

Dinah

Genesis 34:1-31

This past week, the tragedy in Nashville hit close to home. We hear of shootings and violence in the news. But the shooting in Nashville happened in the Christian School of a PCA Church. Three 9-year-old children were killed. One being the daughter of a PCA pastor. Three adult staff were also shot and killed. Eventually, the shooter was also killed by police. She was a 28-year-old woman, who was a former student at the school. Surely, the families of the victims and the family of the shooter need our prayers. We should also pray for the pastors who must minister to these families.

O that God would work through this evil for His glory and the good of His people.

One of the challenges of life is learning how to process evil.

How should we feel about the evil in Nashville?

And how should we respond to the evil in Nashville?

I don't often directly deal with current events from the pulpit. There are countless podcasts to help you with that. My desire is to expound the Bible and attempt to make legitimate applications to your life.

It just so happens that Genesis 34 deals with the same two questions facing everyone connected with the murders in Nashville.

How should we feel in the face of evil?

And how should we respond to evil?

Jacob has returned to the Promised Land.

The Promised Land is to be the place of blessing.

But instead of a land of pure delight, Jacob finds evil and pain and suffering.

Genesis 24 records a dark day in Jacob's family.

Read Genesis 34:1-4.

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."

The events of these first four verses move so quickly that as readers we experience whiplash.

We are told that Dinah went out to see the women of the land.

What does it mean to “see the women of the land”?

She, in some sense, was intrigued by the culture around her.

She was curious. She wanted to know what life was like outside of her family.

Should we fault Dinah? Maybe, but not overly. She was naïve.

She did not fully understand the evils of the world around her.

But Dinah does not bring this evil upon herself.

How should we think about Jacob?

Is he at fault for letting Dinah go? Could he not have kept her under lock and key?

Maybe. One thread throughout this story is Jacob's inability to protect his family from evil.

At the same time, Jacob's failure to protect Dinah is not the point any more than Dinah's flirtation with the world.

It is not Dinah or Jacob who are portrayed as evil in this story.

And although this story should increase our wariness of the dangers surrounding us, it is impossible to be shielded from every evil. Bad things, terrible things, happen to us in this life.

Covenant School in Nashville may take stronger precautions in the future. But no amount of precaution will protect us from all evil. (Pause)

We are told that Shechem is the son of Hamor, the Hivite.

He is prince of the land.

He is royalty. He is accustomed to getting what he wants.

He sees Dinah and seizes her. That means he overpowers her against her will.

And he lies with her.

In doing this he violates her honor and humiliates her.

Dinah has not brought shame upon herself. Shechem has treated her shamefully.

He may have been influenced by his culture. He may have even believed that he had done nothing wrong. But his personal feelings are not the point.

His actions towards Dinah are evil.

But as evil as Shechem's initial actions are, he then surprises us.

Shechem does not abandon Dinah.

There is some honor in his heart. He has some affection for Dinah.

He wants to marry her.

He is a prince. And so he goes to his dad to approach Dinah's father.

"Dad, make this marriage happen!"

Don't be fooled by his wording "Get me this girl..."

Dinah is still in the home of Shechem.
He has forcibly kidnapped her.
At this point, you are made aware of a terrible evil.
How are you to feel about this evil?
And how are you to respond?

Read Genesis 34:5.

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.

Somehow Jacob learns that Dinah has been violated and is still entrapped in the home of Shechem.
But when he learns this, he restrains himself from immediately reacting.
My heart wants Jacob to do more.
There is not even any mention of anger or remorse.

We do not know all that is going on inside of Jacob.
It is easy to blame him as a coward.
And it is significant that throughout this story he is called “Jacob” rather than “Israel”.
We are to conclude that Jacob is unable to perfectly provide for and protect his family.
He may be the patriarch of the people of Israel, but he is not the Messiah to come.
We cannot read this story without feeling some disappointment with Jacob.
I just do not want us to take this too far. Jacob is not the villain.

Even if Jacob had immediately charged into the home of Shechem, he would not have had the strength, (he is an old man) to overpower Shechem. And in the process, Dinah may have been further hurt. We may not be satisfied with Jacob’s response, but there is wisdom in waiting until his sons return.

While Jacob is waiting, Hamor – Shechem’s dad, visits Jacob.

