

**Genesis 34: 1-31; “Overcoming Temptations to Sin”, Sermon # 93 in the series –
“Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on May 19th, 2019,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

In these verses, we have seen that there were strong temptations which came to these young adults, and because they could not resist them, they fell into sin. And so, it will be good if we can ask the question – How could all of this tragedy have been prevented? It could have only been prevented if everyone involved would not have leaned to their own understanding. It could have only been prevented by each person looking to God for wisdom and grace. We want to learn, by God’s grace, to do God’s will when temptation comes.

The lessons which I will now give to you are related to your not leaning to your own understanding, and not taking matters into your own hands. It is my prayer that you will rather acknowledge God in all your ways, so that He will direct your paths. Let’s think together now, about the 4 temptations which came, which were not resisted by those of our text, but by Christ’s grace they may be resisted and overcome by your trusting in the promise of God in the gospel of Christ.

1st of all – The temptation which came to Dinah, to seek worldly fashions and companions.

It says in verse 1 – “Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land.” It does not say whether Dinah had talked this matter over with her mom and dad or not. I think that it was probably a casual matter with her, as it is with many young people of her age. It is estimated that she was a younger teenager at this time. She was Jacob’s only daughter and a child through his marriage with Leah. She had 11 brothers but there was no other girl around, for Dinah to play with, or to do things with, as she was growing up.

This situation was probably irritating to Dinah; that there were no other girls of her age to be a friend with, and no one to share conversations with. There was no one to share the interests that she had, with. And so, she probably complained to her mother that there was nothing to do, nothing to take an interest in, there in the household of Jacob. It was, in a word, boring. She had noticed, however, over the 8 years that she had lived there with her family, that off in the distance, in the city of Shechem, there were a number of young ladies that she could possibly become acquainted with.

She had seen them, and briefly talked with them probably, and she told her mother about them, and then she probably begged her mother to let her go to the city to visit them, and see what was happening there. She may have even promised that she would be good, and she tried to give her mother assurances that nothing bad would happen. And so her mother reluctantly let her go that day. She went “out to see the daughters of the land”. There must have been some sort of party going on, that day, in the city of Shechem; some kind of an activity where she would be able to see the manners and the fashions of that land.

Was it a dance? I don’t know. It was an event which Dinah went to, after meeting some of these “daughters of the land”. They, then, persuaded her to come to this social get-together. But it must have been something which involved showing off the fashions and customs of what these young people thought exciting, because not only young ladies were there, but also the teenage son of the king of the land, Shechem, showed up at this party. Now it was, that Dinah ran into something which she had not reckoned upon. She had just wanted to see and to spend time with some of the daughters of the land, and now suddenly, she was the focus of the attention of the son of the King.

This must have been very flattering and frightening at the same time. Probably all the daughters of the land had been looking to obtain the attentions of this young prince, and they had not been able to do so, but now Dinah had showed up, and she really made an impression upon him. All he could think of, was getting her away from the crowd and spending time with her alone; a very dangerous proposition, but Dinah was probably urged on to it by her new female friends. She went along with their suggestions and was taken advantage of sexually. There were 2 wrong choices that were made that day. The first was that her parents evidently let her go, knowing that she was going to be meeting with those “daughters of the land” whom they did not know, and whose parents did not know the Lord.

This was a grave mistake. Parents, if your children are living in your home, you should always inquire, and see to it that you know, and can approve of, those who your son or daughter is going out to see; those who they want to spend time with. It says in 1st Corinthians 15: 33 says – “Bad company corrupts good morals”. This statement is true. Parents, you should find out whether they, or their parents, are really interested in the doing right things and good things; or whether they are only interested in promoting worldly and fashionable things with their children; things that may involve moral compromise.

If their young people are unrestrained and unsupervised, or if their parents themselves do not attempt to guard them from evil, then red flags ought to go up in your mind. And you ought to say: I believe, darling, that it would best if you would stay home here with us and not go see the daughters of the land until we can meet them and their parents and see what they are like; whether they love good and right things. You can explain this to your son or daughter in this way: There may be many things that they might do that we could not approve of, because it would go against what God has told us is right. I want you to stay home until I can go with you to meet some of these people and we can then talk about what it will mean for us to get to know them better.

