

# Our Exceedingly Great Reward

by Michael Koulianos

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*In 'Our Exceedingly Great Reward', Michael Koulianos emphasizes the importance of prioritizing our relationship with God above all earthly blessings and the transformative journey of faith.*

**Duration:** 38:59

**Scripture:** Genesis 15:1, Exodus 33:11, Matthew 6:33, John 1:1, John 11:25-26, Romans 8:15, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Hebrews 11:6, 1 Peter 5:7

**Topics:** "Reward", "God as Our Reward", "Surrender and Sacrifice"

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## Description

Michael Koulianos emphasizes that God is our 'exceedingly great reward,' as demonstrated in His promise to Abram. He explains that God desires a deep, personal relationship with us, where He speaks clearly and intimately, much like He did with Moses. Koulianos highlights the importance of surrendering our blessings back to God, illustrating this with Abram's willingness to sacrifice Isaac, the son God promised him. He encourages believers to recognize that true life comes from dying to self and that God raises what is surrendered to Him. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a deeper fellowship with God, where He becomes our all in all.

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## Transcript

All right, Genesis 15-1. I'm reading out of the New King James. After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, Do not be afraid, Abram.

I am your shield. Hallelujah. Your exceedingly great reward.

I want to read that again. After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield.

Your exceedingly great reward. This is following, really, the account of Abram and Melchizedek, or if you're from the South, Melchizedek, which is not the way you say it. It's Melchizedek.

They even get it wrong in Tulsa, where they think Jesus is coming back to. And in Dallas, the Bible belt, they get it wrong there too. It's Melchizedek, so don't make fun of me.

King of Salem, that's the king of peace, who brought bread and wine, the priest of God Most High, and he blessed him and said...anyways, that's chapter 14. We move into chapter 15 here, and you look at the opening few words of verse 1. It says these things. After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram

in a vision.

If you read the New Testament properly, you'll discover in the most vital places the word is not a combination of letters. To us, when we think of the word word, we think of a saying or a construct of letters. But it's very difficult for a grouping of letters to come unto you, and then talk to you.

Does that make sense? Have you ever been chased by the word dog? Like, you've never had a word come unto you. And so this actually gives context, and you'll find this throughout the Old Testament. This gives context to why John opens John's gospel with, in the beginning was the word.

What he's doing, he's saying every prophetic fulfillment, every prophetic speaking, every utterance that came from the prophets, the Psalms, Moses, all of that combined now has skin, and he's standing in front of you. His name is Jesus. So when the word of the Lord comes unto the prophets in the Old Covenant, it is a person coming unto the prophets.

And he actually comes, in verse 1, in a vision. So he uses the vision as the setting to come to Abram. It's kind of like Ezekiel.

The Bible says, Ezekiel was taken by the locks of the hair, lifted up into the heavenly places, and there saw visions of God. And I always find it really humorous when people say, just stick with the Bible, forget the supernatural stuff. And my comment is always like, dude, have you read the Bible? Like, what is up with you? That's a pretty intense and personal encounter right there, lifted by the hair, by God, into the heavenly places.

But it's interesting that the Scripture says, and there he saw visions of God, in that place, in that place of the Spirit. It's the same place that John the Revelator, John the Apostle, writes. It's the same place in the Spirit, I should say, that he's describing when he pens, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, in the book of Revelation.

This is what I would submit to you, that there is a lot we don't see, because we're not in the proper location. It says here that Ezekiel saw visions of God. That would imply that the visions were taking place, and if Ezekiel couldn't see them, that's his issue.

God does open our eyes, no doubt about it. But you can blind yourself. One of the quickest ways, two quickest ways to blind yourself, is the hardness of heart and disbelief, and forgetfulness.

Because Jesus connects the lack of faith in the disciples on the boat, right after he multiplied bread and fish for thousands. They're freaking out that they don't have enough food to cross the Sea of Galilee, which is a good hike. It's eight miles wide, which is pretty big.

If you've ever fished, you've ever gone eight miles offshore to go catch whatever. It's glorious out there, isn't it? Sorry, I just had a moment. But that's a long way.

