

Dinah

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[0 : 00] If you have a copy of the Scriptures with you, I want to invite you to open up to Genesis chapter 34.

! We're going to be covering this entire chapter this morning, which is 31 verses long. So it's not the longest of chapters in Genesis, but it's also not one of the shortest. It's kind of mid-range. And so I give you that warning ahead of time.

In a moment, we'll stand and read together. And if your legs get tired, you can sit down. That's okay. It's just a tradition that we have that we stand. I did read this week one particular commentator from quite a while ago said that no preacher would be wise to choose this text for a Sunday morning sermon.

But we're walking through Genesis. And so, wise or foolish, I don't know, but we're going to cover this text. But as I meditated on this week, as difficult as a passage as it is, I came to see the Lord enabled me to see that this is a timely message for us today.

Yes, it's difficult. There are some awkward turns within it for us, at least as the readers. But it is a good word from God to us.

[1 : 23] Able to make us wise. Able. Able to equip us for every good work that he's prepared in advance for us to do. And so, as you turn there to Genesis 34, I invite you to stand to your feet as we breathe through this great chapter.

Moses writes, Now, Dinah, the daughter of Leah, whom she had born to Jacob, went out to see the women of the land. And when Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he seized her and lay with her and humiliated her.

And his soul was drawn to Dinah, the daughter of Jacob. He loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, Get me this girl for a wife.

Now Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah. But his sons were with his livestock in the field. So Jacob held his peace until they came.

And Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. The sons of Jacob had come in from the field as soon as they heard of it. And the men were indignant and very angry because he had done an outrageous thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter.

[2 : 33] For such a thing must not be done. But Hamor spoke with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to me to be his wife.

Make marriages with us. Give your daughters to us. And take our daughters for yourselves. You shall dwell with us and the land shall be open to you. Dwell and trade in it and get property in it. Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, Let me find favor in your eyes. And whatever you say to me, I will give. Ask me for a great bride price, a gift as you will.

And I will give whatever you say to me. Only give me the young woman to be my wife. The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully. Because he had defiled their sister Dinah.

They said to him, We cannot do this thing to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised. For that would be a disgrace to us. Only on this condition we will agree with you that you will become as we are by every male among you being circumcised.

[3 : 35] Then we will give our daughters to you and we will take your daughters to ourselves. And we will dwell with you and become one people. But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and we will be gone.

Their words pleased Hamor and Hamor's son Shechem. And the young man did not delay to do the thing because he delighted in Jacob's daughter. Now he was the most honored of all his father's house.

So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of the city and spoke to the men of their city saying, These men are at peace with us. Let them dwell in the land and trade in it. For behold, the land is large enough for them.

Let us take their daughters as wives and let us give them our daughters. Only on this condition will the men agree to dwell with us to become one people. When every male among us is circumcised as they are circumcised.

Will not their livestock, their property and all their beasts be ours? Only let us agree with them and they will dwell with us. And all who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and his son Shechem.

[4 : 37] And every male was circumcised. All who went out of this gate of his city. On the third day, when they were sore, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and came against the city while it felt secure and killed all the males.

They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword and took Dinah out of Shechem's house and went away. The sons of Jacob came upon the slain and plundered the city because they had defiled their sister.

They took their flocks and their herds, their donkeys and whatever was in the city and in the field. All their wealth, all their little ones and their wives, all that was in the houses, they captured and plundered.

Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, You have brought trouble on me by making me stink to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites. My numbers are few and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household.

But they said, Should he treat our sister like a prostitute? Father, we thank you for this difficult chapter.

[5 : 43] And we thank you that your spirit, who inspired this text, is also teaching us today through it. So we ask through your spirit, teach us from your word this morning.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen. You guys, take a seat. So as we read through this particular chapter, you can see why it would be treated as a difficult text to preach.

