

Building on Biblical Foundations

“The Wages of Sin is Death”

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Genesis 34

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Genesis 34 – Summarized -

Chapter 34 is a disturbing story. I will not read it in its entirety but I will summarize the story. You can read it on your own to refresh your memory.

Dinah – a daughter of Israel and Leah – went out to mingle with the young women of the land. There was a festival and the young women at the time would have attended in full array of the day’s fashion, and would have engaged in dancing and all such revelry.

While she is out the prince of the land, Shechem, spies her and is smitten. He takes her forcefully and defiles her. She is then held in his home.

He decides he loves the girl and want her to be his wife. This is after he has already raped her. The historian Josephus, puts her age at about 14 years old.

Shechem pleads with his father – Hamor the King – to go to Jacob – now called Israel – to ask for her hand in marriage.

Hamor indulges his son and visits Jacob. When Jacob hears the news he does not react. His sons are gathered around him and the King stays for supper. Over supper he says he will pay any dowry that Israel demands.

The sons– Simeon and Levi - conspire together and they come up with a plan. They proposed that all of the men of the city be circumcised including the King and his son. This way they can intermarry and trade and be one big happy family.

The King agrees.

He returns to his city and announces that all of the men of the city are to be circumcised. And it is done.

On the third day while the men in at the height of their agony, Simeon and Levi -and those they have gathered attack and kill every last one of them. They rescue their sister and take all the spoils of the city including the women, the and livestock.

When Israel hears of it he is not pleased. He fears the people of the surrounding land will come against him and his family. But the sons defend their actions as just vengeance for what befell their sister.

So much going on in this chapter. It reads like a Hollywood movie. A wrong decision by a young girl puts her in harms way, a wicked act steals her innocence, a twisted mind calls it love, an indulgent father seeks to appease his son, an innocent family is disgraced and enraged, a deceitful plot is conceived, the vengeance is exacted upon all of the citizens of the city – men, women and children – all suffer.

Sin multiplied.

James 1:14-15

¹ But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

¹⁵ Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

And in Romans we have been told that. . .

Romans 6:23 “ The wages of sin is death;”

And here in this chapter we see the full illustration of it. The Lust of the prince leads to the sin of rape, and the sin of rape leads to vengeance in the hearts of her brothers, and ultimately the slaughter of an entire city of men.

The word of God -the Bible has been give to us to instruct, to correct, to rebuke, to teach, to learn. . .

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

We who hold the Word in our hands are without excuse.

Jesus said. . . in Matthew 4:4 “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.””

And we are told that . . .

Psalm 119:105 - Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

And one of my favorites:

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Sometimes it is a wise saying ,a quote from Jesus or Paul, or Solomon. Other times it is a parable – a word picture to help us understand and other times, many other times the Lord uses real people, making really poor choices to teach us.

Oh, that we might learn a thing or two from those who have stumbled before us.

What can we learn from this tragic story?

1. Sin begins every so subtly. . . with just a hint of impropriety. Dinah – at fourteen – left the protection of her father’s house to venture into the city where she might experience what the “other” girls did. Her curiosity at their revelry cost her greatly. This first transgression quickly multiplied.
2. Raising a son (or daughter) without instilling in them self control and respect for others is destructive.
3. An indulged child will become an entitled adult. The prince was indulged by the King. Allowed to take whatever he wanted. I imagine he never had anything withheld from him but was raised to feel entitled – entitled to whatever he wanted.
4. Lusting does not give one the right to the thing they desire.
5. From one act of violence, more violence shall come. And each time it escalates. From rape to murder of an entire city.
6. Vengeance cannot right a wrong. It does not bring peace. What happened to Dinah was outrageous and Israel and his sons had every right to seek justice. What happened was not justice. The punishment far exceeded the crime.
7. Religion (or religious rites such as circumcision) should never be used as tools of manipulation. The men of the town consented to the circumcision not because they wanted to honor God and be called his children, but to gain favor with their own King. Simeon and Levi had no intention of honoring their proposal for dowry, but used circumcision as a weapon to disable the city’s men to prepare them for slaughter. Abuse of the Lord’s ways will never bring about a righteous result.

We will see how the Lord responds next week. Does he chastise Israel? Does he abandon him? No. Indeed his mercies are new every day.

We are living in days that seem to be filled with one sin begetting another and so on and son on. What are we to do?

How do we respond to the injustices around us? How do we – as the people of God – respond to the ever increasing sin?

Ultimately we are to be conformed to the image of Christ. That is our mission.

What did Jesus say to do:

Love the Lord with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind – and love your neighbor as yourself. Matthew 22:37-39

If we love God with all that we are, we won't have much time to chase after things that offend him. If we love our neighbors as well as we love ourselves, we won't be inclined to abuse them.

How do we do this? Abide in Jesus. Draw near to him and he promises that he will draw near to you. Keep a short account, confess your sins to him daily. Sin separates you from God. When you let sin pile up in your heart there is little room for Jesus. It is like Adam hiding in the Garden. God could see him. Adam was ashamed and hid. But he was not actually hiding anything.

Lust gives birth to sin, and the wages of sin is death.

You can lust after money, sex, food, praises of others, power, position, possessions, even religious self-righteousness (like our friends the Pharisees). Desiring anything more than God is sin. That is a hard truth.

When we lay it ALL down, he fills us up. Let's cleanse ourselves of all unrighteousness and plunge our souls into the river of life that is Jesus Christ.