However, the Bible says Jesus walked to the middle of that lake to get to his disciples when the storm began to stir the waters, and he was on the mountain praying. And the Bible teaches that while he's praying, he saw them struggling in the middle of the lake. That's what the Bible means.

Middle means middle in Greek, and middle means middle in Hebrew, and Aramaic, and whatever else you'll speak. So middle means middle. That means he saw them from four miles away.

You can't do that in the natural. He could see because of the place he lived in. He lived in the Spirit.

Now, to show his dominance as the one, listen carefully, as the one who caused land to form out of the water in Genesis 1, to reveal his dominance, he chose to walk upon the water for four miles. And it was his way of pointing back to the Jews and saying, I'm the God of Genesis 1. It's me. I'm right here.

So all of that being said, God, when he speaks to us, God speaks clearly. And the closer you get to the Lord, the more clearly he will speak to you. We see this with his relationship with Moses and the difference between his relationship with Moses and Aaron and Miriam.

He said, I speak to you in basically similitudes or riddles and mysteries. He said, but with Moses, I speak face to face as a man speaketh to his friend. Come on his right.

Somebody got it because I want that. I want that. And here you see the Lord actually tell the people, listen to this, that he's closer with Moses than he is to his brother and sister.

So it makes us much more comfortable to just have this like socialistic view of the kingdom. But in God's economy, he just doesn't roll like that. God is closer with certain people than he is with others.

God has a, a more authentic friendship with certain people than he does with others. And the way he expresses that is by the clarity of communication. It's not to say you shouldn't rejoice.

If you get this parabolic dream that requires an unfolding because we all start there, but that it's not like, for instance, if there's a mystery and whatever colors and some stuff, I wonder when I read dream books, I'm like, and I don't read them much. I've read like two paragraphs, but I'm like, where are you getting that? There'll be like, uh, you know, cars mean this. And I'm like, how do you know that? Like every time they'd only mean that in heaven.

How do you know? So the point is this, we should rejoice in all of these things, but never settle. We want God to speak to us as a man speaketh to his friend. The Bible says of Noah that Noah walked with God.

What fellowship, what amazing fellowship to walk with God. How about Enoch? The Bible says that Enoch walked with God and was no more because God took him. And that Hebrew word for took can mean in certain contexts, the same, uh, wording that would be expressed in a Hebrew wedding.

I take you to be my wife. I take you to be my husband. It wasn't so much an escape ism, uh, environment.

He wasn't just rescuing Enoch. He was taking him, marrying him early. So those are the examples that Christians should look, should, should, or should burn for.

So here, the person of the Lord shows up to Abram and he makes a statement. He says, I'm your shield. You're exceedingly great reward.

Right after that, look at verse two, Abram said, Lord God, what will you give me? Seeing I go childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus. And then Abram said, look, you have given me no offspring. Indeed, one born in my house is one born in my house is my heir.

And behold, the word of the Lord came to him saying, this one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir. Then he brought him outside and said, look now toward heaven and count the stars. If you're able to number them.

And he said to him, so shall your descendants be. So here, the promise of Isaac is released. How many of you have heard of Isaac, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Okay.

God tells Abram, I'm the reward. He starts the relationship there. It's me.

And then out of his goodness, God basically promises Abram, a miracle baby. Not basically he does. He promises Abram, a miracle child.

And if you continue to read, God calls Abram to the table. And he asks Abram to kill his son. Listen carefully.

The son that God promised him. And it's understandable to me why people would ask, why would you take something that you gave me? And in an immature place, we say things like this. God would have never asked for it back because he gave it to you.

For me, that was a career I pursued in the game of golf. It was my passion. I still love it, but it was more than a passion.

It was everything I did for 21 years of my life. And my reply to the Lord when he asked for it was, you can't take it. You gave it to me.

He said, that's exactly why I can take it. Now, in our stream and the shoulders that we rub from a fellowship perspective that I enjoy rubbing shoulders with, we are so into influence that we actually think that we need the entirety of our arsenal to influence the world. And so we've deified influence and we've minimized sacrifice.

And sacrifice doesn't just mean working hard. Sacrifice actually means death. When you sacrifice something in the Bible, you weren't telling the little lamb to run faster and put in extra hours.