It would be treated as a passage that you might want to leap frog over in your journey through the book of Genesis. But the more that we examine the passage and the more that we think about the passage within the context, not only of the book of Genesis, but also within the context of the entire Pentateuch, the Torah, these first five books of the Bible, within that context we begin to see that it serves a real purpose.

In this passage we are seeing the interaction of Israel, their very early interactions as a people, with the people of the land, with those who dwell in the land of Canaan.

And so we are being given a very early peek, very early insight into what the relationship will be like between the nation of Israel and between these other peoples that are in the land.

[7 : 00] And the truth of the matter is that by the time we arrive at the end of this particular chapter, there is no real hero of the story. There is no one who stands out to whom we can point and say, hey, let's be like that particular person in the story.

Let's act like this particular person in the story. Because this is not written to show us how we should behave, but it is written to give us insight into what they did, into how they veered away from God's designs.

And in doing so, it helps us to see from a New Testament, from a New Covenant perspective, how should we interact with sin in the world around us? And then even beyond that, we get to see because of the actions of those within Israel here, how do we interact and how should we respond to the sin, even of those within the church?

How should we think of these things? Because we do live in a world where things like this happen. This is recorded because these events really occurred.

Because these events occur all the time around us. We're in the midst of the Me Too movement, where you see our culture beginning to recognize just how prevalent and common this treatment of women by men actually is.

[8 : 16] And we have to ask the question, how do we respond to this kind of evil in the world around us, and sometimes even within the church? How do we respond? What do we do when we see that something so heinous has happened?

What I want to do this morning is I want us to look at the major characters, the major figures involved in these events, and see if by gaining insight into them and their motivations and their actions, by gaining insight, if we can begin to sort of understand how it is that Moses, the author of this book, views these events, and then by seeing that, how we are expected to respond to evil around us and among us even today.

So let's consider first, let's talk about Dinah, the daughter of Jacob. Now one of the things that is significant about her is she's identified very clearly in the first verse of this chapter.

Now Dinah, the daughter of Leah, whom she had born to Jacob. That right there is a signal for us. We already know that Leah is not the favored wife of Jacob.

We know that. And we know as we continue to read through the book of Genesis, that the favoritism that Jacob has toward Rachel, that that spreads to the children of Rachel and Leah. That there is a favoritism that he displays toward Joseph that he doesn't display towards the children of Leah or the children of his concubines.

[9 : 41] It's not present. And so there we're immediately alerted to the reality that Jacob may not react in the way that we would expect a father to react when he hears that such a thing has been done to his daughter.

Because already there is some sort of distance there. There is somewhat of a barrier there. And Jacob already treats the children of Leah differently than he treats Joseph.

And we know that that's present because we've read through the story. We've seen how Jacob came to be married to Leah and to Rachel. And we have seen his favoritism. But this information is also going to play into the response of the brothers.

We see that Simeon and Levi come to defend Dinah, their sister. Where are the rest of the brothers? Where are they? We don't know. But what we know about Simeon and Levi is that Leah is also their mother.

So there's a stronger familial connection between her brothers Simeon and Levi, who are major characters in this story, than there is even between Jacob, her father, and Leah herself.

[10 : 46] That's who she is. But there has been some debate about what exactly we're told she does here. We are told that she went out to see the women of the land.

What's going on here? What is she doing? Well, it's actually quite simple. What she's really doing is going out into the fields where women would often work and pick grain and do all sorts of labor out in the fields.

And she's going out into the fields to meet these women and to get to know them. She's probably in her mid to late teens at this point. Probably curious. She has a lot of brothers.

It makes sense. It's not shocking that she would go out to meet the women of the field. And there's nothing scandalous about this. There have been preachers and commentators who have tried to lay the blame at the feet of Dinah for her actions here.

But in reality, the more that I began to look at this, the language that's used here of her going out into the fields and then to look at other incidences within the book of Genesis and outside of that in the Old Testament, I cannot see any way that we can accuse Dinah of doing anything sinful here.

