

Ugly Sin and the Beautiful Savior Man Needs (Genesis 34)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at GCBC on December 22, 2013

Please turn to Gen 34. If you're wondering, I'm not gonna preach the same sermon as last week. But you may wonder as I read why I'm preaching this today. In context God told Jacob to take his family back to Bethel, 31:3, and Jacob came over 400 miles, but he stops 20 miles short, settling in Shechem

*Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land. ² When Shechem [same name as the land/city] the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, **saw her, he took her and lay with her by force** [others say 'violated/humiliated her']. ³ He was deeply attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl [**not agape**] and spoke tenderly to her. ⁴ So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young girl for a wife." ⁵ Now Jacob heard that he had **defiled** Dinah his daughter; but his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob kept silent until they came in. ⁶ Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. ⁷ Now the sons of Jacob came in from the field **when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done.** ⁸ But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage. ⁹ **Intermarry with us; give your daughters to us and take our daughters for yourselves.** ¹⁰ "Thus you shall live with us, and the land shall be open before you; live and trade in it and acquire property in it." ¹¹ Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, "If I find favor in your sight, then I will give whatever you say to me. ¹² "Ask me ever so much bridal payment and gift, and I will give according as you say to me; but give me the girl in marriage." ¹³ But Jacob's sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor with deceit, because he had defiled Dinah their sister. 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 consent to you: if you will become like us, in that every male of you be circumcised, ¹⁶ then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live with you and become one people. ¹⁷ "But if you will not listen to us to be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and go." ¹⁸ Now their words seemed reasonable to Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son. ¹⁹ The young man did not delay to do the thing, because he was delighted with Jacob's daughter. Now he was more respected than all the household of his father. 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 friendly with us; therefore let them live in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters in marriage, and give our daughters to them. ²² "Only on this condition will the men consent to us to live with us, to become one people: that every male among us be circumcised as they are circumcised. ²³ "Will not their livestock and their property and all their animals be ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will live with us." ²⁴ All who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and to his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city. ²⁵ Now it came about on the third day, when they were in pain, that **two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came upon the city unawares, and killed every male.** ²⁶ **They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went forth.** ²⁷ Jacob's sons came upon the slain and **looted the city**, because they had defiled their sister. ²⁸ They took their flocks and their herds and their donkeys, and that which was in the city and that which was in the field; ²⁹ and **they captured and looted all their wealth and all their***

Ugly Sin and the Beautiful Savior Man Needs (Genesis 34)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at GCBC on December 22, 2013

little ones and their wives, even all that was in the houses. ³⁰ Then Jacob said to **Simeon and Levi**, “You have brought trouble on me by making me odious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and my men being few in number, they will gather together against me and attack me and I will be destroyed, I and my household.” ³¹ But they said, “**Should he treat our sister as a harlot?**”

And all God's people said "huh?" That's a Bible story? That's how it ends? Some have never read this story and don't remember it from your children's Bible or SS classes, because it wasn't there. You can't buy a flannel-graph set for this chapter. Most adults would prefer to skip it. Why is this chapter even in the Bible? And you're preaching on this to start the New Year...*why?*

James Boice wrote: 'Here and there in the Bible we come upon chapters that report such disgraceful deeds that it is difficult to know how to comment or preach on the rape of Jacob's daughter...a bloody revenge...by Jacob's sons.

What are we to do with [this] chapter? ... Some writers simply pass over the incident. Arthur W. Pink is one. He wrote that he was leaving his readers to turn to it for themselves. Alexander MacLaren also skips over it in his *Expositions of Holy Scripture*...[another] provides some commentary. But...in the section..."Homiletical [Preaching] Suggestions," he says: "We may well wonder if any man who had proper discernment ever drew a text from this chapter." [We'll see if I do] Then he relents "...by the more mature mind [it] *could* be treated to advantage before a *men's* class. But we cannot venture to offer homiletical [or preaching] suggestions for its treatment." ... [Boice, though, says this just shows this isn't man's ways or writing] ... How could this chapter get included if Genesis were merely a human composition? Human writers would have suppressed these events, just as commentators seem compelled to suppress them today. The only way these events could have come to be included is that the ultimate author of this book...is God, who speaks the truth regardless of how it reflects on people."ⁱ

If I was a topical preacher, I confess I'd never pick this story for a sermon. But expository preaching (i.e., book-by-book, chapter-by-chapter, verse-by-verse), isn't like picking and choosing food at a buffet. I don't have liberty in preaching like picking a Christmas card to mail. A preacher's job is actually more like the mail-man who must deliver all the mail. He doesn't write it or pick and choose which letters get delivered, or open the Amazon order and take out certain chapters of a book. No, he's to deliver all as it was sent. God determined the letters that would make up our NT, and the books that make up our OT, and God didn't make a mistake in including this story in Genesis