You killed it. It was no more. So when we call Jesus the sacrificial lamb, we're not just saying he spent long days healing the sick.

What we're saying primarily and foundationally is you're the one who comes to die. But when influence or influencers become the standard, what you actually end up doing is diminishing holiness and exalting impact. And you start buying the lie that my compromise is unto impact.

Therefore, God blesses it. So you hear stuff, oh, you can't just stop doing that. God blessed you with that.

You shouldn't stop doing that. You should have God asked for it. You want let me say it like this.

If you're going to carry something in your hand in this hour, you want it to be in resurrected form. Let me say it another way. You want to lay it down at the altar.

And if God raises it and puts it back in your hand, then it's lethal and dangerous. But if you don't, then the weapons of your warfare are carnal. They're your weapons.

Even your giftings need to get slaughtered. You say, oh, no, they're without repentance. I'm not talking about an office or the gift of healing.

I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about your passions, our passions, even our promises from God. Now, some of us kill what God gave us just so we can hide.

You know, if you're like me, this scene would freak you out. Bunch of people. And people knowing who you are, none of it's super fun in the natural.

But sometimes your assignment is the mechanism that God uses to take those things off of us that need to go. So God asked for the Isaac that he promised. And it all points back to Genesis 15, 1, I'm your reward.

And God saw to it that that would be the posture of Abraham's heart. God wanted to know, am I really your reward? Because you received that word when I released it. I came unto you in a vision.

I told you I was your reward. Here's a test. Is this registering? So God asked for Isaac because God had just spoken in verse one, in Genesis 15, that he wanted to be Abraham's all in all.

So that tells me something. Listen carefully. That God even refused to share Abraham with the blessing he was giving Abraham.

Wow. Say that again. God refused to share Abraham with the blessing he gave Abraham.

What you'll find, and for the sake of time, I don't want to go there, but what you'll find is that when Abraham takes Isaac up the mountain, he tells his servants, we will be back. I'll say that one again. Six of you got it.

When he took Isaac up the mountain, and may I remind you, Isaac carried wood up the mountain. Sound familiar? Jesus carried wood up Golgotha. And Abraham knew something of his covenant God.

He's the God who raises the dead. He knew it. He knew something.

He had touched something through fellowshiping with the Lord. Now there's a little debate. I don't want to get into theological debate, but I have studied it.

My opinion is that Melchizedek is a theophany. It's a manifestation of the pre-incarnate son. My opinion.

Don't stone me if you disagree, but it's my opinion. He comes with bread and wine, and he comes to bless Abraham, and he's the king of peace, of the God most high. This preceded any temple culture or worship who has no genealogy.

He's from the ancient past. I mean, gosh. You know, if you ask a kid in children's church, they go, that's Jesus.

We just can't get there. And he blesses Abraham. Now here's the question.

If Abraham is God's best friend on the earth, and Hebrews teaches us that only the greater can bless the lesser, that means Melchizedek was greater than Abraham, and Abraham was God's best friend. We're talking about a serious figure here. Y'all figure it.

I'm not going to tell you, but that's what I think. Okay? He touches something in his fellowship with the Lord that convinces him. You're a dead raiser.

I don't know what he touched, but he found something in the Lord's character. He discovered something in the Lord's nature that taught him, no matter what I give you, I can never out-give you. Say this, Jesus, you raised the dead.

Say it again, Jesus, you raised the dead. Say it again, Jesus, you raised the dead. Two more times, Jesus, you raised the dead.

One more time, Jesus, you raised the dead. Now, when we were in bondage, and all of us were in bondage, for those of us who don't think we were before Jesus, that's proof of your bondage. You were in bondage.

I was in bondage. When we were in bondage, and the shame cycle was our life, the shame and condemnation cycle, where you were free for three days, did something stupid, came into church, especially if you were a PK, and your parents preached their sermons at you, you'd think I've been there. My dad's watching right now.

Dad, you know it's true. You know you've done it. I'd be like, man, these sermons are so applicable to my life.

