

Genesis in Biblical Perspective: The Gospel of Christ from Genesis – Another Reminder of the Legacy of Sin

Genesis 34

By [Dr. Harry Reeder III](#)

We will be looking at Genesis 34 in this study. One of my favorite arguments for the inspiration of the Scriptures is God's Word, while it comes through human agency, originates from God and it given to us by God and there are things throughout the Bible that if I was a person writing about a religion I made up, I would never put in the Bible and we are going to be looking at one of those texts in this study. There is nobody that comes out of this chapter clean. Everybody in this chapter is covered up with problems and this is one of those passages where the positive lessons that come are enormous in the text but they're all cast within a negative framework of life. Even though Jacob is now redeemed and the redemption is beginning to work through his family, the embedded entangling roots of sin have continued long enough in his life that there are still things that are coming back and even though things have been forgiven there are the consequences of sin of both how he responds to situations and even how his family is responding to situations.

That's why I encourage you to never listen to Gospel preaching in the name of grace that ever treats sin in a cavalier or light fashion. Sin, while I can quickly be forgiven because of the finished work of Jesus Christ, has consequences when believers sow it. It has consequences in our life and in our families. We are seeing some of the leftover legacies of sin in the life of Jacob and his family and throughout this text. There are scars and marred lives because of it that will continue many, many years into the future.

The first thing I'd like to do is give you a thematic focus and theme for this passage and that is this. Growing as a Christian requires absolute dependence upon God's grace and absolute diligence in embracing the means of grace. In other words, if you want to grow as a Christian you don't grow for grace but you grow in grace. If you grow in grace you're absolutely dependent upon what Christ has done for you. It's not good works that I will rest in but it will be Jesus that I will rest in and you can't put your foot in both areas. You have to be utterly dependent on Jesus Christ and what He has done on the cross for you, but that other dependence when you're growing in grace is not seen by passivity in the Christian life.

On the contrary, there is the pursuit of the Lord. There is the fleeing of temptation. There is the study of the Word of God. There is the engagement of worship. There is diligence in prayer. There is devotion to the cause of Christ in the Kingdom. There is that call of the Lord that we lay hold of – those responsibilities in our life. So there is one hundred percent dependence upon grace and there is one hundred percent diligence to pursue the means of grace. One of the reasons why is that we still have sin that is rooted down in our life. It's not enough for us to take the lawn mower of redemption and cut across the top and not the weeds down. We need to go after the roots that have embedded themselves in our life years and years apart from Christ.

The Bible calls those roots the old man and you have to go after the old man with the work of grace. You have to put off the old man to put on the new. Do you want to live? The call of Christ is to come and die. You come and die in order to live. You die to yourself, sin and to the world and you do so with utter dependence upon the grace in which the Lord has provided for us.

In the previous study we saw that Jacob has left Esau and he has surreptitiously moved away in order to make his abode in a place called Shechem. There he built an altar and worshipped the Lord. There in the midst of that place in the land of Canaan he had pitched his tent outside of Shechem, before Shechem at that point. Let's look back at Genesis 33:18–20 says

[18] And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan-aram, and he camped before the city. [19] And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, he bought for a hundred pieces of money the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent. [20] There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

So Jacob has reconciled with Esau and instead of going to Edom with Esau which was right, he comes toward the Promised Land. He was not supposed to go to Edom but there is one problem. He is not going where he had vowed to go. His vow was that he would go to Bethel. It was there that God had called him to worship. It was there that God has prepared him for twenty years under indentured servitude of Laban. It was there that Jacob vowed that if God would be with him, he would return to that place, but he doesn't and he goes to Shechem. He goes to the place where Abraham first entered the land, had erected an altar and then moved on. It is there that he settled his family, bought a land and pitched a tent, not at Bethel but at Shechem, surrounded by the sons of Hamor in the Canaanite city. The Canaanites were noted for their violence, sensuality, fertility gods and life of decadence.