This may not be the most edifying or encouraging story but we need to hear it. This story shows us the nastiness of sin and man's need for a Savior from it. There's hope even for wicked murderous sinners in a wonderful merciful Savior. This is a dark chapter that makes a dazzling Christ shine brighter. If we see its sin as repulsive, let's also see fairest Lord Jesus as more beautiful

Title I give to this chapter: Ugly Sin and the Beautiful Savior Man Needs

1. There's Ugly Sin in All
2. There's a Beautiful Savior for All

Ugly Sin and the Beautiful Savior Man Needs (Genesis 34)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at GCBC on December 22, 2013

First, there's ugly sin in all

Like Romans 3:12 says, before it gets to the good news, "*no one does good, not even one.*" That's true for all of mankind, and all of them in this chapter: SHECHEM - who v. 2 calls "the prince of the land," isn't just in the kitchen with Dinah, strumming on an old banjo. She's in his bedroom, her virginity stolen, even while he tenderly tells her he loves her, and he's keeping Dinah in his tent in v. 11 when he offers Jacob's family any price to keep the girl. But in v. 31 his paying for illicit immorality is seen as prostitution, harlotry.

HAMOR - his dad in v. 10 promised Israel shares, stock options, freedom to trade, do business in the land, full partnership. He tempts God's people to be unequally yoked, thinking it'll bring a good life. To Jacob a wandering tent-dweller sojourner that all sounded too good to be true and it wasn't the truth.

Look at v. 23 what Hamor tells the men of the city, what his real intent was:

"Will not their livestock and their property and all their animals be ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will live with us." [Hamor is lying]

But this pagan from Canaan is about to meet his match with Jacob's 2 sons:

SIMEON AND LEVI - in v. 13 they deceive Hamor and Shechem, asking the men to go through an incapacitating operation as a setup for the prince's assassination and for the annihilation of every man in the prince's kingdom.

This is Hatfield and McCoys type of warfare between clans, like Roseanna McCoy having an illicit relationship with a Hatfield son, and so the McCoy brothers are out for revenge and blood, not true justice, but vigilante justice. Gen 34 is like the whole Hatfield clan and people then being mass murdered

Nations have gone to war after 1 assassination (like 100 years ago this year after an Austrian prince and heir [arch-duke] was killed and WWI began). In the end of v. 31, Jacob fears his sons have brought war on their heads. In Gen 34 it's not just a prince assassinated, all his men are killed unarmed as they lie in their beds, awaiting the wedding parade of their prince's bride.

A little over 40 years ago President Kennedy wrote a speech he never got to give. He was assassinated to the shock of a nation as its young prince of a president paraded with his pretty wife. Lee Harvey Oswald was later shot before he could face proper justice. JFK's speech conclusion spoke of his enemies: 'Our adversaries have not abandoned their ambitions, our dangers have not diminished, our vigilance cannot be relaxed ... We ask, therefore, that we may be worthy of our power and responsibility, that we may exercise our strength with wisdom and restraint, and that we may achieve in our time and for all time the ancient vision of "peace on earth, good will toward men" [Luke 2]. That must always be our goal, and the righteousness of our cause must always underlie our strength [then he quoted Ps 127:1].'ⁱⁱⁱ

Kennedy may have been thinking of his enemies as outside America, Soviet enemies, but there were enemies within America as well that the vigilance of the Secret Service could not afford to be relaxed about. Haunting words now that also speak to 4000 years ago and the enemy within Israel's camp, a time when 2 from within God's people didn't act 'worthy of their power and

Ugly Sin and the Beautiful Savior Man Needs (Genesis 34)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at GCBC on December 22, 2013

responsibility.' Israel was to be a blessing to the nations, to bring salvation to people, not slaughter people who can't defend themselves. They didn't 'exercise their strength with wisdom or restraint' or with the 'righteousness of their cause' - this is a wretched revengeful reversal of Israel's calling. In v. 25 it's clear that Simeon and Levi planned this and 3 days later carried out what any law would consider premeditated first degree manslaughter, a massacre worse than any mass killing in our country's history. We think of Nazis in atrocities to Jews; here 2 Jews orchestrate genocide of non-Jews.

Imagine someone going into a post-surgery wing of Kaiser hospital, going to all the recovering male patients who can't get out beds and stabbing them to death while shoving the screaming nurses and visiting children aside. It's a calculated cold-blooded conscience-ignoring killing spree, and horrifically they covered it with the religious symbol of circumcision. They literally cut off the people. God's covenant sign was to set Israel apart from the pagans around them, but here it's abused to commit a sin worse than pagans. Worse than Dinah treated as a prostitute, is prostituting a religion for mass murder.