I'd say, mom, dad's preaching at me. She'd go, I know. We're all in bondage, and we live in that shame cycle that makes us feel like dirt.

Does it not? And Jesus said that he who sins is a slave to it. Nobody enjoys the sense of slavery. So the Bible speaks of the tongue being like the rudder of a great ship, or being able to mind yourself, basically, is harder than taking a city.

So to not be able to steward your members or your mind, it is slavery. And nobody enjoys that. Hopefully, especially if they come into the light, they think they're enjoying it.

And then it turns on them. And that's what hell will be like, by the way. The demons that we serve are the demons that will torment us and turn on us.

So you're stuck in this cycle. And all of a sudden, the Lord starts delivering you. And you get rid of that shame and that condom.

Or he gets rid of it. You can't. And he starts to take it away.

And you feel light, free. And something kicks in. The moment you come to Jesus, he imputes righteousness.

Thank you, Lord. Aren't you glad you'll never have to stand before the throne as your own attorney? I am. You don't have to scrub the stain off of you, that the blood will cover you.

Imagine that as the father looks at you before the throne, he'll look through a red lens, the blood of his son. Everyone here will have a hue of red, a deeper stain, the stain that removes our own afflictions that are self-induced. Does he remove every stain? Yes and no.

One remains the stain of the blood. Gosh, even his robe is dipped. It's amazing.

And so you feel liberated. And that's what happens. You go from a slave to a child.

Maybe we'll teach you this in Romans. And you're adopted. Part of the family of God.

And you feel fantastic. And you gladly start giving away the stuff that caused the pain and shame. Right? You know, some of y'all emptied your closets of all those clothes.

You know what I'm saying? Thank God you did. You know, you flush stuff down the toilet. And it felt good.

You get lighter and lighter and lighter and lighter. And you get baptized in water and God takes the scalpel to the old man of condemnation. And you literally are amazed that you're worshiping in a traffic jam.

Right? The air looks better. You're nice to people that you didn't want to look at. Your mom couldn't get you to make your bed.

You're born again now. Now you're vacuuming. You're washing clothes.

It's amazing. Because the Lord is lightening the load. And it's wonderful as it feels.

And it is wonderful. It's just the beginning. It's just the beginning.

And because He's good, He's still got some stuff up His sleeve. You see, the Lord is the master of timing. So if when I got saved, tonight you'll be in the room where I'll be able to take you to the place I got born again.

And the place I got healed. And back to the right, the place I got filled with the Spirit. Fell under the power of God.

Filled with the Spirit. The most glorious sounds coming out of my being that nobody coached me through. Old ladies with buns tried.

Like, just do this. Just copy my prayer language. I'm like, I'm not copying your prayer language.

Give me a break. I want the real deal. They're like, just let it go.

I'm like, give me a break. So I waited. It took six months.

But I got the real deal. I got the real deal. I didn't choose Crisco.

I got cold press, extra virgin, cloudy olive oil. The good stuff. Don't sell out.

Right there. You'll see tonight. Right by the piano.

Filled with the Holy Spirit. It's wonderful. But if God would have told me, I'm going to use you to plant a church one day.

And the first one will be dead as a doornail in California. And I'm going to allow you to discover that you can't do it. And that's going to take four years of your life.

You're going to be so discouraged, you're going to have to pay people to stack chairs. Literally. One of our volunteers said, I can't stack chairs tonight unless you pay me.

I'm like, that's not volunteering. Every day, 1045, preaching. This train would come by.

Right through San Juan Capistrano. Shake the building. The train would go right.

We were meeting in this dome-like tent. And we started in a movie theater. And it was horrific.

I remember trying to pray for the sick. And the preview for this demonic movie called The Omen, that was released on 666, came up on the screen for my background music. And I remember going, God, he's playing the wacky keys.

And I looked back at our pianist, and he's like, I'm not doing it. And the whole preview, I said, Lord, deliver me. We started off with 400 people.

It grew to 75 in three weeks. And I used to tell people, we're a mega church. We're mega small.

And this is a church for you. If you want to be a part of a church where nothing happens, this is the one. This is the one.

You won't get saved here. You certainly won't get healed. I'm not even sure if God's here.

