

# Rebellious Teens, Irresponsible Dads, and a Gracious God

Genesis 34:1-31

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## Introduction:

Today we come to one of the most relevant passages in Genesis for us!

- It is an account of the rebellion of a teenage daughter and of her brothers on account of an irresponsible father and how God still works in their lives.

As we have worked our way through the account of Jacob's life given to us in Genesis, I have continually shown you how Jacob represents the entire church...

- There is a sense in which he and his family *were* the whole church in their day.
  - It was in this family that the Lord had promised to bring forth His kingdom of righteousness in this sinful world.
  - They were sinners, just as we are, but God graciously reached out to them and called them to be His people and promised to be their God!
    - He had made a covenant in which He promised to be their God and to take them as His people...
    - He had told them that He would multiply them and that they would, in the fullness of time, become a blessing to all the families in the earth.
      - It was through them that the church of redeemed people was to come forth, and it was from them that the Saviour of the world would come.
  - Of course, now in our day, the Saviour has come, and His name is Jesus Christ—the Son of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as the Son of God.
    - He came to save this family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob from their sins by giving Himself to die on the cross—
      - He was *the* sacrifice that God appointed for the forgiveness of sin...
      - And it is through Him that the Holy Spirit is given to His people to bring them to repentance and faith, and to produce holiness in them.
    - And now that He has come, God has been pleased, through Him,
      - to call the nations of the world to embrace this salvation to enter into this righteous kingdom that He has established in this sinful world—this kingdom, this church, that has its righteousness through Jesus alone.
  - And in Genesis, we are able to see how God works with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and in seeing that, we learn how He works with His entire church today—again, because in their day, they *were* the entire church.
    - He calls them to Himself, just as He calls us.
    - He makes His covenant with them, just as He makes His covenant with us.
    - He pardons them, just as He pardons us.
    - He reveals Himself to them, just as He reveals Himself to us.
    - He protects them and provides for them, just as He protects us and provides for us.
    - He teaches them His ways, just as He teaches us His ways.
    - He gives them ceremonies appropriate to them in their day just as He gives us ceremonies that are appropriate to us in our day.
    - He chastens them for their sins as a loving Father, just as He chastens us as a loving Father for our sins.

And we see again and again that they truly do represent us.

- We have faith, but we often do not live consistently with our faith...
- We pursue God's promises and obey His calling, but we often come short in doing this.
- We worship Him and we trust Him, but we do not always worship as we ought.

And today we are going to see how Jacob is representative of what men often are as Christian fathers—not very Christian...

- And we are going to see what young adults often are in God's covenant—foolish and rebellious.
- We are going to see in Jacob today things that have plagued the church in every generation, and things that plague us today...
  - things that hinder us from advancing in His kingdom from one generation to the next...
- If it were not for the grace of God, the church would have been destroyed long, long, ago—before Jesus ever even came.
  - And while not every family is preserved, the church as a whole, as seen in Jacob, is preserved by the gracious hand of our God.

Our text today in Genesis chapter 34.

- Please listen as I begin reading in Genesis 34:1

**Genesis 34:1-31:** Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. <sup>2</sup> And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her. <sup>3</sup> His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young woman and spoke kindly to the young woman. <sup>4</sup> So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young woman as a wife." <sup>5</sup> And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter. Now his sons were with his livestock in the field; so Jacob held his peace until they came. <sup>6</sup> Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. <sup>7</sup> And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard *it*; and the men were grieved and very angry, because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, a thing which ought not to be done. <sup>8</sup> But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife. <sup>9</sup> And make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to yourselves. <sup>10</sup> So you shall

dwell with us, and the land shall be before you. Dwell and trade in it, and acquire possessions for yourselves in it." <sup>11</sup> Then Shechem said to her father and her brothers, "Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give. <sup>12</sup> Ask me ever so much dowry and gift, and I will give according to what you say to me; but give me the young woman as a wife." <sup>13</sup> But the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully, because he had defiled Dinah their sister. <sup>14</sup> And they said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that *would be* a reproach to us. <sup>15</sup> But on this *condition* we will consent to you: If you will become as we *are*, if every male of you is circumcised, <sup>16</sup> then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us; and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. <sup>17</sup> But if you will not heed us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone." <sup>18</sup> And their words pleased Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son. <sup>19</sup> So the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he delighted in Jacob's daughter. He *was* more honorable than all