Circumcision was for non-Jews who wanted to convert to the faith of Israel. Imagine a non-believer who took advantage of your sister, got her pregnant, but now wants to marry her and do things right. You say 'we're Baptists and so you and all your wedding party and wedding guests must be baptized first.' So they all come down to the river for a mass baptism and all at once you and your boys dunk them and hold them under till they're all drowned.

This is no bath, this is a blood-bath. Kent Hughes paints the scene this way: 'charging from house to house, shoving screaming wives and children aside and hacking their helpless victims to death. The murderous orgy ended with the executions of Hamor and the groom-to-be, after which the blood-soaked brothers led their trembling sister out of the wailing town ... the remaining brothers swooped in "like vultures on lifeless corpses" [in v. 27-29, looting, taking everything, wives and children]. No one looked good, not even one ... JACOB was pathetic – for what he did *not* say. He did *not* condemn the massacre. Neither did he condemn his sons for breaking the law of *lex talionis* [ancient code to prevent revenge greater than the crime. He]...said nothing about their desecration of Israel's most precious symbol of faith. And, of course, there was not a word of concern about his just-raped daughter Dinah. Jacob's only concern was survival – to save his own skin... [³⁰ *Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me odious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and my men being few in number, they will gather together against me and attack me and I..."* ...instead of traveling straight to Bethel as God had called him to do, he did ...not settle in Bethel, but rather twenty miles away in prosperous Shechem [a better place for business, but it was spiritually disastrous]. It was *almost* obedience, which is simply disobedience. If Jacob had gone to Bethel in full obedience, none of this would have happened...And more...deceit by his sons was rooted in *his* own deceitful ways. Why should they be concerned about deceiving the Shechemites when Jacob had deceived...Esau [right before this at the end of Gen 33]? What was wrong with their backing out of a commitment if it was okay for their father to do so? On top of this, [he] had provoked his sons' revenge by his apathy about their sister Dinah.'ⁱⁱⁱ

It's painfully clear in this dark chapter man needs one greater than Jacob.

Ugly Sin and the Beautiful Savior Man Needs (Genesis 34)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at GCBC on December 22, 2013

Jacob had been renamed Israel by God, but he's not called by his new name in this chapter, probably because he's acting like the old Jacob throughout.

There's another name we read in other chapters that isn't in this chapter for the first time. God isn't mentioned. Turn to Gen 49 where He speaks on this

Jacob does repent and return to God's house in chapter 35 and in chapter 49 he speaks a God-inspired prophecy of God's judgment on Simeon and Levi: ⁵ *"Simeon and Levi are brothers; Their swords are implements of violence.* ⁶ *"Let my soul not enter into their council; Let not my glory be united with their assembly; Because in their anger they slew men, And in their self-will they lamed oxen.* ⁷ *"Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel. I will disperse them in Jacob, And scatter them in Israel.*

Jacob didn't sufficiently rebuke them in chapter 34. They may have thought they got away with murder literally – but sin's consequences and curse was felt by God's judgment on the 2 tribes who would be dispersed without land as inheritance, they would be scattered with no territory bearing their names

But that's not the end of the story. Yes ... There's Ugly Sin in All (#1) But we need to end with our 2nd point: **There's A Beautiful Savior for All**

The application for this point is *never take your eyes off Jesus and the cross.*

Right after Gen 49 mentions this dark chapter of ugly sin in Israel's history, it goes on to the brightest most beautiful good news of a Messiah-Savior, a King coming through the tribe of Judah (v. 8-10). A descendant of this tribe named David wrote in Ps 27: *'to behold the beauty, the beauty of the Lord'*

This beautiful Savior gave grace to Jacob as we'll see in future weeks, but what about Simeon and Levi and their tribes? Was their curse irreversible? No, flip forward 3 chapters to Exodus 2. Those tribes weren't irredeemable. Ex 2:1 *Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi.* ² *The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was **beautiful**, she hid him for three months [his name was Moses, the deliverer]*

Moses saved on a human level, but he pictures a more beautiful Savior. A seemingly irredeemable family produced Moses, a man God used to redeem Israel from Egypt, leading back to the land the right way. This Levite Moses a descendant of the mass-murderer Levi, Moses also had blood on his hands in murdering an Egyptian (Exodus 2:12). But years later, grace transformed him to deliver all 12 tribes from Pharaoh (who was a mass murderer himself of helpless babies). And as you keep reading, the tribe of Levi rises up for God's honor and righteousness later in Exodus, and Levi's tribe is made by God to be the priests, mediators of God's covenant grace (the whole book Leviticus is named for this tribe!). It is a picture of Christ's priestly work as our mediator with blood all over him, blood of another on his hands...ours.