[11 : 54] She's not going out to do anything or to encounter anyone. So that she might engage in any kind of illicit activity. That's not at all what she's doing. Now we might say, probably the closest we could get to being negative about Dinah, I think, in this entire passage, we might say that it was unwise of her to go out.

That's a possibility. I mean, after all, when we read in the book of Ruth, we see another instance of a young woman gathering. She's out in the fields doing some work.

And Boaz, who at that point in time has seen her, she's caught his eye, and so he tells her that I have instructed the young men not to touch you, not to do any harm to you.

So apparently it was a common known danger for women who are out in the fields, outside the city, to be attacked and assaulted by men.

That was a reality. That could happen. Boaz was concerned about that for Ruth. So he instructs all the men who work, do not touch her. And then he tells Ruth, don't go glean in anyone else's fields. You're protected here.

[12 : 59] Indicating that perhaps somewhere else she would not be protected. So we might say, well, given that background, perhaps it was unwise of her to go out.

But then again, even to counter that, we need to remember that her aunt, the other wife of her father, was herself a shepherdess out in the field by herself, with sheep back in their homeland. So it would not have been strange to her and probably not to her family for her to do this very thing. I don't think that Dinah is doing anything outrageous.

And if there is some lack of wisdom, it's based perhaps upon a change in setting, a change in culture. She's no longer back home in Paddan Aram where it's not a big deal for women to be a shepherdess.

She's now in the land of Canaan, which appears to be a dangerous place for women to be out by themselves. But we don't know how much she understands of that and what she knows. So I don't think that as this story is recorded for us and she's introduced to us, that we are intended to have a negative view of Dinah.

[14:07] She is, in every way, I believe, a victim in this particular story. We're not to lay blame at her feet. We see the villain one verse later in verse 2, Shechem.

When Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he seized her and lay with her and humiliated her. Now Shechem really and truly is presented as the villain of this particular story.

He is. And even in the language that we see, he saw her. He seized her. He lay with her. And he humiliated her. We can see immediately, we can see that Moses wants to emphasize for us, he had sinful intentions.

In fact, the language that he uses at the beginning, that he saw her, and then literally it's not seized, it's just the common word for to take something. He saw her and then he took her. That's the same language used in Genesis chapter 3 when Eve sees the fruit and she takes the fruit.

That's the same language. So it's the idea that he sees something and he's almost overcome for his desire to have the very thing that he sees. And in this case, he sees a young woman out in the fields.

[15:23] And his desire overtakes him. He wants to possess her. He wants to have her. And so indeed he takes her. And even the word that's used for to lay with her is in a slightly different form, or actually the words that follow it are slightly different than what we might normally expect.

So there's a little bit of force behind this to say that this is his doing and she's an unwilling participant in all that he does. And in fact, the end result is that she is humiliated.

She is disgraced in some way. So Shechem is no doubt the villain of the story and Dinah is no doubt an innocent victim of the story. But we can't leave things there between these two.

Because Shechem is not a one-dimensional villain. You know, sometimes we go and we see movies and oftentimes when we're watching a lot of older movies, we get these one-dimensional villains. This is the bad guy.

This is the good guy. There's nothing good about the bad guy. He even dresses in black most of the time. And he's all the way bad. I think of the original Star Wars movies.

[16:28] There's nothing in the first couple of movies that would be redemptive about Darth Vader at all. He's clad in black. He's mean. He chokes people when he's mad at them and kills. He's just bad. But by the time you arrive at the third, there's background information.

No longer is he just some mysterious evil figure who just does bad. Now he's someone's father. Now he has a backstory and all those sorts of things.

We see that in a lot of movies today where now villains are usually presented as a multi-dimensional character so that we as we watch the movie will in some way identify on some level with the villain because it makes the story more interesting.

Well, Shechem is not presented here as one-dimensional. Yes, in this verse he's one-dimensional, but immediately after that we learn some more things about Shechem.

Look at verse 3. His soul was drawn to Dinah, the daughter of Jacob. He loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. Then if you move down to verse 8, you hear Shechem's father Hamor speak and he says, The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter.