the household of his father. <sup>20</sup> And Hamor and Shechem his son came to the gate of their city, and spoke with the men of their city, saying: <sup>21</sup> “These men *are* at peace with us. Therefore let them dwell in the land and trade in it. For indeed the land *is* large enough for them. Let us take their daughters to us as wives, and let us give them our daughters. <sup>22</sup> Only on this *condition* will the men consent to dwell with us, to be one people: if every male among us is circumcised as they *are* circumcised. <sup>23</sup> *Will* not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs *be* ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us.” <sup>24</sup> And all who went out of the gate of his city heeded Hamor and Shechem his son; every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city. <sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem’s house, and went out. <sup>27</sup> The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled. <sup>28</sup> They took their sheep, their oxen, and their donkeys, what *was* in the city and what *was* in the field, <sup>29</sup> and all their wealth. All their little ones and their wives they took captive; and they plundered even all that *was* in the houses. <sup>30</sup> Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and since I *am* few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I.” <sup>31</sup> But they said, “Should he treat our sister like a harlot?”

May the LORD bless the reading of His holy Word.

**I. In this account, we find three serious threats to the survival of the church in every age.**

- Let’s look at each of there.

**A. First, there is the threat that we will be absorbed into the world.**

1. We see this threat in our story with Jacob’s daughter, Dinah.
  - a. In the first verse, we find her, as it says, *going out to see the daughters of the land*.
    - 1) This was completely inappropriate behaviour on her part.
      - We don’t know if she did it with or without her father and mother’s approval, but it was not something that she ever should have done.
      - She was a young woman who was probably not more than 14 or 15 years old.
    - 2) And why was this such a bad thing?
      - Was it not a natural thing for her to want to make friends among the girls of Canaan?
      - It may indeed have been natural, but the Canaanites were known for their perversity, their idolatry, and sexual immorality.
        - The LORD had made it known that He was going to destroy these people.
        - These were not the kind of girls for her to hang out with.

- b. The threat arises from the temptation to find her identity with these girls.
    - 1) When this is done, God's people begin to conform to the world.
      - We lose our unique identity as God's covenant people!
        - We are disciples of Jesus Christ, but if we stop following Him, we are no longer His disciples.
    - 2) All through their history, Israel was in danger of being absorbed so that they were no longer a people belonging to God.
      - Time and again, the LORD had to rescue them from this danger.
      - And so it is today, as can be seen in many branches of the church—
        - there is virtually no difference in the faith or the walk of many so called Christians and the world.
  - c. If things had been allowed to progress here and Jacob's family had intermarried with the people of Shechem—as Hamor and Shechem proposed,
    - There would have been no more Israel—Israel would have been absorbed into Canaanite culture,
      - And there would have been no people of God, no kingdom of righteousness in the world, no people to bring forth the Saviour of the world or to be a blessing to the world!
    - That is why the LORD strictly forbids His people to intermarry with the world.
      - We must marry only in the Lord.
2. It would have been much better for Dinah to find her identity with her family rather than with these women.
- a. I find that many Christian parents place far too much importance on finding friends for their children.
    - Over the years, I have seen that whenever this is done, little good comes of it—instead harm comes.
  - b. God instituted the family for us as the social unit with which we are to identify...
    - friends are a precious thing—and godly friends are wonderful when they are available—
      - but if they are not, we should not suppose that we or our children must have friends of whoever happens to be around...
  - c. I do not mean that we must go out of the world—
    - We can have work relationships and we can (and should) reach out to serve the people around us...
      - but we cannot simply hang out in the sense of going along with whatever they might be doing and trying to fit in by laying aside God's call upon our lives.
    - We are warned to keep ourselves unspotted from the world and to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.
- The second threat to the survival of the church is very much related to the first.