In the dark chapter of Gen 34, Jacob's sons said basically "let all the people die for the sins of their prince Shechem." But our Prince of Peace takes all the sins of His people on Him and dies

Ugly Sin and the Beautiful Savior Man Needs (Genesis 34)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at GCBC on December 22, 2013

for all of them instead! Hallelujah! Unlike Shechem, Jesus was the perfect prince but the bride He desired was impure. Unlike Jacob, Jesus was not self-seeking and self-protective. Unlike Simeon and Levi, Jesus subjected Himself to divine justice, the sword of the Father's wrath on Him. At the cross He was pierced for Israel's and our sin.

The word "defiled" was used 4x in Gen 34 in the KJV, but as you keep on reading the Bible, you find out all sin is defiling in God's sight, not just rape or murder. Jesus said heart sins are also equally defiling, like lust and anger, which Jesus said in Matthew 5 makes us all deserving of hell (Mt 5:21-29). Jesus said nothing external or outside us defiles us. Mark 7:15 *"the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man ... all these evil things proceed from within and defile..."* (v. 23). This is a warning to heart sin, too. Israel's greatest enemy (just like ours) isn't the Hivites, it was in their hearts.

The wages of sin is death, not just for mass murderers, for all of us sinners.

But as a book on the gospel in the life of Jacob says: 'Instead of the people dying for the sins of their prince, as happened at Shechem, [our Prince] has died for the sins of his people...[a work] so complete that it can deal with even the sin of compromised and compromising Jacob and his family...so complete that it can deal with your sin and my sin, too, no matter what you may have done. No one is beyond the reach of this redemption.'^{iv}

What about people living in Shechem, later called Sychar? This dark place was transformed later to be a place of grace. In Joshua 24 all Israel's tribes reaffirm their covenant commitments here, including Simeon and Levi, and they bury the bones of Joseph here, where Jacob bought him land. In John 4 there's a person whose ancestry came from an unequally yoked marriage like Dinah/Shechem. Jacob had bought and built a well in this same place.

Look at John 4, or listen as I read. John 4:5 says Jesus *'came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; ⁶ and Jacob's well was there.'* Then a Samaritan woman comes who had been more immoral than the original Shechem, multiple husbands, her current lover she didn't even want to marry like Shechem wanted to marry Dinah. I said earlier someone greater than Jacob is needed. She asks in v. 12 *'You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you...?'* [Then v. 25] *The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us."* ²⁶ *Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."* [Christ first reveals Himself here]

In the place where murderous blood once flowed, Living Water now flows. Shechem, Sychar, the place of the darkest chapter in Israel's history, is now a place of grace where the light of the world shines for all: ⁴¹ *Many more believed because of His word;* ⁴² *and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world."* The world, not just mass murderers cursed like Simeon and Levi, moral people.

As the poet named Shai Linne says, on the cross Jesus was treated: '... As if He was a wicked liar with twisted desires [like Simeon], the One who's sinless and just, Punished as if He was promiscuous ... with vicious lust [like Shechem]

The source of all godly pleasure, [Jesus is on the cross] Tormented as if He was a foul investor or child molester ... How could He be bruised like He was a goodie two-shoes who doesn't think that she needs the good news? [He

Ugly Sin and the Beautiful Savior Man Needs (Genesis 34)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at GCBC on December 22, 2013

suffered for hypocrites, too] ... [Jesus is] the Light, but being treated like He's the seedy type who likes to beat His wife He's treated like a rapist [like Shechem in Gen 34], treated like a slanderer, treated like a racist or maybe a philanderer [that's His substitution for sinners] Jesus being penalized like He had sin inside [treated like our heart sins deserve, as if He's] Filled with inner pride while committing genocide [like Levi in Gen 34] ... We see how [God] feels about sin...Your unfathomable love for men-at the cross. It's when we see your sovereignty-at the cross...We see our idolatry-at the cross we know there's a judgment day...may we never take our eyes away from the cross^v

This year I pray we never take our eyes away from the cross, an ugly place of execution, where we see the beauty of Christ on the backdrop of our sin. Another descendant of Jacob once killed many in the name of religion, Saul of Tarsus. But he found Jesus to truly be a beautiful Savior for all peoples. He found the message of the cross was the power of God, what he wanted to know above all, Christ and Him crucified, the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 1-2). Not just on communion Sundays, but every day, let's survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died. Let's keep seeing our sin for how ugly it is, and keep turning from it, and keep turning to our beautiful Savior.

ⁱ Boice, *Genesis*, 2:829.

ⁱⁱ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources/jfk-trademart/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Hughes, *Genesis*, p. 415-17.

^{iv} Iain Duguid, *Living in the Grip of Relentless Grace: The Gospel in the Lives of Isaac and Jacob*, p. 144.

^v Shai Linne, "The Cross," Atonement Album.