

Dear Friends,

## GENESIS 28: 13-15

Jacob will be in a deserted, desolate place for just a little bit longer. There is darkness all around him. There is darkness within him. He is sleeping. In his dreams he sees a vision of a stairway with its top reaching to heaven. Then he sees God. Perhaps he expects sharp words from God, words of condemnation. He has, after all, done some harm and caused some hurt. He does not, however, need to be afraid. God speaks words of grace, words full of promise.

Perhaps he feared that in leaving his homeland he was also leaving God. Again, he does not need to be afraid. For God says, "Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go". Maybe God was teaching him that this special place, this gate of heaven could really be found everywhere.

You may look at yourself and see some ways in which you have caused hurt or harm. As a consequence, perhaps you fear a little what God might think of you. You might wonder if God can possibly be with you in this place or that experience. You too do not need to be afraid. God says, "Know that I am with you always". God's unconditional love reaches you. You dwell in God's love and God's love dwells in you.

Jacob does not need to feel that he is in the dark anymore. For the darkness cannot overcome the light of God's presence and that presence is with him. This does not mean for one minute that life will be easy. It won't. Many troubles and misfortunes lie ahead. He will be battered, bruised and broken. He will be wounded and end up walking with a limp. He will feel the deepest of griefs. But through it all, he may know that God is with him. He may feel lonely, but he will never ultimately be alone.

And this will not just be for Jacob. He is blessed by God. But that's not just to make him feel good while those around him are suffering. It's not for him alone. God says "All the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring". He is blessed, but that blessing is meant to spill out of him, to overflow from him. In fact, it's meant to be passed on to all the nations of the world. No limits are to be placed upon it. It is meant for everyone, whoever they might be. God longs to bless you and for you be a blessing to others.

Surely this experience will transform Jacob. How can he ever be the same again? You may say "If only I had a vision like that. If only God would speak to me so directly and give me such a clear promise, that's what it would take to change me for the better". How much Jacob the wrestler, the wheeler and dealer will be changed remains to be seen.

God bless you,

Tony