- B. The second threat is the threat of fathers who are indifferent to their children, who do not nurture them or love them—who do not serve them and pour out their lives for them!
1. Jacob is a sad example of this problem which we see again and again in the church today.
    - a. In the first place, it is clear that Jacob has very little regard for his wife Leah and her children.
      - 1) You can see here in our text how indifferent he is when his daughter Dinah is raped!
        - We are told in v 5 that Jacob held his peace—he seems inclined to do nothing—he is said to be neither sorry nor angry.
        - In verse 5 it says: **And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter. Now his sons were with his livestock in the field; so Jacob held his peace until they came.**
        - Contrast this with her full brothers, Simeon and Levi in verse 7:
          - **And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved and very angry, because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, a thing which ought not to be done.**
          - They loved their sister and they were both hurt and angered by the wrong that had been done!
      - Jacob just does not seem to love Leah or the children he has had by her.
    - 2) We can sympathise with the fact that he had Leah foisted upon him by her father Laban...
      - If you remember, Laban tricked Jacob into marrying her instead of Rachel whom he loved...
      - But as we saw at the time, Jacob was culpable because he went along with it for fear that he would not get Rachel if he refused Leah.
        - And not only that, but through his passiveness, he also ended up acquiring his wives' maids (at the behest of his wives) as two additional wives.
    - 3) But even after he had taken this foolish step and had acquired two wives, we saw that while he might have made the best of this,
      - He instead showed disdain for Leah so that she and her children, as well as the two servant wives and their children were love starved.
      - Jacob is just beginning to experience the many sorrows that will come through the jealousy and resentment of his unloved wives and children that he is feeding each day.
  - b. How do Christian men show this contempt today? I will grant that most do not have two wives—or do they?
    - 1) In fact, many do!
      - Many, to use the language of Malachi, deal treacherously with their wives—that is, they divorce them...and marry another.
      - And then they have an unloved wife and her children...

- and a loved wife with her children.
- 2) And then there are those who give their heart to harlots.
- They are married outwardly (as Jacob was), but their soul is joined to the poor silly women they gawk at on the internet—on their porn sites...
    - Or the women they fantasize about at work or in the neighbourhood.
  - Lust will eat your soul right out of you and make you a zombie when it comes to loving or caring for your own wife and children.
    - Even if you don't get caught, your heart is not with them and there will be consequences.
2. You can see in our text two of the consequences that grow out of the Jacob's failure to love his own children and their mother!
- a. First, it is clear that poor Dinah was suffering from father hunger.
- With a father who did not love her, she did not have a home that meant much to her.
    - The Canaanites seemed...interesting.
    - She wasn't particularly interested in having a home like she had grown up in—and their situation looked rather exciting to her...
      - She went to hang out with the girls in Canaan because she was empty of a father's love.
  - If men only knew how much difference it makes to a daughter to be truly loved and cherished by her father,
    - they might think twice about the way they treat their poor little girls.
    - If Jacob had treated Dinah well and loved her, it is very unlikely that she would have ever wanted to hang out with the woman of Canaan.
      - She would have been rather horrified by their conduct and would have wanted to tell them about the true and living God.
- b. Second, we see the seething resentment that arises against Jacob from his unloved sons.
- Simeon and Levi, as we have seen, were grieved and angry about how their sister had been violated...
    - but their anger and resentment was inflamed against their father who did not seem to care...and that anger was also direct toward him.
  - They have contempt for their father who was prepared to exercise no leadership in the situation and to take no action...
    - And who comes complaining against them when they take matters into their own hands—not that they have done evil, but that they have put him in a bad spot before his neighbours.
      - God had done a lot in Jacob's life, but one area that was still far from sanctified was in his dealings with his children!
  - If we read ahead, we see how this resentment leads these jealous young men to take action against Jacob's favourite son Joseph...
    - Jacob is the one that sowed these seeds of rebellion by his disregard of his own children—some of them at least and their mothers.

TRANS> Fathers who behave like this are a threat to the very survival of the church.