[17:37] So Shechem, whatever his initial actions were, he has developed at some point in time, at the moment, later on, we don't know.

He has feelings for her. He does care for her and he longs for her to become his wife. One of the things that we don't realize until we get to the end of the passage, though, is that throughout this entire story, she's back in Shechem's household.

Not only has she been assaulted, but she's also been kidnapped and she's back at Shechem's household the entire time. So was it perhaps when he had her kidnapped at his household, essentially under house arrest, in a sense, that he fell in love with her?

We don't know. But this is not an uncommon thing. It is not uncommon for those who hurt others to then try to point to some, no doubt, perhaps in some way authentic and genuine feelings that they might have towards that person to kind of justify their behavior.

Because like Shechem, all of us, we are given to self-justification. We are given to finding ways to make it not so bad. Whatever we have done, how terrible it might be in the eyes of others, we are very, very good at finding a way to gloss over it and make it okay.

[18 : 58] And that's Shechem's desire throughout this entire story. If she becomes his wife, it is as if the initial assault has never occurred. I mean, you've got to understand that.

That the law required him to be stoned to death. Now, of course, the law of Moses had not yet been given. But even generally speaking, oftentimes a man could be stoned for this sort of thing, and yet, here he wants to take her for his wife because that will make it as if the event has never occurred at all.

Shechem is going to bury this if he can. He's going to make it as if this has never happened. That may be motivated by genuine feelings for her. He may actually at some point have developed some sort of interest beyond a physical interest in her.

But though we're given a multi-dimensional picture of Shechem by seeing these things, we cannot forget that he is the perpetrator. And he, like all of us, would like to cover over his sin to make it so that it's not a big deal, to make it so that he can move on past it, put it behind him as if it wasn't important.

That's the normal response of a sinner to their sin when it is bound to become public. We want it to be okay.

[20 : 22] We want to do something to make it not seem so heinous. We even see this, I see this a lot of times in the way that people will apologize to other people. Have you ever noticed that oftentimes when someone has wronged you, that they come to apologize to you and it starts, well, I'm sorry for doing what I did.

And then oftentimes it's followed by an explanation. But you know, I thought that there's this desire that we have even when we approach someone to confess and apologize for our sins.

We have this sort of innate desire to want to follow that up with something that will make it, but it's not really as bad as it seems. I do want you to forgive me. I wronged you. But listen, this is why I did it.

That's not a real apology. A real apology is just, I was wrong. I sinned against you. And I need you to forgive me. That's a real apology.

But we are so driven by our desire for self-justification or to make our sin not seem as bad as it is.

That like Shechem, we try to reframe the past.

[21 : 29] Oh, if she would marry him, then that wasn't an assault anymore. That's just the beginning of their relationship and their marriage. Rocky as it may have been.

He wants to reframe it. We want to reframe our sins. We're not all that different than the villain of the story. But of course, he's not the only person who's highlighted here.

Jacob comes on the scene next in verse 5. We are told that Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah. So he hears about it. We don't know the means by which he heard.

Perhaps it's just the fact that she's missing. Where has she gone? Well, she went out to visit with the girls out in the fields and nobody's seen her since. And maybe he did some investigating and found out what happened. Maybe some of the girls out in the field ran back to tell.

We don't know. We know that he finds out, he hears that this thing has happened. And our expectation of a father is that he would immediately spring to action. We especially expect that of Jacob because despite the fact that chapter after chapter he has just been deceptive, that he has not been a model patriarch.

[22 : 39] But in the last couple of chapters, we saw him turn a major corner. We saw real repentance in his life. We saw him finally claim God as his own God and not merely the God of Abraham and Isaac.

So now at this point, we are prepared not only because he's a father, but because we've finally seen Jacob confess and bend the knee to God. We've finally seen him repent of some of his ways.

So we're expecting something from him. And what we get really is nothing. We get nothing. Jacob heard that he defiled his daughter Dinah, but his sons were with his livestock in the field.

