

GENESIS 32:9-10

ALWAYS REMEMBER THE "I AM," WHO HELPS THE "I-AM-NOT'S"

Then Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant.

Do you like getting advice? It doesn't matter how old you are, advice is not always a welcome thing—whether a child building with a lego set, or an adult working at a job. Individual pride doesn't like advice: "I want to do it this way, I like to do it this way, I have always done it this way." But sometimes advice is much needed and valued—when in a jam and running out of ideas, and or when the advice comes from someone whom you respect and trust. Today, I have advice for you, but it's really not from me. It's from God and His Word.

Jacob was the type of fellow—very typical it seems to me—who liked to do things his own way. He would solve a problem, so he thought, with some clever plan. He took advantage of his older twin brother, his hungry twin brother Esau, by trading him some stew for his "birthright" to carry on the family estate and role in the world. . God had promised to their father Isaac and their grandfather Abraham that this family-line would become a great nation, from whom the Savior would come! Again Jacob took advantage of his brother Esau, when Esau had gone to hunt special game for their father, and in addition took advantage of their blind father by impersonating Esau, so as to get their father's special blessing of prosperity and well being for the years ahead. Nasty. Jacob ran from home to avoid the murderous wrath of Esau. Twenty years later he was returning--a wealthy man with a large family, abundant herds and flocks, and many servants—about to meet his brother Esau. This time he knew his tricks wouldn't do him any good. Finally he was learning. He needed advice, he needed help. He needed God's help.

This was the help he had always needed in life, the same help you, and I, and all, need in life every day. We are all by nature, by our sinful nature, proud and self-reliant, I'll-do-it-my-way sinners before God. Being a sinner is a big problem that follows us around all life long, a problem one can't fix no matter how clever. Jacob finally realized that. I pray that you realize it too—today not later, and later rather than never. You need the LORD. Jacob humbly turned to the LORD. Pride is a dead-end street. "*Pride goes before destruction; a haughty spirit before a fall*" (Proverbs 16:18). The LORD was the One who had blessed his father and grandfather, who had promised that the Savior from sin, including their sins, would come from their family line. This LORD is the great HE IS, the great I AM. He had instructed Jacob to go back home and promised He would be with him. Here is advice for life. The LORD who never changes, the HE IS, the I AM, is filled with love and concern for you. He's the one who sent His Son for you. He is your "Ace" and your Help everyday with every kind of problem, from small physical problems, such as "my finger won't heal," to big spiritual problems "I'm a sinner, unacceptable to the God—and in big trouble." Here's advice. Cling to the LORD. His is your saving God, the great I AM. He loves you, even you, even as troublesome as you are.

That's the other part to this advice. Remember that you yourself, in spite of all your cleverness and abilities, are an "I-Am-Not." Jacob admitted that about himself. ***I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant.*** I am not worthy. I am small. I am little. I am insignificant. I am a disappointment to you, O LORD. And yet you shower me, a shoddy servant—I'm just a servant—with good things, with all the mercies and all the truth that You extend to me as unfit as I am. "*His mercies are new every morning; His compassions fail not,*" (paraphrase of Lamentations 3:22-23). Each morning, for Jesus' sake, you, an "I-Am-Not," have a clean slate before the Lord. Your down-fall and disobediences of the day before are forgiven. That's a lot of mercy! no matter how young or old you are. ***I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant.*** God's "truth" is God's loyalty, God's firm reliability, God's straight-as-a-rifle-barrel dealings with you. In Christ, He does not harm you ever, or fail to stand at your side. What an amazing state of affairs! The I AM stands lovingly by the I-Am-Not's in each day of life. Like the child who repeatedly messes up his father's instructions, like the worker who repeatedly messes up his job responsibilities, you and I and all the rest of us are misfits and I-Am-Not's. But the great I AM graciously forgives through the crucified and risen Savior, and stands at your side. He led Jacob safely home—Esau received him with love. He is leading you safely home to heaven.

ALWAYS REMEMBER THE "I AM," WHO HELPS THE "I-AM-NOT'S." This is advice from God's Word on Confirmation Day!

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---