C. And now let's turn to the next threat—the threat of rebellious sons.

1. Sons like Simeon and Levi who are never loved do not understand grace.
  - a. They are not accepted or approved by their dad, so they come out always trying to prove themselves...
    - Some of them will be great achievers...who are never satisfied...
    - Others of them will break out into riotous living, they will give up and turn to drugs or violence.
  - b. I don't mean to suggest that they are not responsible for their actions, they are:
    - But as they, like all of us, are born in sin, if they never see gracious acceptance from their dad,
      - it makes it difficult for them to see God's gracious hand of full and free acceptance in Jesus Christ.
      - This is true of daughters as well.
  - c. They can also become resentful about injustice (when they have a passive father like Jacob) and so become harsh critics of everyone around them.
    - They make much of the faults of others—like Pharisees—but do little to help.
2. You can see that Simeon and Levi react to Jacob's indifference and inaction by taking matters into their own hands—and Jacob leaves it to them...these young men who were barely twenty years old.
  - They are like Absalom when he decided that his father was unfit to lead (because his father did not deal with his sister's rape).
  - In our story with Dinah, these boys desperately needed their father to lead, but he left it to them to negotiate with Hamor and Shechem.
- a. First, Shechem and Hamor his father come with a proposal of marriage.
  - 1) Although Shechem had raped Dinah, he also truly loved her.
    - a) Verse 2 is set in contrast with verse 3...
      - In verse 2 we read that he saw Dinah, took her, laid with her (which is more accurately translated "laid her") and violated her (or humbled her)—it is the language of rape...
      - But in verse 3, we see that the young man truly did love her...
        - It says that his soul was strongly attracted to her—literally, that his soul clung to her...
        - It says that he loved the young woman...
        - And it says that he spoke kindly to her—literally, he spoke to her heart—he was truly trying to comfort her.
          - We are not told what her response was, but she may have been pleased to have his attentions.
          - When it says that he spoke to her heart, it may indicate that he reached her heart.
    - b) In any case, Shechem really does want Dinah for his wife.
      - He does what is more honourable than what many young men do.

- Having violated her, he goes to his father and states his desire—no, actually, this prince who is used to getting his way demands to have her... **“Get me this young woman for a wife.”**
- 2) And so the negotiations for marriage proceed.
- a) Shechem comes, in good faith, asking for her hand in marriage.
- It should be understood that for the immoral Canaanites, there was no great crime in taking a young woman who caught your eye.
    - Any woman who was roaming the streets was, in their corrupt culture, for the taking.
      - That is why there is no apology offered for violating her...
  - But now Shechem is prepared to do anything to have her as his wife:
    - he tells Jacob and his sons to name any bride price and ask for any gift and he will gladly provide it.
- b) Hamor proposes that they enter into an alliance where they become as one people—where they merge as families.
- We have his speech in verses 8-9: **The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife. 9 And make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to yourselves.**
  - This was the deadly proposal of what I spoke about before...
    - A proposal that, if accepted, would result in God’s people becoming Canaanites.
    - It is exactly what God’s people are later warned about in Deuteronomy 7:3.
  - Hamor also offers them land rights, which would have put an end to the nomadic way of life and let them settle in the land before the time appointed by God.
    - Verse 10 says: **So you shall dwell with us, and the land shall be before you. Dwell and trade in it, and acquire possessions for yourselves in it.**
- b. And now Jacob’s sons, Levi and Simeon, Dinah’s full brothers, answer deceitfully.
- 1) They are burning with anger!
- Their sister has been violated by this corrupt man and he doesn’t even apologise.
  - But even while they speak, she is still in Shechem’s house!
    - Their anger rises as their father sits by completely passive...
- 2) They are in a bit of bind—because Dinah is essentially a hostage...
- But then they hatch a plot—we are told that it was deceitful.
  - We read the story...
    - They propose circumcision—not real circumcision where the men of Shechem embrace God as their God and redeemer and put their hope in the promises of the gospel...