Read Genesis 34:6-7.

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.

While Jacob is talking with Hamor, the sons return after learning what happened.

They are indignant.

They are burning with “righteous anger.”

My heart resonates with the feelings of the brothers.

What the brothers feel is entirely appropriate.

Moses inserts his own judgment through the feelings of the brothers.

He is not only giving the feelings of the brothers.

He is also making a statement that those feelings are correct.

We know this because Moses adds “in Israel”.

There is no place called “Israel” at this time. Jacob is living as a foreigner in this land.

Not until the time of Moses and Joshua would Israel enter the land and begin to make it her own.

Moses wants to use the story of Dinah to establish the point that God's people were not to act like Shechem in the land of Israel. They would live by a different standard, God's righteous standard in which women would be treated with dignity and respect.

What Shechem has done is outrageous. It is outrageous in any time and place. But it is certainly not appropriate for God's holy people living in God's holy land.

It is right for God's people to feel indignation in the face of evil.

We are not to be indifferent to evil.

God is never indifferent to evil.

The Final Judgment will be driven by God's indignation against evil.

Feelings of righteous anger are what drives the rest of the story.

But righteous anger does not always lead sinful men to righteous actions.

It seems that Jacob and Hamor and Shechem and the brothers are all in the same room.

Read Genesis 34:8-10.

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."

Hamor minimizes the evil that has been done.

In essence, he says, "Don't react strongly to my son's actions. Boys will be boys. He does care for Dinah, really. Let's just forget the whole thing and be friends."

And what is more, let's unite our two families and extended families. Let's dwell in the land together. Mix with us. Hamor believes that the two families can benefit from one another.

What we have here is an offer to "ignore evil".

God does not ignore evil.

It must be dealt with. The way to deal with evil is to confess it as evil, to turn from it, and to look to God for mercy.

Not only does Hamor want Jacob to ignore the evil. He wants Jacob to unite their two families.

This temptation to "mix" with the Canaanites is relevant to the Israelites under Moses and Joshua.

Deuteronomy 7:1-4 "When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than yourselves, ² and when the LORD your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. ³ You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, ⁴ for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly.

The danger before Jacob is that his family would mix with the Canaanites and in so doing abandon their devotion to Yahweh.

Remember, God has joined himself with Jacob. And Jacob has only recently declared that Yahweh is "his own God."

As horrendous as is the crime that Shechem has committed against Dinah, the danger of Jacob's family joining themselves to foreign gods would be even more terrible. It would be eternally devastating.

How will Jacob respond to this offer?

Before Jacob can respond, Shechem gives his own appeal?

Read Genesis 34:11-12.

- 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."

Shechem's offer of a bridal price goes over and above what is required in the Mosaic Law.

It is natural to have fears as to whether he is sincere.

But it is important to see that if he were an Israelite, his offer is good and consistent with biblical law.

Deuteronomy 22:28-29 ²⁸ "If a man meets a virgin who is not betrothed, and seizes her and lies with her, and they are found, ²⁹ then the man who lay with her shall give to the father of the young

woman fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife, because he has violated her. He may not divorce her all his days.

You may not understand this law, or like it. But it was designed to protect young women from abuse. They were not to be used and then cast aside. Men would be forced to financially provide for the young lady. And the hope was that the man would learn responsibility and respect and even grow to love his wife.

But Shechem is not an Israelite.
He might have become an Israelite.

But the brothers are not interested in reaching out to Shechem to explain to him the way Yahweh had taken Abraham and Isaac and Jacob into covenant relationship with Himself. They had no intention of offering a path to Shechem of entering into that Covenant Blessing.

Instead, they are blinded by a zeal for revenge.
And their sole purpose is to pour out “righteous” wrath upon Shechem and all who are connected to him.

Jacob is again silent.

Read Genesis 34:13-17.

- 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."

The brothers care about one thing, bringing retribution upon Shechem and his people.

Dinah has been defiled. And they must defend her honor. Nothing else matters.

But while God is sympathetic to their anger, He does not approve of their response.

Their response is evil.

First, in order to bring about their vengeance, they must deceitfully use the covenant sign of circumcision.