Now we have Genesis 34 before us. This text contains two vivid statements of rape. There is the rape of a woman, the name of love out of lust. There is the rape of a city, the name of justice but out of vengeance. There blasphemy, rape,

murder and slaughter takes place. The rape of lust compounded by the rape of revenge and here can we only rest in the wisdom of God as to why He would call us to handle this text. Many of the commentators don't. Some just skip it. Harry L. Reeder III (me) came close to skipping it, but it's a text that is in the Word of God and I am reminded that all Scripture is profitable. The things that were written of the days before have been written for our instruction and encouragement according to Romans 15. So let's look at our text for this study, Genesis 34. Genesis 34:1–4 says

[1] Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the women of the land. [2] 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. [3] And his soul was drawn to Dinah the daughter of Jacob. He loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. [4] So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this girl for my wife."

Here the incident is described for us. Dinah had four full brothers, Rueben, Simeon, Levi and Judah. The rest were her half-brothers who would come from either the surrogate mothers or Rachel. Here is this challenging moment that is recorded in the Scripture. Dinah has gone out in contrary even to the Canaanite customs, where she is un-chaperoned, on her own, unguarded and unprotected. Motivated by curiosity she wants to go see the women of Canaan. She is found by the son of Hamor, Shechem and he seizes her, forces himself upon her, defiles her and humiliates her by the act of rape.

Then he declares his love for this woman and goes to his father and says "Get me this woman for my wife." Now comes the response. How do both of the fathers respond? Genesis 34:5–12 says

[5] 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. [6] And Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. [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, for such a thing must not be done. [8] But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him to be his wife. [9] Make marriages with us. Give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. [10] You shall dwell with us, and the land shall be open to you. Dwell and trade in it, and get property in it." [11] 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. [12] Ask me for as great a bride price and gift as you will, and I will give whatever you say to me. Only give me the young woman to be my wife."

First of all is the absolute bewildering response of Jacob. His daughter has been defiled, humiliated and raped, no apology comes but only a request in the form of a demand, "Give her to my son as a wife." Strangely Jacob is seemingly disconnected. He has no response and as far as the text says he is emotionless. He maintains his silence when he finds out about the occasion. His sons are in the field and when they come in he gives them no direction, no leadership and they are left to deal with the anger and vengeance they feel in their heart. Jacob, again, has resorted to his old ways of the shrinking man and when the moment comes for his leadership for his daughter and for his sons the text gives us silence. He does nothing.

Hamor is not disconnected. He is under the dominion of his son. Whatever his son demands he gives it to him, even in their own law that had governed the Canaanites in those days, what his son had done was wrong. There is no rebuke of his son. His son is obviously used to demanding what he wants and his father is committed to getting what he demands. So Hamor comes with a proposal. His proposal is simple. It is that the covenant line of God, the line of Israel, the line of Jacob will intermarry with the Canaanites, the Hivites, the line of Hamor and Shechem and there will be a free intercourse of marriage, property, and ownership together. In other words, let's now come together in light of what happens. Jacob makes no reply. It is the sons who intervene to reply. Genesis 34:13–24 says

[13] The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully, because he had defiled their sister Dinah. [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 to us. [15] Only on this condition will we agree with you—that you will become as we are by every male among you being circumcised. [16] 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. [17] But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter, and we will be gone." [18] Their words pleased Hamor and Hamor's son Shechem. [19] 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. [20] So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying, [21] "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. [22] 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. [23] Will not their livestock, their property and all their beasts be ours? Only let us agree with them, and they will dwell with us." [24] And all who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

They propose something and this is not an offer of evangelism as if to say “Would you come to the Lord and be a part of the covenant?” This is a deceitful use of circumcision. These brothers would know what the effect would be upon the adult male. So their offer was they couldn’t intermarry with them and all unless their adult males were circumcised. So if Shechem really wanted Dinah they had to all agree to do this. Hamor and Shechem say if that’s all they have to do then they will do it. They go tell the people of their city what has been proposed so that they too can intermarry with the Israelites yet they don’t make a mention of the rape that has taken place or about the problem that has occurred. They draw their people in with the offer of further wealth by this intermarriage of these two lines. They all agree to do that.