- but just the ritual act of circumcision...
  - This was plausible enough because many pagan cultures at the time actually practiced circumcision,
    - not as a sign of God's covenant, but as a rite of passage.
    - It was done at puberty when a young man became an adult.
      - And so they probably thought this was custom of Israel, a taboo that they were requiring.
  - 3) Simeon and Levi must have expected these terms to be accepted, because they are said to have proposed this deceitfully—
    - That indicates that they had the whole thing planned out all along.
  - c. And of course you know what that plan was!
    - They attacked the city when the men were recovering from their surgery.
    - They were, we might suppose, laid up in their houses, not wanting to be out and about, so in came Levi and Simeon, probably with their servants, to slay them—one household at a time.
      - This was likely a rather small city, more what we would call a village.
      - They plunder everything they own—and take their wives and their children as slaves.
  - 3. This was a very wicked thing to do.
    - a. It was an overreaction of youth—an excessive, treacherous, cruel zeal.
      - Something far beneath the people of God.
      - But such is the way of rebellious sons who do not understand grace.
      - They are harsh and unfeeling, unleashing their anger upon their enemies.
    - b. Such rebellious sons are the ones who cause division in the church...
      - They are self-righteous and harsh in their judgments.
      - They are the Absaloms who are irritated by the slackness in the church and who rise up to destroy the church in the name of justice.
      - They drive out God's true servants and call them wicked because they don't measure up to their standards.
      - They even crucify the Lord of glory.
    - c. And when they are rebuked, all they can do is justify themselves...
      - When Jacob says, **“You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and since I *am* few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I.”**
        - Their only rely is (v. 32): **“Should he treat our sister like a harlot?”**
    - d. Often they do point out true error, but they do it without grace.
      - They are the Pharisees who watch to see who does not keep the Sabbath or follow the traditions of the fathers in ceremonial washings.
      - They do not see the hand of gracious God working in His people.
- TRANS> So you see the terrible dangers that threaten the very survival of the church!
- These threats are always with us—

- unloved saints who yearn for acceptance in the world...
- fathers and leaders who do not provide loving nurture to those under their care...
- and angry resentful saints who do not understand the grace of God and who turn to self-righteousness and persecution and violence.

**II. But my brothers and sisters, I have good news for you—the LORD will never allow His church to be destroyed by these threats!**

A. He breaks up our alliances with the Canaanites!

1. Like Dinah, we get in over our heads, and find ourselves becoming swallowed up by the world.
  - But in His providence, God raises up men like Simeon and Levi to smash those alliances...
    - Even when they over react, the Lord’s gracious hand is in it to prevent His people from being consumed by the world.
  - God has many ways of keeping us apart from the world.
2. Additionally, he brings about things that make us obnoxious to the world.
  - Of course we should not intentionally do wrong—but when there are deeds such as those of Simeon and Levi that tar us all, we must not despair.
    - God has many reasons, and one of them is to keep us apart from the world.
  - We are often distressed when the world turns against us as God’s people, but we should not be...Jesus said that the world would hate us.
    - Don’t despair when you are ostracised at work for following Christ—that is the Lord’s way of protecting you.
    - Don’t suppose you have failed when people call you narrow and evil.
    - Don’t let it distress you when observing the Sabbath keeps you from being able to sing in a choir or serve in an office or become a pro ball player.
      - The Lord knows exactly what He is doing!
3. And by all means, if you are love starved, like Dinah was,
  - a. Don’t go and hobnob with the Canaanites...
    - Stop and consider what you have in Jesus Christ.
    - If your parents do not love you, meditate on His love which is far better than any parents!
      - There is great potential in your rejection for you to cultivate a great love for Jesus!
    - And don’t just look at the love of Jesus; look also at the love of the Father... too often we don’t look at that!
      - Yet, Jesus is always telling us of the Father’s love and He is always talking about bringing us to the Father.
        - If you are a Christian, you can never say that you don’t have a Father who loves you!
  - b. And knowing that, you do not need to find acceptance with the Canaanites—
    - Find your acceptance in God’s house—identify with God—

- look to please Him instead of the world...
  - Rejoice in His complete acceptance through the cross and live fully for Him!
- c. In the strength of that love, you won't crave Canaanite love...
- You will rather be able to love Canaanites—not as someone who is looking to become like them...
  - but as someone who is looking to lead them to learn of your Father and of His mercy and to enter into His kingdom through faith in Jesus Christ.