Circumcision was given as a sign of God's promise of blessing. It was given to Abraham and to his offspring. Indeed, all who would call on the name of the Lord, and submit themselves to the terms of the Covenant could enjoy this blessing.

This might have been explained to Shechem. They might have called him to repentance and true faith.

But instead they treat the covenant sign as a tool for their own wickedness. They tell just enough truth concerning the sign to hide their true intent.

God never intended that circumcision be some outward badge, without any internal submission of faith.

We have no idea what Jacob thinks about this. He was not in on the deception.

Bruce Waltke says it well:

“They sacrilegiously and reprehensibly empty the holy covenant sign of its religious significance, commitment by faith to Abraham’s God, and abuse it to inflict vengeance.” Waltke, 465-6.

What we have in the brothers evil plot is the false idea that in order to defeat evil, evil is required.

This sort of thinking is rampant in our world.

My atrocious actions are justified because I am motivated by righteous anger against some evil, real or perceived.

Evil does not justify evil.

Two wrongs do not make a right.

We may not like Jacob’s silence. But neither should we approve of the plan of the brothers.

Like it or not, the deception works.

Read Genesis 34:18-19.

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.

Shechem and Hamor are happy to submit to circumcision.

Shechem gladly accepts this inconvenience because of the strength of the passion he feels for Dinah.

Of course, we can challenge the depth of his love. Sure, his affections are more selfish than selfless.

But it is not accidental that Moses tells us of Shechem's "delight" in Jacob's daughter.

And we will never be given the opportunity to know if Shechem's intentions were genuine.

The brothers do not simply want Shechem to be circumcised. They are smart enough to know that if they execute vengeance upon Shechem alone, Hamor and the rest of the men of the village will retaliate. To execute vengeance on Shechem, they must murder the rest of the men of the village. After all, they are all guilty.

Shechem and Hamor are able to persuade the entire village to submit to circumcision.

Read Genesis 34:20-24.

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.

22 Let us take their daughters as wives,
and
let us give them our daughters.
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.

Of course, Shechem and Hamor have to give incentive to their neighbors to be circumcised. They explain to them that Jacob's wealth would then be open to them. This is not to say that they are also being deceitful. It is just to say that they believe an alliance with Jacob will be advantageous. They convince the rest of the men of the village.

Every man is circumcised.

Physical circumcision is surgery. In a baby it does not take long to recover. But in an adult, the recovery is difficult and would take time.

Read Genesis 34:25-26.

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.

Although all the brothers were included in the deception, Simeon and Levi executed vengeance. They are Dinah's full brothers, having the same mother and father. Their anger may be hotter than the others.

Rather than giving a graphic depiction of how they carried out this massacre, we are told that it was done "while they felt secure."

After killing all of the men of the city, they rescue Dinah and bring her home.

How many wives lost their husbands on that day?

How many children lost their fathers?

This was premeditated murder.

It was carried out when the city felt secure.

It was carried out as the men were trusting Jacob and his family.

We are not to feel good about this.

The actions of Simeon and Levi should break our hearts.

History is full of such stories.

The Indian Geronimo is just one out of countless others.

He murdered countless innocent families. Why? Because evil men murdered his wife and children.

I do not say this to condemn Geronimo. I think he may very well have trusted in Jesus Christ later in his life and found true forgiveness. I only bring him up to say that the actions of Simeon and Levi are not unique. They are the norm.

This is man's natural response when filled with righteous indignation. The evil continues with the actions of the other brothers.

Read Genesis 34:27-29.

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.

While Simeon and Levi are taking Dinah home. The rest of the brothers come upon the dead and plunder the city. Their justification for this plundering is that their sister was defiled by Shechem.

They take everything for themselves. Animals and possessions, wives and children. They take them all as plunder. I doubt they treated them with kindness and respect.

This is a dark day in the life of Jacob and his family.

But if the actions of the brothers are evil, what is the right response?

The brothers might have made a sincere appeal to justice. They might have demanded Shechem be punished, and Dinah released. They might have sought God's face.

We are told that God does appoint civil authorities to punish evil in this world, even among unbelievers.

Simeon and Levi were not authorized to do what they did. They were not proper legal authorities.

In Nashville, it was right for the officers to enter the school and take down the shooter. They were authorized to do so, and they were protecting others in danger. Had the woman not been killed, she ought to have been tried and convicted for her crimes.

