacrifices we attain to greater capacity for God, and therefore possess more of Him. This is the only Reward worth thinking of--God only satisfies the soul. With Him we are rich; without Him poor; exceeding great--riches in glory, transcending all measure. The revelations of God as Shield and Reward are both given in reference to the present life, but the former applies only to earth, where without are fighters, within are fears; while the latter is mainly true for heaven, where those who have fought, having God for their Shield, will possess Him for their Reward, in a measure and manner which will make all earthly experiences seem poor. Here the heirs of God get subsistence money, which is a small instalment of their inheritance; there they enter into possession of it all.

**2.**

Many years have passed since Abram was called to go forth from his father's house, assured that God would make of him a great nation. They had been years of growing power. He has been dwelling at Mamre, as a prince among the people of the land, a power. There sweeps down on Southern Palestine the earliest of those invasions from the vast plains of the North which afterwards for generations were the standing dread of Abram's descendants. Like the storm pillars in their own deserts, are these wild marauders with the wild names that never appear again in the history. Down on the rich valleys and peaceful pasture lands they swoop for booty, not for conquest. Like some sea-bird, they snatch their prey and away. They carry with them among the long train of captives Abram's ungenerous brother-in-law, Lot. Then the friend of God, the father of the faithful, musters his men, like an Arab sheikh as he was, and swiftly follows the track of the marauders over the hills of Samaria, and across the plain of Jezreel. The night falls, and down he swoops upon them and scatters them. Coming back he had interviews with the King of Sodom, when he refuses to take any of the spoil, and with Melchizedek. Abram is back at Mamre. How natural that fear and depression should seize him: the reaction from high excitement; the dread that from the swarming East vengeance would come for his success in that night surprise; the thought that if it did, he was a wandering stranger in a strange land and could not count on allies. Then there would come, perhaps, the remembrance of how long God had delayed the very beginnings of the fulfilment, Seeing I go childless.

To this mood of mind the divine vision is addressed. Fear not--I am thy shield whatever force comes against thee, and thine exceeding great reward,--perhaps in reference to his refusal to take anything from the spoil. But God says this to us all. In these antique words the very loftiest and purest principles of spiritual religion are set forth.

* He that loves and trusts God possesses God.
* He that possesses God has enough for earth.
* He that possesses God has enough for heaven.

**I. It is possible for a man to have God for his. I am thy Reward,--not merely Rewarder, but Reward.**

How can one spiritual Being belong to another?--plainly, By mutual love.

* The Gospel assures us of God's love, and makes it possible for ours to be fixed on Him.
* Faith gives us God for ours.
* The highest view of the blessings of the Gospel is that God Himself becomes our reward.

How sad the insanity of men appears, in the ordinary aims of their life, its rewards and its objects of desire! How they chase after variety!

How much loftier and truer a conception of the blessing of religion this is than notions of mere escape and the like!

**II. The possession of God is enough for earth.**

God the all-sufficient object for our spirits, His love, the communication of Himself, the sense of His presence, the depths of His infinite character, of His wondrous ways, of His revealed Truth as an object for thought: of His authoritative will as imperative for will and conscience: aspiration towards Him.

God the Eternal Object. To find Him in everything, and everything in Him, is to be at rest.

This is what He promises--

* Not a life of outward success and ease--much nobler than if He did.

Take Abram's as a type.

* In war He will be our Defence.
* In absence of other joys He will be Enough.
* Sphered and included in Him is all sweetness. He sustains all relations, and does for us what these other joys and goods partially do.
* The possession of His love should put away all fear, since having Him we are not at the mercy of externals.

What, then, is Life as men ordinarily make it?--what a blunder!

**III. To possess God is enough for heaven.**

Such a relationship is the great proof of immortality. Christ and Sadducees. The true glory of heaven is in fuller possession of God: no doubt other things, but these subsidiary.

The Reward is God. The idea of recompense ample and full for all sorrow. More than adequate wages for all work.

That final reward will show how wise the wanderer was, who left his father's house and looked for a city. God is not ashamed to be called their God.

Christ comes to us--offers Himself. Think of how rich with Him, and oh, think of how poor without Him!

Which will you have on earth? Which will you have in another world?