TRANS> That is a word about all of the Dinahs out there...

- and now a word about all of the Jacobs out there...

B. The Lord will not allow indifferent fathers who do not love their children to destroy His church.

1. If you are such a father and if you are the Lord's, He will rebuke you for your refusal to care for His sheep.
  - You will have to bear with the shame of their sinful behaviour, their indifference to Christ, their alliances with the Canaanites...
  - You will have to bear with their bitterness, their hatred and contempt, their disrespect of you, and their rebellion.
    - They will take matters into their own hands and reject your ways.
  - And the LORD will use all of this to humble you and to break you.
2. And His church will go on—despite you!
  - If the church was only as good as its shepherds, there would be no church today.
    - But it is much better than that because God works through imperfect fathers and imperfect leaders...
      - And those who go far astray, as Jacob did, in their leadership, He humbles and restores...
      - And sometimes He even restores their children—as He restores Jacob's children.
3. So if you are a father—of a home or in the church...
  - recognise right now that even though you are indifferent toward those under your care,
    - the LORD will not be indifferent to you!
    - He will take extreme action—sometimes radical action that can be very painful and heart-wrenching to you—
      - but it will be action to restore you.
  - As we will see with Jacob,
    - because of your fatherly indifference, He may even take your beloved Joseph away,
      - And He may cause your Simeon and your Levi to make your name stink in the community...
        - but He does that because He is a work in you and will not let you go.
  - So fathers, get in step with your heavenly Father in the way you lead.

- Start dealing with your sons and daughters in love—all of them.
- God is at work in you to bring that about—so go on and start doing it.
  - Love your wives and do not be bitter against them...
  - Do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the LORD.

C. And finally, the LORD will restore rebellious sons like Simeon and Levi.

1. Of course when our story ends in chapter 34, they are not yet restored.

- In fact, things are going to get much worse the resentment of the sons of Leah grows stronger and stronger until it breaks out against Joseph.
  - They become like those who crucified Christ—they even found fault with Him.
  - But that is not how everything ends for them...
- In time, we will see how these rebellious sons are humbled...
  - How they receive grace from Joseph when they don't at all deserve it...how they see the grace of God portrayed through him.
    - And how they learn to show grace to others themselves.

➤ They are unable to destroy Joseph or the hope of the church, but instead end up receiving grace through him.

2. If you are among those who are troubled by the injustice and folly of those around you in the church—if you are resentful of your father—and of never finding acceptance in his eyes...

- the best thing you can do is the same thing I encouraged unloved Dinah to do.
  - Look at the great love of God the Father—look at His grace and acceptance in Christ.
- Your problem is not like Dinah's where you are trying to find acceptance from the world...
  - Your problem is that you are trying to find fault with everyone else to prove that you are not as bad as they are...you are striving to prove that you are not as bad.
- Well I have something for you to consider—
  - You are just as unacceptable to God as anyone else, but if you are trusting in Christ, your heavenly Father totally accepts you.
    - He is your loving Father, and He rejoices in every step you take for Him, as imperfect as it might be.
  - You don't have to prove yourself to Him.
    - Now you are free to enjoy pleasing Him for the rest of your life.
  - You are making yourself miserable with all of your fault finding and criticism.
    - Stop trying to point it all out and start encouraging people to live in the beauty of Christ's acceptance.

**Conclusion:** My brothers and sisters,

- Do you see that Jesus is the LORD of the church!

- We are a mess, with our unloved Dinahs and our indifferent father Jacobs and with our rebellious over reaching Simeons and Levis...
  - But we have a Saviour who is at work in us.
  - He is the one who will keep us going.
  - The sooner we start joyfully resting in Him and serving Him the better off we will be.