

Genesis 34:1-31

In this chapter we find a significant gap in the timeline. When Jacob first left Padan Aram, his daughter Dinah was likely less than six years old. By the time this chapter unfolds, she has grown into a young woman, perhaps in her mid-teens.

We read in Genesis 34:1, "Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land." Dinah was the only daughter mentioned by name among many brothers—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, and the rest. Being a young woman, she naturally desired companionship and went to visit the local girls in the area of Shechem. But, there is a danger when we begin to mingle too closely with the world without the covering of the Lord.

A Cycle of Sin and Deceit

When Shechem, the prince of that country, saw her, he took her by force. The Bible says he defiled her. Yet, strangely, the text tells us his soul "clung" to her. He spoke kindly to her and asked his father, Hamor, to secure her as his wife. While his initial act was a grievous sin, he sought to make it "right" in a worldly sense by marrying her.

When Jacob heard of this, he remained silent until his sons returned from the field. When those brothers arrived, they weren't just grieved; they were white-hot with anger. They said this was a "folly in Israel... which thing ought not to be done" (Genesis 34:7).

Hamor and Shechem came to negotiate, offering a dowry and proposing a merger of their peoples. They said, "Dwell with us... trade therein, and get possessions" (Genesis 34:10). It sounded like a business deal, a way to peace. But the sons of Jacob—specifically Simeon and Levi—answered with treachery.

They used a holy sign, circumcision, as a weapon of deception. They told the men of Shechem that they could only intermarry if every male was circumcised. The men of the city agreed, not out of devotion to God, but out of greed, thinking, "Will not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs be ours?" (Genesis 34:23).

The Consequences of Fleshly Anger

On the third day, while the men of the city were in pain and recovering, Simeon and Levi took their swords and slaughtered every male in the city, including Hamor and Shechem. They rescued Dinah, but they also plundered the city, taking the wives and children captive.

Jacob was devastated. He told his sons, "You have troubled me to make me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land" (Genesis 34:30). He feared a counter-attack by neighboring cities that would wipe out his family. But his sons simply retorted, "Should he deal with our sister like a harlot?" (Genesis 34:31).

Practical Application: Sowing and Reaping

We see a heavy principle at work here: "Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

- Jacob had deceived his father, Isaac.
- Jacob was then deceived by his father-in-law, Laban.
- Now, Jacob watches his own sons use deceit and "religious" rituals to commit mass murder.

The Bible doesn't gloss over this. These men—Simeon and Levi—were the heads of the tribes of Israel. Levi would eventually be the father of the priestly tribe! Yet here, they are governed by a "cursed anger." In fact, years later on his deathbed, Jacob would look at them and prophesy that they would be scattered because of this very cruelty (Genesis 49:5-7).

A Challenge for the Believer

This story is a reminder that God does not use perfect people. If He did, He wouldn't have anyone to work with! He takes people with "horrible tempers" and "deceitful hearts" and, by His grace, folds them into His plan.

However, the challenge for us today is this: Are you trying to solve "worldly" problems with "fleshly" weapons? Simeon and Levi had a "righteous" cause—their sister was wronged—but they used "unrighteous" means to address it. When we operate in our own anger rather than the Spirit of God, we leave a "stink" in the world rather than the fragrance of Christ.

An Invitation to New Life

Maybe you look at your life today and see a trail of "stinking" decisions, deceit, or anger. You might think, "God could never use me." But look at the grace of God! He took this dysfunctional family and brought the Savior of the world through their lineage.

Jesus Christ didn't come for the perfect; He came for the broken. He took the judgment we deserved upon Himself. When He shed His blood on that cross, He paid the price for every lie, every act of violence, and every sin you have ever committed. When He rose from the dead three days later, He proved once and for all that He is God, the Savior, and the Lord over all.

If you are tired of the cycle of sowing and reaping sin, you can start a new life today. Give your life to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you and to be the Lord of your heart. He is ready to take your "imperfections" and cover them with His righteousness.