So Jacob held his peace until they came. He doesn't feel perhaps that he has the manpower, maybe. Maybe he feels that if I do something that I'm going to be overpowered and it's going to be worse for the rest of my household.

It's tempting to think that because of the way things are labeled. But even when his sons come on the scene, even when now he has backup, even when now he has the firepower, so to speak, that he needs to actually avenge his daughter or do something about it, he still, he does nothing.

[23 : 49] Hamor, the father of Shechem, the villain, comes to him. He comes, he speaks with him. And we're told that the sons of Jacob, as they're coming in from the fields, they hear about these things and there is a stark contrast between the way the sons of Jacob respond and the way that Jacob himself responds.

Jacob, though we have finally been able to see some good things happening to him, Jacob is not painted as the model figure in this particular story. He does not respond in the way that we would expect a father to respond or anybody who is caring and concerned about another person who has been hurt and who has been wronged.

In reality, Jacob's primary concern at this juncture is everything that he has in his reputation. He is afraid that he might lose all that he has gained.

Except that he's already confessed and he already knows God gave you this gain. God provided this wealth. God provided these children.

God gave you promises that pertain to the future of your children. And we wonder, how could he be so afraid? If God has provided, surely God will protect. We don't see that thought process in Jacob.

[25 : 03] In fact, turn down toward the end of the chapter, verse 30. Here's Jacob's thought process. Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, You have brought trouble on me by making me stink to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

My numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household. very much concerned that he might protect by avoiding justice that which God has given him in the first place.

What sense does this make? Why would anybody proceed in this kind of way? And yet, we do this. We long to protect even if it means that we ignore sin.

Even if it means that we don't deal with the issues that surround us. We long to protect all that we have, failing to tell ourselves, God gave this to me. Why should I think that if I respond rightly, that He will not continue to protect me?

Of course, sometimes His protection comes by the removal of the very things that have caused us to go wayward. But in this particular case, the promises pertain precisely to His household.

[26 : 19] His children have to remain alive. And they have to have children. Otherwise, He won't have as many descendants as the stars in the sky or the sand on the seashore. He won't have those descendants and those things have been promised.

Jacob is not acting like a concerned father, but more importantly, he is not acting like one who fully trusts in the promises of God to protect that which He has provided.

Jacob instead is trying to sweep things under the rug to protect His kingdom that He has built up around Himself. And it will not work.

It will not work because on the one hand, God will not allow such a thing. Oh, in the short term, yes, in the short term, things can be swept under the rug. In the short term, we can avoid the nasty things that must be said and done.

In the short term. But in the long term, it always comes. It always comes. And Jacob, Jacob is acting as if he can push it aside and continue to live comfortably.

[27 : 29] But it won't happen. It won't happen because he has sons who are more concerned than he is. He has sons that want to intervene, that want to do something.

And at least my initial reaction, the first few times that I read through this passage, my initial reaction, quite honestly, was to cheer for the sons. I mean, these guys, they do what's got to be done.

They exact vengeance. They defend their sister's honor. But that's only partially true. That's only true as you move so far.

But you'll see that they are not the heroes of the story either. We saw already that as they come in from the field that they're angry, they're upset, and they don't understand the silence of their father. Look at verse 7. The sons of Jacob had come in from the field as soon as they heard of it. And the men were indignant and very angry because he had done an outrageous thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter.

[28 : 29] For such a thing must not be done. Must not be done. And then how do they respond to the proposal for marriage? Verse 13. The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully.

They're not going to have this. They're not going to have the silence of their father prevail and their sister be treated in this way without any sort of recompense at all.

They're going to intervene. And the first clue we have of that is not only their anger, but their deceit. They have learned well from their father. They can deceive when necessary. But their deceit doesn't serve the end of justice.

Their deceit is the satisfying of their own anger. How do we know that? Well, I think there are two things in the text that show us that they're not pursuing justice per se.