But the massacre of the city of Shechem raises another question. "How are the actions of the brothers different than the actions of the Israelites under Joshua?"

How are we supposed to be fine with Joshua's conquering the Promised Land and not fine with the actions of Simeon and Levi?

This is not an easy question. But it must be dealt with.

In the end, God will judge every man.

No one escapes this judgment.

God's righteous indignation against every evil must result in a just punishment of every sin.

Shechem will stand before God on that day.

Simeon and Levi will stand before God on that day.

And no one will be able to stand before Him in their own righteousness.

As terrifying as this may sound, our sense of justice knows that it is needed.

Can we honestly think it good for God to allow evil to go unpunished?

No, we need this Day of Reckoning.

But if this Day is coming, how is it possible that anyone could be saved?

The answer is only found in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, has borne God's just wrath for us. He who knew no sin was made sin for us.

Only through faith in Jesus Christ can anyone endure the Day of God's just judgment against all evil.

The Day of God's Final judgment is foreshadowed in Joshua's conquering the Promised Land.

Long before, God had told Abraham of this day.

Genesis 15:13-16 ¹³ Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ As for yourself, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶ And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

The phrase “for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete” gives me comfort. I do not think it is for us to decide when anyone’s sins are complete. We are told this because we are to trust that when Joshua conquers the land that God has not commanded that which is unjust.

As the final judgment will be just, so this day was just.

But this was an isolated situation and not a model to be repeated whenever we have feelings of indignation.

Our marching orders are clearly defined in the book of Romans.

Romans 12:17-21 ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰ To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

As Christians, we are to have a strong sense of indignation over wrongs committed.

And we should want to live in a society where civil authorities carry out our laws justly.

But we also should desire for the redemption of those deserving of wrath.

But we should also understand that redemption is only found through acknowledging our sin and turning from our sin and trusting in Jesus Christ.

To ignore our sin and to ignore Jesus, is to remain under God’s holy wrath.

When God saves, he is not being unjust.

All who are not “in Christ” should fear the Judgment of that Day.

God is the only One perfectly qualified to judge and to execute just wrath.

The final verses leave us empty.

Read Genesis 34:30-31.

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?"

Jacob is more concerned with survival than justice.
He is weak. And he is more concerned for his own welfare than he is for justice.
Jacob leaves us empty because he does not feel any righteous indignation.

But Jacob exposes the evil actions of Simeon and Levi.

He is right on when he says that they will become a stench to the rest of the inhabitants of the land. No other Canaanite will agree that the actions of Simeon and Levi were just. We do not look to unbelievers to determine what is just, but neither should we disregard them entirely. Simeon and Levi were wrong.

But the brothers refuse to admit that they were wrong. This too leaves us empty.
We want God to show up and declare his judgment upon everyone involved.
You could be listening to me preach and disagree with my conclusions.

You might be saying to yourself, Mike is wrong. Simeon and Levi were justified in their actions.

This again shows why we need a Final Judgment.

In Nashville, everyone will have an opinion on where to place blame. The opinions of men do not matter. In the end, God will make his judgment. And everyone will know it has been just.

At the end of Jacob's life, when he pronounces a blessing upon his family, Simeon and Levi's actions will be remembered.

Genesis 49:5-7 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.

This is a clear judgment that they were wrong.

But Simeon and Levi also receive mercy.

From Levi will come Moses and Aaron. And it will be Aaron's descendants who will become the priests who administer mercy to God's people.

Can you see that only God truly has the right to judge?

And only God has the right to extend mercy?

Guiding Principles:

1. Do not let evil destroy your belief that God is good.
2. Do not let the evil of others justify evil in you.
3. When you stand before God, it is the evil that you have committed that will matter.
4. Do not expect full justice in this world.
5. Do not let present injustice destroy your confidence in God's justice.
6. Do not be ashamed of Jesus Christ and the cross.
7. Do good in the face of evil.

How do I feel about Nashville?

Anger...

Sadness...

Frustration...

But into these feelings comes other feelings:

Trust...

Hope...

Compassion...

Thankfulness...

What do I do?

I cling to Jesus.

I fight against my sin.

I call others to Jesus.

I seek to do good.