That was the way that Jacob and Leah should have proceeded, and it will be supposed that Dinah might have listened to them. In this case, her mother either did not know of her going, or she did not do enough to stop her from going. But in either case, Dinah didn’t hesitate, she simply took matters into her own hands and went out to see the daughters of the land. She no doubt wanted to know how people outside of her circle of acquaintances lived. And what was wrong with that, she thought? Nothing, perhaps, if there was parental supervision, and the agreement among parents to watch against sin and to teach about temptations to sin. But often this is not the case in many households in our land.

Parents you should pray and take steps to bring your knowledge of the Lord and His ways and His truth into your young person’s decision making process, of what would be the right thing for them to do; what would be the wise thing to do, in any given situation of possible moral compromise. Teach them what is right and wrong in relation to the world. Show them that catering to what the young people of the world who are without Christ are trying to promote, will only lead them into great difficulties in terms of resisting the temptations to sin that will come.

The lesson is, then, as parents, let us think of what good things our young people could be doing with their time; things that will promote their knowledge of the Lord, and the knowledge of what people are like, both in a sinful way and in a righteous way; let us teach them to seek out good and moral and righteous companions if at all possible. How then does a young person, or any Christian person for that matter, resist temptation and overcome the world?

The answer is found in Romans 12: 1 and 2 – “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of

God.” This is how to avoid or overcome temptations of the world; by faith in Christ, that He will give you something better than sinful companions. Present your body to God as a living sacrifice, and you will prove the wisdom of this giving yourself to God. It will be good and acceptable and perfect in relation to your knowing what companions you should do and how you should spend your time together. If you pray about it, God will give to you friends and companions who will want to do what is right, if you will seek for them, and attempt to find them.

2nd – The temptation which came to Shechem, to immediate sexual gratification.

Verse 2 says, “And Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her.” This was a very sinfully wrong and inappropriate thing for Shechem to have done. When he looked at Dinah, he saw what to him was sexually desirable. And not having the self-control to resist the impulses and desires of his sinful nature, he lured her and seduced her to someplace where they would be alone and then he violated her. “He defiled her”, it says in the King James. The word in the Hebrew means that he “humbled” her. He forced her to do sexually what she did not want to do with him.

I think that it is wise for all young women to notice that what Shechem wanted. He wanted immediate sexual gratification in an unlawful way. This temptation has been around in every generation; some men not believing that they can wait for marriage, or God’s way of giving the best things in a godly marriage. They must have their desires fulfilled now. They are usually those who have not been taught by their parents, the ways of the Lord; that He gives grace for purity of heart, and will in His good and wise time satisfy the desires of your heart.

But sometimes a young man, or even a young couple, will not listen to their parents, or heed the ways of God. And so it is good if their parents or others can talk to them about the grace which is in Christ; the grace of self-control, and how purity of heart honors the Lord, and brings the best of things to the person who will wait for the blessings of marital love. How much this is needed in this generation. Evidently Jacob had taught his sons the difference of right from wrong, because it is said in verse 7 that they were grieved and very angry at Shechem, because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter.

It was a dishonor to God, and it was a dishonor to Israel, the nation chosen of God. It is the tendency of ungodly young men and ungodly older men as well, who do not have the grace of self-control, to yield to the temptations of gratifying their sexual desires in the very way that this text describes; even in their hearts, even if it never comes out in their actions. Shechem “saw her, he took her, and he lay with her, and he violated her”. Some men “see” and “they take” in their minds eye, and they never actually physically take the woman that they are looking at. But the sin of sexual uncleanness is committed by them all the same.

Jesus says in Matthew 5: 28 – “Whoever looks on a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” This is the kind of lust and temptation that masters many ungodly men. How can it be resisted? How can it be overcome? It requires decisive action. Jesus says, “If your right hand causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.” And the Apostle Paul says in 1st Corinthians 6: 18, “Flee sexual immorality.” “Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.”

How little do we know and understand just how far sin can take us, if we engage in one sin. Oh let us pray to know and to see what is taking place in our heart. Let us pray, dear Christians, for grace to guard ourselves from developing sinful desires; that kind of thinking upon the object of sinful desire, that leads us to think that that desire has to be satisfied in ways that God would never approve of, and which can only bring you into His judgment for it. Christ gives a greater

grace, I am saying, to learn to view your sexuality rightly, and to satisfy all your legitimate desires for sexual love in marriage. He will teach you by His Holy Spirit to know how to go about to look, and how to find that husband or wife, so that all these desires may be glorified in His wondrous gift of marriage.