They're pursuing their own revenge. They're pursuing personal vengeance in order to defend their sister. On the one hand, first of all, we see that the means of their deceit is to impose the covenant sign of circumcision upon the Hivites.

[29 : 40] Now, mind you that the sign of the covenant, circumcision itself, is a sign of life that God has given to Abraham and his descendants. It is a sign of being within the covenant community.

It is not to be used to bring death. That's precisely what they do. They take the covenant sign that was a sign of God's giving of life to Abraham and to his descendants and his favor upon him.

And they use it as a weapon. Look as we go through the story. Verse 14, they said to them, we cannot do this thing to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace.

Only on this condition will we agree with you that you will become as we are by every male among you being circumcised. Then we will give our daughters to you and we will take your daughters to ourselves and we will dwell with you and become one people.

That's not a possibility. That's not an avenue that God himself allows his people to pursue. He will not allow them to become one people with the peoples of the land.

[30 : 44] He will not allow it. Their deceit runs deeply. Not only are they willing to use the covenant sign of circumcision, but they're also willing to pretend that they will pursue a path that God himself has cut off from them.

This language of the daughters of the land or your daughters is something that does crop up here and there in the book of Genesis. But never in a positive sense. There is Ishmael who marries a daughter of the Canaanites and drives his parents crazy.

Then of course there is Abraham who sends his servant to get a bride for Isaac because he does not want his son to marry one of the daughters of the land. So this is something that even though they don't yet have the law of Moses to tell them not to do it, they already know this is not a path open to us.

Enter marriage with the Canaanites and the Hittites or the Hivites or any of the other ites in the land.

That's not allowed. That's not permissible for them. And they know it, but they're willing to dangle that out there as a possibility to further their deceit.

but what really pushes them beyond is the fact that they don't execute judgment.

[32 : 01] According to the law of Moses, and granted they don't possess the law of Moses, but according to the law of Moses, the punishment in the case of a sexual assault would be for the person who committed that to be stoned to death.

And that's it. That's it. Now, from a modern sort of American, westernized point of view, even that is extreme, we think. But that's the penalty imposed by the law of Moses later on.

But what they will pursue is far more than that. They not only want to take his life, they take the life of his father, the negotiator, and beyond that they take the life of every man in the city.

Now this is probably not a city of tens of thousands of people, so we're not talking about a slaughter that's just grand in scale, but nonetheless, a slaughter of people who had nothing to do with these events.

Nothing at all. Now we might think that that's justified because Shechem and Hamor have their own deceit in play. Shechem and Hamor, and Hamor, Shechem's father in particular, he has it in mind

that they might become one people with the people of Israel, so they might, in a sense, swallow them up.

[33 : 17] He says, will not their livestock, their property, and all their beasts be ours? Just let us agree with them and they'll dwell with us. So there's deceit on every side. But never in the eyes of the narrator, of Moses, as he writes this, does that let Simeon and Levi off the hook?

Never are they declared as being justified in their actions. You have portrayed in the story, on the one hand, Jacob, who by his silence stands opposed to the ways of God.

And then on the other hand, here we have Simeon and Levi who by their overzealousness, by their increased violence, they stand opposed to the ways of God.

And they, like Shechem, are seeking self-justification at the end. They're angry with their father and rightfully so, but they're questioned back to him, should he treat our sister like a prostitute?

In other words, they're saying, all our actions are justified because of what he did to our sister.

That's not justice. It's vengeance. Now in the old covenant period, yes, there were laws and customs that allowed a family member to personally bring about justice.

[34 : 41] That's changed now. We don't live under the old covenant anymore. We're living under the new covenant. And Paul instructs us in Romans 12 and Romans 13 that we're not to personally seek vengeance, but God has established governments that are apart from the church and apart from us.

And those governments are to be God's executors of wrath. And we are to expect those governments to deal justice out. We should expect that. We don't personally execute vengeance. We should long for justice. But even in an age when vengeance could be personally, or justice could be personally meted out by a family member, what they do goes beyond the bounds. We know that because as you move forward in Genesis, turn over to chapter 49.