Circumcision is the sign of the Old Covenant that is the initiatory sign that if someone was proselytized or was a Gentile and became a believer, such as Abraham, then that was the sign of the covenant. Then it was the sign that was to be placed upon the male covenant children to confirm God’s promise of God being a God to you and to your children after you. Later on the sign of the Passover, the covenant meal, will be added and both of those are fulfilled in Christ and in the New Testament they are replaced by baptism and the Lord’s Supper, of which I’m grateful that baptism has replaced circumcision. If that was part of the duty in the New Covenant ministry (circumcision) I don’t think I could have answered the call to the ministry.

However the initiatory sign of that time that marked out the people of God was circumcision. It was a declaration that there was no hope in the flesh and without the shedding of blood there will be no redemption. It was an act of a symbolic sacrifice and an act that declared there is no hope in generation for we need regeneration. There is no hope in the flesh. So they then take this Divinely, ordained, holy sign and they use it as an instrument of war. They use it to cripple all the males of the city. Now what will they do at that point? Genesis 34:25–31 says

[25] 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. [26] They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword and took Dinah out of Shechem's house and went away. [27] The sons of Jacob came upon the slain and plundered the city, because they had defiled their sister. [28] They took their flocks and their herds, their donkeys, and whatever was in the city and in the field. [29] All their wealth, all their little ones and their wives, all that was in the houses, they captured and plundered. [30] 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.” [31] But they said, “Should he treat our sister like a prostitute?”

The sons of Jacob exact revenge. The circumcision has been done. The third day would have been the most difficult day for those who had been circumcised. They probably would have been immobilized with their soreness. Simeon and Levi take their swords and lead the other sons of Jacob who come in behind them to totally take all of the city. As they go into the city on the third day they kill all the males within the city and take all of that which is in the city. Jacob raises an objection saying “What will this do to me? Now I am like an odor in their nostrils. Look what you’ve done to me. Why would you do this to me?” The sons who have never heard a word of direction to deal with the anger of what they felt over the wrong done to their sister appropriately reply to Jacob by saying “Father, should we let them treat our sister, your daughter, like a prostitute?” Then the text ends.

Why is this recorded in the Word of God and what are some basic lessons we can glean from this? I want to give you five takeaways from this text. Here is the first one. There are five reasons why the daughter, Dinah, was defiled. I call it the chaos of sin. There are many times in my office when a marriage is breaking up, recalcitrant children, break downs in relationships and people are always asking me why. When sin comes in like a flood and when it destroys it just never makes sense. There is no order to it. It’s chaos. Sin comes out of chaos. Here are the five elements of chaos that I see that led to the defilement of Dinah.

The first reason is Jacob’s disobedience to God’s call and his sacred vow. Jacob had made a sacred vow saying “God if You are with me then I will return to Bethel.” It was there that God had appeared to him with the ladder freighted and loaded with all the angels and had called him. So Jacob says “If I go, You’re with me, You give me a nation, You bring me back here and You never depart from me, then I vow with this pillar that I have set up here at Bethel to come back here to worship You and give You a tithe of all that I have.” He violated his vow and he did not respond to the call of God to come to Bethel. He chose another place to worship God, Shechem and it was there by not following God’s Word, upholding his vow that he led his family into a precarious environment.

Secondly, because Jacob did not worship God where he was supposed to worship God, he brought to God unacceptable worship. In the New Testament where we worship is no longer an issue. The Lord makes that clear with the woman at the well. The Samaritan woman said to Jesus in John 4:20,

[20] Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship. She is basically asking Jesus where can we worship God? [21] Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. [22] You worship what you do not know; we

worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. [23] But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. [24] God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:21–24)

In the New Covenant the issue is not where but how. It is that we are to worship in Spirit and truth.

In the Old Covenant where people worshipped was crucial. There was a place to be at God's appointment where He would receive worship. Jacob had not gone to that place. He was in violation of his vow and God's call for he had brought worship at a place called Shechem. That means it was unacceptable worship. I believe with all of my heart that worship is at the core of the Christian life. We were saved to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. We were saved to the praise of the glory of His grace and that is why I believe the church in the United States of America is in a precarious position. The issue is not when the date is on the hymns that we sing but the issue is what is motivating the worship of God's people today. Has it been the infiltration of the notion that the whole point of worship is the entertainment of the worshipper or has it been a notion that we have come to exalt the Lord our God and that God is the center of our worship not me? The question is not how did they do for me today but how did I do before the eye of God. Have I worshipped Him in Spirit and truth?