3rd – We find the temptation which came to Jacob’s sons to take their own revenge.

In verse 6 we now find Shechem’s father Hamor also getting involved and taking matters into his own hands, to seek the help of Jacob, so that he might still obtain what he and Shechem wanted in regard to Dinah. After Shechem had defiled Dinah, instead of sorrowing over this abominable deed, he had said to his father, “Get me this young woman as a wife”. He goes from one forceful deed to another. He goes from forcing Dinah, to making demands on his father. And Hamor goes along with it for reasons which I will describe for you in a moment.

Children and young people; it is never a good indication of repentance in regard to the sins that you have committed, when you follow it up with demands that you make to your parents, to order them to get you what you sinfully want. It is because Shechem was determined to get what he wanted in the first place, that he was led to this terrible sin that he committed. What is the lesson? Do not try to force even good things from your parents. They may succumb to your wishes but the Lord God Almighty will not. He will thwart you in the end. And then where will you be?

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Only fools despise wisdom and instruction. Well, we see here that Hamor succumbed to his son’s suggestion. He went and spoke to Jacob. This could have been a good thing if it had been well managed righteously. He came to speak to Jacob, but the sons of Jacob had just before this, heard the news; that Dinah had been defiled by this man’s son, and that she was still being held in his house. And they were very angry and upset that these things had been done by Shechem. They rightly thought of it as “a disgraceful thing”. It seems apparent to me that Jacob was himself overcome with grief and anger, because there is not a word of his speaking to Hamor himself.

He should have spoken with his sons first, and told them that he, as the father of Dinah, wanted to speak to Shechem alone, and that they were not to take matters into their own hands or to act apart from his counsel and decisions in the matter. He should have spoken to them about the possibility of their anger leading to their taking their own revenge upon Shechem. He did none of these things. And even though he cannot be faulted for his own responses to this sin and crime; he is to be faulted for not attempting to bring his own sons under his control and authority in this matter.

Instead, Hamor ends up talking with Jacob’s sons, dealing with them instead of with the God-appointed authority. And so, Jacob, and his sons end up acting as the self-appointed authorities in what follows. There is a great temptation, when someone has sinned against someone we love, to take matters into our own hands and to go around the authority which God has established. Especially when it appears to us that the one in authority will not immediately act, to bring charges against the offender in connection with the legitimate governmental authorities, and seek to bring the criminal to justice.

Perhaps Jacob did not have this option. But he should not have allowed his sons to take over his fatherly authority at this time. The sons of Jacob say, “Shechem has done a disgraceful thing in Israel.” This was very true. Not only was it disgraceful as a family matter, but it was also disgraceful as a thing which had been done to the church of the Living God; to Israel. However, the brothers of Dinah could have done righteously, if they had just stayed in their place, and let their father lead and decide what they all should do. Instead they took matters into their own hands, and it says, “They spoke deceitfully to Shechem and Hamor his father”, when Hamor

came to them relating Shechem's great love to Dinah. "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter," Hamor says.

But Hamor does not mention a word about the sin of his son, or the fact that what his son had done was an act of folly. Why? Because he was not concerned so much with the sin. He was only concerned with a resolution to this situation that would be personally favorable to everyone concerned. Jacob should have been there to instruct him in righteousness; and his sons should have waited the outcome of their father's deliberations and his will in this matter. Matters of justice cannot be left waiting for long.

This was Jacob's mistake. It is a terrible mistake in judgment, when a man will not recognize that he should restrain his own sons. He could have come to his sons and told them that there is a God in heaven who was even more concerned that a sin had taken place than they were; that He knew that it was an injustice and a disgraceful thing, and that He would help them to come to terms with what had happened, and He would help them to deal with it in a righteous way. But this is not what happened here.

Jacob's sons were overcome by the temptation to deceit and treachery, and so now they made wicked plans to vent their anger and satisfy their desire for revenge upon the whole city where Hamor and Shechem lived. What should they have done? In order to face and overcome this temptation, they needed to focus on God's honor more than the violated honor of their sister and their family. There is no record of their ever having sought counsel from the Lord. And they should have been taught by Jacob their father, that it is not good to take your own revenge; but leave room for the wrath of God.

God can certainly deal righteously and justly and decisively with those who have sinned in vile ways, without resorting to the violence that Jacob's sons enacted here. Let us pray to be those who are wise in the way that we handle situations where someone in our family has been sinned against, and not think that justice will be satisfied or our family's honor restored if we try to enact it ourselves without God's approval, or without our taking our case before the courts of our land. This is the right way, to seek God's wisdom, His approval, and to defend His honor, and not to take matters into our own hands.