As we move forward in Genesis, when it comes time at the end of the life of Jacob for him to bless his sons, which we know is a significant moment, he's going to bless each of them and the blessings that he gives to them, these men as the heads of the future tribes of Israel, these blessings will affect not only these men, but their descendants and the tribes themselves.

And beginning in verse 5, we see his quote-unquote blessing towards Simeon and Levi. He says, Simeon and Levi are brothers. Weapons of violence are their swords.

[36 : 04] Let my soul come not into their counsel. O my glory, be not joined to their company. For in their anger they killed men and in their wilfulness they hung hamstringed oxen.

Cursed be their anger for it is fierce and their wrath for it is cruel. I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel. And that is in fact exactly what happened when the people of Israel come back to the land and they're all given their sort of tribal allotments of land, the nation of Simeon is sort of scattered within the region of Judah.

They really don't technically have their own place to say, this is ours. They're just kind of scattered within Judah. And then Levi can't even say that they're scattered within Judah. They're spread throughout the whole nation among all the tribes.

They don't have their own region, their own land. so that the actions of these two brothers in going beyond justice has consequences not only for them but for their descendants.

It is a difficult thing and it is a fine line to walk to actually pursue justice. because there is always a danger on one side of falling into silence and allowing injustice to continue and flourish and then falling into revenge on the other side and moving beyond the requirements of justice.

[37 : 23] And whenever we are dealing with sin outside the church or inside the church we will always face the temptation to fall in one of these two directions.

Some of that may be dictated by our personalities and just sort of where we lean the directions that we go. Some of it might be dictated by the circumstances the way that Simeon and Levi's actions are dictated by the fact that this is their sister.

But nevertheless whatever the cause be it internal or be it just our relationships with others whatever the cause we are tempted in the face of sin we are tempted to fall into one direction or the other.

And what we need we need a clear word on how can we avoid the mistakes of Jacob and Simeon and Levi. And then how should we think if we are the villain?

What if we find ourselves in the place of Shechem himself? What if that is who we are in the story? How do we think? How do we respond? Certainly not like Shechem who tries to cover it up and

make things into something better than they are.

[38 : 26] How should we think in the face of gross sin? Let me just give you some pointers to this in 1 Corinthians.

I want you to turn there because in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 we are given some insight into how the Apostle Paul thinks about what certainly Paul would have termed and what we even today at least for some of these things might term to be gross violations.

As in the big sins. How do we think about these things? Well, first of all let's ask the question of what if we are Shechem? Because let's not always assume that we are not the villain of the biblical story.

Let's assume that we usually are. That's why we need Jesus. Because we're the villain. Because we're the sinner. Because we're the perpetrator of violence. That's who we are. We're not innocent in any of these things.

We are more often than not we are Shechem in whatever the situations of our life that stand in front of us. What do we think then? I mean the Old Testament law says stone them.

[39 : 36] Simeon and Levi say chop them up in everybody that he knows. So what hope is there for a Shechem? There's great hope. There's great hope. 1 Corinthians 6 verse 9 begins with a note that seems hopeless.

Do you not know that the unrighteous that's Shechem and quite frankly that's me. That's you. Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?

It's bad news. And he continues on. Do not be deceived neither the sexually immoral that's certainly Shechem no doubt. Nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who practice homosexuality nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor revilers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

That's bad news. Because even if you don't fit directly under one of those categories you still fit in the broad category of unrighteous. What will the Shechem of the world do?

Verse 11 such were some of you but you were washed you were sanctified you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

[40 : 52] Probably nothing's more crucial here than seeing the connection between the word justified in verse 11 and the word unrighteous in verse 9 because they're the same root word.

Essentially Paul was saying the unrighteous they don't get into the kingdom and that's you or at least it used to be because now you who once were unrighteous have been declared righteous by God through Jesus.