I believe that is the key to the entire Christian life because the entire Christian life is worship. If we dumb down worship to a man-centered view then we will drift on that to the Christian life and make that a man-centered view of the Christian life, thus all kinds of aberrations of the Gospel, such as the prosperity gospel, self-esteem gospel, the therapy gospel, instead of Gospel that calls us to die that we might know the life of Jesus Christ and He be exalted in our lives. I believe the issue of worship is at the core. I believe that special worship has a special place, not only that God has called for it, but it becomes that pinnacle of the Christian life in which the rest of the Christian life is drafting upon it. So that whether I eat or drink or whatsoever I do, I do all to the glory of God (I Corinthians 10:31).

The third element of the chaos of sin is the family has been led to the precipice of destruction. Jacob has pitched his tent before a Canaanite city. Does that remind you of another happening in the book of Genesis? It is like Lot. Lot drew near to Sodom and then he pitched his tent near Sodom. The next thing we know he has a house in Sodom. He is in the gates of Sodom. Lot is ridiculed by the Sodomites. The greatest challenge in the Christian life is to be in the world but not of it. We cannot for the sake of being in the world become of it, but neither can we for the sake of being of the world attempt to leave it and segregate ourselves from it. This is the greatest challenge I know in the Christian life. How

am I in the world but not of the world? The Lord would have me here but He would not have here in me and that is so crucial in the Christian life.

When the family has been led to that point, now a daughter looks out from her tent and becomes fascinated with the women of Canaan. With no chaperone she goes out to mingle among them. My heart just broke as I thought of this and as I see our daughters and their mothers. She looked in fascination on the women of Canaan instead of on the woman of Proverbs. There is a curiosity that is in Dinah and because of where she is placed and what she has seen she fell prey. What have we exposed our sons and daughters to? I know we've been raised in a bubble and please hear me for we must take great care that we don't turn our children over to the world. Don't turn our children over to the world. We teach them how to live in it for Christ. This is no job for cowards and it's no job for legalism.

This is a matter of the heart. It's a matter of where the heart will not be a place for the idolatry of the world but Jesus Christ is in the heart of our children. We introduce them to the Gospel and we drill holes into their lives. We keep drilling down into their lives and as we put those holes we then take the Gospel of Jesus Christ like dynamite and keep packing it in, so that they know and love Christ so much that where they go, how they dress, what is important to them and what captures their affection and allegiance is that which is done by the explosion of the Gospel in their heart.

Do not miss the fourth element of chaos and that is disconnected fathers. I say this because I don't want to miss out on Hamor. Some fathers are disconnected because their children rule them. We are so busy wanting our children to like us and to affirm us that we don't have time to be their parents. It said in the text that Shechem was the favorite son. Shechem probably never heard 'no' one time in his life. There is no rebuke of him by his father. Here is a father who was dominated by his son and his son brought havoc in the lives of others as well as himself, all leading to death.

Here is a disconnected father whose own daughter is defiled and he is silent. His sons are boiling with anger and indignation and he gives no leadership. He gives no direction. He is the absent father even though he is physically there. Secondly, the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. Here we see the father's passivity, his lack of leadership, and this anger with no direction. I want to remind you that anger is not a sin. The Bible says to be angry yet do not sin. There is sinful anger but anger is not sin. Anger is a God-given emotion. It is a very powerful emotion and that's why it has to be handled so carefully, because the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

Here the anger of man took an issue of justice and turned it into vengeance. This deserves more treatment than I can give it in this study but whenever a family, an organization or a nation is abandoned by the rule of law and justice, it's not long

until vigilante justice and revenge take over. How should this have been handled? Leadership was absent and when there was not law to direct them, grace to guide them, mercy to undergird them and justice had been abandoned then it's not long until vengeance takes over.