4th – There was now in the sons of Jacob, the temptation to act in unrighteous anger and to kill not just Shechem but also many others.

This is where the grace of God, which only comes to us only through our Lord Jesus Christ must be sought for and obtained, if we would keep ourselves from great and God-dishonoring sins. You have probably heard the saying, "There, but for the grace of God, go I". Never underestimate the power of what anger, craving for justice, will do. This could happen to any of us. It is even very hard sometimes for Christians, to discern the difference between righteous and unrighteous anger.

But let me give you some help if I can. When you are agitated by thoughts and feelings of anger to the point of wanting to take matters into your own hands, when you find yourself thinking of some way to hurt or kill that person who has hurt someone you love; when you are tempted to act without having reference to God-appointed authorities or counsel, you should know that this is not righteous anger. If you find yourself disqualifying, or speaking against, or going around the God-appointed authorities in your life in order "see justice done", then I do not believe that you can justify your anger as being righteous.

Righteous anger is always more concerned for the wrong done to God's honor than to your own. It will not hesitate to become indignant and to speak or act to defend that honor in a way that is accordance with God's word. But righteous anger is ultimately more concerned with what will honor God and what would be the right thing to do, than it is in seeking criminal revenge upon the person who committed the crime. Righteous anger is not only concerned with God and

His honor, but it is also concerned with the possible salvation and reformation of the one who has committed the crime, than it is seeking revenge. Listen to Romans 12: 17-19 – “Do not repay evil for evil.” “Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.” “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.”

And here again, is where the sons of Jacob failed. They used their religion as a ploy to get their revenge. When Shechem proposed marriage with his giving to Jacob and his sons a dowry and gift, “ever so much”, they say to him, “We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a reproach to us.” Are they thinking of God’s reproaching them? Would it be as great as the reproach that God would bring upon them, justly, for what they intended to do a few days later?

No, they were willing to attempt to proselytize Shechem and Hamor to their religion under false pretenses, so that they could murder them! How often has this been the case in human history. Too many stories could be told, of how a man’s personally offended honor, or a group of people’s offended honor, has led to bloodshed in the name of God! This is a greater disgrace than the crime which was committed by Shechem. He was willing to be circumcised in order to have Dinah to become his wife.

He was willing to learn what Jacob and his sons held to, as the only true religion, of the only true and living God, in order to make amends for his past sinful actions. He did not know the way of the Lord, but they did. He did not know the depth of his own sinfulness, but they could have taught him in the fear of God. But theirs was the temptation to deceive, and then to kill. Verse 17 says – “But if you will not heed us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone.” “And their words pleased Hamor and Shechem his son.” “So the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he delighted in Jacob’s daughter.”

And then this divine commentary – “He was more honorable than all the household of his father.” You see, his father was only doing this because he believed that Jacob’s livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs would become theirs if they agreed to be circumcised. (verse 23) There was covetous in his words. Here again, Hamor failed to recognize the sin of his son, and even his own sin, that God could never accept this. There was now sin on every hand, except in Shechem who was trying to act honorably. What a travesty of justice took place at this point. Jacob was ignored, God was ignored, but the thirst for revenge was being satisfied.

Verse 25 says, “Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males.” “And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem’s house and went out.” “The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled.” Now what can we say by way of conclusion? I think that we need to see how awful a thing it is, when we lean upon our own understanding, and then take matters into our own hands.

Dinah sought fashion and acceptance and she found a man forcing himself upon her. Shechem sought immediate sexual gratification, but could not ever make up for what he did. Jacob’s sons sought to enact justice but they dishonored their father and God, and themselves, in the process. What is the answer to these things? The answer is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was for them to have trusted in all the promises of grace which God promises to give to those who are tempted.

What is the answer for us? It is to remember 1st Corinthians 10: 13 – “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” You must have the grace of Christ to have self-control. You

must have the grace of Christ to keep from dishonoring God and your parents. I plead with you today to seek Christ and to so seek him by faith, that you will find him. It is not enough to be the child of godly parents. It is only enough when you are a child of God walking by faith, walking in the love of Him and the fear of Him all the day long. This comes when Christ's grace is teaching you God's way; to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age." Christ has died for this; therefore believe and trust in Him.

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