That's what happens when we repent of our sin and turn to Christ. Whatever the sin may be no matter how awful no matter how big it might be or how small it might be when we repent and turn to Christ in faith those of us who are unrighteous are declared righteous by our faith in Jesus.

It is better to own up to your sin and repent and turn to Christ and be declared righteous by Him than to secretly remain unrighteous and face the wrath of God.

It is infinitely better to confess your sins to Him and seek His grace through Christ than to think that you can lock them away securely in a box or in a safe and face God's wrath as an unrighteous person.

You unrighteous as you may be may approach God clothed in the righteousness of Jesus if you will but repent and trust in Jesus.

[42 : 16] That doesn't mean that there aren't temporal penalties! Penalties in this life and in this world! Consequences that we have to suffer! After all if you commit some of these things are crimes!

If you commit a crime expect that the government will come in as Romans 13 says and they will bring punishment upon you. That's the purpose of the government. That's what they do.

It's called retributive justice. It doesn't necessarily aim at the rehabilitation of the person. It aims to bring justice. It aims to say you did this and that deserves this particular type of penalty and we're going to bring that penalty upon you.

We should expect that and want that to be the case if we're going to live in a society that is even on the surface even slightly just.

We should want that. But before the ultimate judge the worst of sinners can be declared righteous by faith. Now of course all this is the assumption that these are the sins done by those outside the body.

[43 : 23] And then once they repented then they became one of those who belong to Christ. Christ. What shall we say though in the case of someone who professes faith in Jesus and can then be described as sexually immoral and adulterer one who practices homosexuality thieves greedy drunkards.

What shall we say of those who name the name of Christ who stand inside the church and yet presently these labels fit?

Do we say them? Do we absolve it and ignore it as Jacob did simply saying but they were declared righteous by faith in Jesus? We don't have to worry about sin anymore.

I don't think so. I don't think so because 1 Corinthians 5 comes before 1 Corinthians 6. and in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 Paul deals directly with the case of sexual immorality within the church. He says in verse 1 it's actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you. It's there he says he acknowledges it Paul doesn't hide from it they're hiding from it they're acting like it's not a big deal Paul says it's actually reported and then he says I want you not to mourn let him who has done this let him who is presently naming the name of Christ but has done this thing let him be removed from among you.

[45 : 01] Let him be taken away from the body of Christ. We don't pretend that sin doesn't happen within the body of Christ.

We see it we acknowledge it and we deal with it. But of course within the body of Christ the goal is never the removal of the person the goal is beyond that. Verse 5 you are to deliver this man to Satan that's the removal from the body of Christ putting him outside you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. In other words the hope of the apostle Paul and the hope of all discipline within the body of Christ is the repentance of those who have fallen into sin so that they might be restored to fellowship in the body of Christ.

That's the hope and that's the goal. Not an ignoring of sin. Not a treating of sin as if it's an insurmountable thing that can never be overcome within the church.

But an honest acknowledgement of it, a calling of it out, a using of discipline when necessary to deal for it in a longing and a hope that they might repent.

[46 : 11] Paul is fully capable of considering the sin of those in the church in a different way than he considers the sin of those outside the church.

So for instance, he says in verse 9, I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people, not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world. He can make the distinction, but he can also expect different types of justice.

In the world, he can expect retributive justice that simply aims to set things right. That's the government's role. But in the church, he aims for what we might call rehabilitative justice.

He is aiming at the restoration, the repentance of those within the body who fall into sin. There is something to be learned. There are many things to be learned from how young Israel deals with sin within the nation, even when it comes from those who are outside.

There are things to be learned from this particular story, but probably none more significant than the reality that we are all sinners. Simeon and Levi are sinners.

[47 : 25] Jacob is a sinner. Shechem is a sinner. But, the most unrighteous among us can be declared righteous through faith in Jesus.

Jesus. And those declared righteous through faith in Jesus have a charge. Pursue righteousness in your own household and long for it outside the walls of your household.

Let's pray.