I hate to say this but sometimes I long for the days when something would happen there were always some uncles and cousins that would just take care of it. Those were the days. I would always let the men who came to date my sisters know that they did have a big brother that wanted them to handle them rightly and if they didn't they'd get a visit from me, but I can't do that vigilante vengeance. If there is the absence of law that is exactly what happens to a nation. I believe we're on the verge of that in this nation. That's a whole other issue to deal with. We can't convict anybody of anything because we won't recognize evil and won't recognize personal responsibility. Eventually what will happen is the mob rule of vengeance and that is an abomination which leads to nothing but all kinds of chaos, evil, blasphemy, murder and slaughter. Here is a father that did not give leadership. He didn't lay down the law for his sons saying "This is the way this will be dealt with" therefore the anger of man took over and all kinds of blasphemy took place.

Here is the third one. When the anger of man took over what were the five results of this sin? Number one was that a daughter had been defiled. I'm sure this had to mark Dinah for the rest of her life and she had to deal with this issue. I pray there was great ministry and mercy to her but the Scriptures are silent on it. Here are sons that are now unbridled, undirected and become the proverbial loose cannons in a family. Here is chaos that is reigning throughout the family and they will never ultimately recover. Eventually they will get a brother they don't like whose name is Joseph and they will sell him into slavery. This pattern of handling things on their own out of their anger will continue.

Not only that, here is Simeon and Levi whose seed will continue to bear responsibility for what took place here. Simeon and Levi were the ones who grabbed the sword and went through the city of Shechem. Let's look in Genesis 49 and see what happens at the death of Jacob. Genesis 49:5-7 says

*[5] "Simeon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are their swords.
[6] Let my soul come not into their council; O my glory, be not joined to their company. For in their anger they killed men, and in their willfulness they hamstrung oxen. [7] 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."*

No land or heritage went to them. Their violence had years of consequences.

Then finally, a father's response to this is a self-centered absorption with his own preservation. What will the people in the land do to me now? Here is a father who doesn't see what has happened to his daughter or his sons, but is only

fascinated and absorbed with himself. He is shamelessly selfish. I know he is born again but this root of self-absorption is so hard to pull out by God's grace, but it must be.

Fourthly, is the blasphemy of the sacred and the holy. They took the sacred sign of circumcision, the Divinely ordained mark of the covenant, and they profaned the use of the sacred. When God has given things holy we must not profane them in the efforts of personal vengeance or self-absorption. I actually think of that when I think of God's precious church. It is a people who must reach into the world and must reach with all of their heart yet we must treat the things of God as sacred and holy. His Word, His sacraments, His worship and our prayers are not to be profaned for the pragmatic moment. In the text they profaned the use of the sacred. The sign and seal of the covenant became an instrument of personal vengeance.

Finally, just as a reminder, Jacob reminds us that the journey of grace to heaven is one that is long and requires our attention day by day. Our sin is deeply rooted within us. I plead with you not to sign any peace treaties with sin in your life. Romans 8:13 says [13] *For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.* By God's grace kill the remaining sin in your life. I am so grateful for God's patience, His longsuffering, His mercy and that it is not by my performance that I gain heaven but that does not mean that my life as a Christian should be treated with anything else but diligence and perseverance with utter dependence upon God's grace. O God, open up my heart and see if there is any hurtful thing in me and God, for Your glory pull it out by the roots. Make me more and more like my Savior! Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for these moments in this text of Scripture and the challenges that are before us. Father, You have this negative text here but O how we see the positive implications in our life. What would it be like to see fathers bathed in grace, who have become husbands that lead wives, who raise children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and realize they have a Savior who will work with them that You might work through them? O God, what would it mean for a people, in the name of enthusiasm and zeal, would never stoop to treating that which is holy with profanity or vulgarity? O God, that which is holy we reverence, the Gospel, Your Word and we treat it with confidence

but not with contempt. O God, let us not profane the sacred. Father, give no root to sin in our lives. God, work in our lives that our children would rise up and bless Your Name. O God, these children that are out there now that we are so concerned for and desire to reach, Lord use us that You might raise up them that a Good News and a Glad News would go throughout the land. Father, many times I have heard it said that Christianity is only one generation away from

extinction and I understand that, but I also know that we are only a generation away from a great awakening. Could it come with us and our children? Come Lord, come here and begin with me, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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