But we're the church for you. And those experiences helped craft why we do what we do today, how we do things. Because I've gone the other way.

It didn't work. It's horrible. And if God had told me that on that night in 1989 when I got saved and healed at OCC, there's no way I would have gone into the ministry.

No way. If I knew the measure of pain that pastors walk through. It's not a matter of, are you in pain? Really, the question is, how are you managing your constant pain? It is a consistent life.

Pastoring people is painful. Because you're dealing with different levels of maturity, thousands of people, and then you realize people are going to be people, and then you have to love the sheep. Do you know how precious all of you are to the Lord? You are very precious to Jesus.

He loves his sheep. Imagine, he asks Peter a question. When he restores Peter, do you love me? Peter says, you know that I love you.

And this is how Jesus ups the ante, or instructs Peter to prove his love. Feed my sheep. Oh, do you love me? Feed my sheep.

Do you love me? Tend my sheep. So you are precious to Jesus. But a pastor walks through pain.

And it's really about, I'm not sure you ever have a season where you don't have an issue. What you can do is become a testimony that God is bigger than the issues. So if the Lord would have told me, oh, you'll walk through believing me for this much money.

I'd be like, I ain't doing that. You're going to have to build a building during an economic crisis. And floor it, and move forward in the opposite nature of what the devil is trying to do in the nations.

While he's tearing things down, you're going to build a building for the glory of God. Oh, I wouldn't have done that at 12. I'd say, no, I'm not doing that.

I'm going to hit golf balls way easier. I'm not doing any of that. Or the betrayal piece.

It's like betrayal is yearly. Deep betrayal. So you're betrayed.

How are you going to deal with that? What I'm saying is the Lord doesn't give it all to you in those early years or days. Because at that point, he's still offloading. And you feel like you can just fly.

Then the drum roll starts. And you pray something smart, but that requires a seatbelt. Are you ready? Lord, use my life.

You have no idea what you're asking for. It's why Paul told Timothy, lay hands on no man hastily. The context there was commissioning and ordination.

So what we do today is, hey, come to my course. By the way, it's an e-course. I never get to meet you.

I don't know if you're crazy. I don't know if you smoke crack between the Bible studies. Just sign up for my course.

And at the end of it, after 90 days, 90 days, you can't even get a tomato plant to grow in 90 days. In 90 days, you get ordained. It's hilarious.

We have no idea what we're signing up for. And so we just shell them out like on a conveyor belt. Prophetess, whatever.

This one, that one. Then it shows up on their business card. They can't even address you until they use their title.

And it happens so quick. I've had people I know, who we raised up, within 90 days go into other environments. Now they don't go anywhere without their title.

After years, I go, what happened to you? What happened to you? Then you pray that prayer. Lord, use me. And this is what he says.

Okay. You gave me your drugs. But I'm going to dig deeper now.

Now give me your miracle. See, that's the deeper place. You gave me your depression.

I took it. Now give me the blessing. Put it back.

Put it back into the hands that gave it to you. Now, if you've ever touched him prior to that, you know he raises the dead. That's what he does.

Death, where's your sting? Grave, where's your victory? He's a dead raiser. Don't you get it? Why do you think he raised Lazarus just before he went into the Holy City on a colt? It's a prophetic declaration that the graves will open one day when he walks into the Holy City and rules and reigns forever. That moment was a microcosm of the second coming.

He had to raise Lazarus to proclaim he's the Messiah. He's coming back on a white horse. When he comes back, he will land on the Mount of Olives.

It will split in two and he will go straight into the Holy City. And when he does, graves will start breaking open. Actually, prior to that, they will meet him in the sky, those who've gone on to be with him.

And those who are here on the earth will be transformed into his likeness. And when they see him, they shall be like him. He's a dead raiser.

He's a death killer. Are you getting it? I'm about to slap somebody. I'm going to slap myself.

That's what he does. He's not average. Who else can sit up in a grave without Elijah breathing into his nostrils? He didn't need him.

He didn't need dead bones. He didn't need any help. He's the Lord of life.

Resurrection and life. That's what he does. But he only raises that which dies.

You got it. You want to live? You've got to die.

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