

A Dehumanizing Crime

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[0 : 00] Good morning, church. Please join me as we read Genesis chapter 34. Now Dinah, the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the women of the land.

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. And his soul was drawn to Dinah, the daughter of Jacob.

He loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, Get me this girl for my wife. 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. And Hamor, the father of Shechem, went out to Jacob to speak with him.

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.

[1 : 04] For such a thing must not be done. 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.

Make marriages with us. Give your daughters to us and take our daughters for yourselves. You shall dwell with us and the land shall be open to you. Dwell and trade in it and get property in it. 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. Ask for me as great a bride price and gift as you will.

And I will give you whatever you say to me. Only give me the young woman to be my wife. The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully because he had defiled their sister Dinah.

They said to them, We cannot do this thing to give our sisters to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. Only on this condition will we agree with you, that you will become as we are by every male among you being circumcised.

[2 : 14] 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.

But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and we will be gone. Their words pleased Hamor and Hamor's son Shechem. 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. So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying, 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. Let us take their daughters as wives and let us give them our daughters. Only on this condition will the man agree to dwell with us to become one people, when every male among us is circumcised as they are circumcised.

Will not their livestock, their property, and all their beasts be ours? Only let us agree with them and they will dwell with us. 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.

[3 : 33] 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.

They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword and took Dinah out of Shechem's house and went away. The sons of Jacob came upon the slain and plundered the city because they had defiled their sister.

They took their flocks and their herds, their donkeys, and whatever was in the city and in the field, all their wealth, all their little ones and their wives, all that was in the houses they captured and plundered.

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. But they said, Should he treat our sister like a prostitute?

[4 : 40] Here ends today's reading. Thank you very much, Demetria. Well, as you've heard from the scripture reading, this chapter in Genesis that we have come to this morning is very dark and distressing.

In truth, it is probably the darkest and most distressing chapter in all of Genesis. Because it focuses on a dehumanizing crime.

The rape of Dinah, the daughter of Jacob. And I think this account naturally triggers two questions in our minds. At least two.

I think the first question is, Why am I preaching from this chapter on a difficult and a sensitive topic like rape?

And the simple answer is, This is the chapter we have come to this morning. This is where our sermon series in Genesis has brought us this morning.

[5 : 52] Our approach to preaching here at Kingdom Life is to preach through whole books of the Bible or large sections of the Bible, taking the time to explain it, and then to apply it to our lives.

This kind of preaching is called expository preaching, where we try to exposit what does the Word of God say in any particular part of the Bible that we are looking at.

We try to understand it as it was then, and then we try to apply it to our lives now. This also helps us to read God's Word in context, rather than taking something out of the middle of a passage, not appreciating what went before it, what came after it, and then trying to say, Okay, this applies to us, and many times that's done wrongly.

The other approach to preaching is what is called topical preaching, where a preacher picks a topic or subject that he wants to talk about, and then he uses some Bible verses to support what he wants to say on that topic.

And so a topical preacher might preach on worry one Sunday, and then the next Sunday he preaches on parenting or marriage or on prayer or fasting or on voting or whatever topic comes to mind.

[7 : 22] But it's very unlikely that a topical preacher will come and say, I'm going to preach on rape this morning, because it's just so sensitive and so difficult a topic that you just don't randomly pick it.

But God, in his wisdom, has given this to us in his Word. And so what we try to do is we try to faithfully preach through whole sections of the Bible, books of the Bible, and we take whatever is there, and we proclaim it as the Word of God, which it is, and then we try to apply it to our lives. So that's why I'm preaching this morning on this dark and difficult topic. And I think the second question that arises is why is this account in our Bibles?

I think we all know that not every single thing that happened in Jacob's life, not every single thing that happened in Jacob's family is recorded in Scripture.

But this is recorded in Scripture. And why would God inspire Moses to write this?

[8 : 45] Why would God inspire Moses to put this account in Scripture as Holy Scripture that we are told is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness?

As the Apostle Paul says in 2 Timothy 3, 16. So why is it in our Bibles? Why do we have this dark and depressing account in our Bibles?

And you'd agree with me that it's the kind of thing that you just don't talk about, you don't share in a public way like this. But here it is in our Bibles. And so this morning, I will seek to answer the last question as to why we have this account in our Bible.

And I want to offer two reasons that we do. Two reasons why we have this horrific account of Diana's rape in our Bible.

But first, let's pray. Heavenly Father, we pause in this moment and we ask for your help. We ask for your help because we need your help.

[10 : 03] Lord, this is your word. I'm your servant. Would you use me to bring your word to your people?

Lord, use your word and the preaching of it for the profit of our souls. Use it for the good of our lives. Use it to build up and strengthen this church.

And Lord, most of all, would you use it to glorify your great name? It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

For those of you who are taking notes this morning, I have two simple points that I wish to offer as the two important reasons that we have this account of Diana's rape in our Bible.

First, it underscores our need for law. Now, you might recall that when we started this sermon series in the book of Genesis, I shared with you that God inspired Moses to write the book of Genesis to provide the nation of Israel with a God-centered view of the world, how the world was created, how the world came into being, but it also was to give them a historical context for their place in the world and for God's will in their lives as a people.

[11 : 39] God wanted the nation of Israel to understand a context for the world and for the reason he was constituting them as a nation.

And what we see is after the fall, after the fall of man, laws were needed to restrain sinful conduct. That's very clear from the reading of Scripture. And so Moses is making a case to help the nation of Israel to understand and to appreciate the nation that God is going to cause them to be through the experiences that they would have had.

Moses is writing Genesis as they are walking through the wilderness, as they are going into the land of Canaan. What we see in this passage is that the rape and violation of Dinah when Jacob was living in Shechem was at a time when customs may have been against rape, but there was no law against it.

There was no police or there was no person to whom Dinah could have gone or to whom Jacob and his sons could have gone. And what made matters worse was the person who committed this offense was the son of the ruler of the land.

[13 : 11] But even where there is no law, where there is no written law of the land, there is natural law. And natural law is revealed when you look at creation, when you look at the design that God laid out.

We see God creating Adam and Eve, a man and a woman, in his own image and in his own likeness. He created them with equal dignity and equal worth.

Adam was no better than Eve. Eve was no better than Adam. They were created in the image of God and they had equal worth and equal dignity. And because people are made in the image of God, every single person, God gives this right to be treated with worth, to be treated with integrity, and not to be violated in the slightest way.

And one of the ways that people are often violated is when another person with whom they're not interfering interferes with them. That is a violation of natural law that God has revealed in creation. To touch someone without their permission is a violation of the autonomy that God has given to them, the ability to govern and determine what happens with their person.

[14 : 44] When you touch a person without their permission, we've violated natural law that God has put into the created order and this right of autonomy that he has given to every single one of us because we're made in his image and made in his likeness and naturally we are supposed to respect that.

We have God-given autonomy over our bodies. And if we're not interfering with anybody else, no one has the right to interfere with us without our permission.

I'll say this just to be very clear about what I'm not talking about. This natural law I'm talking about that says that we have autonomy over our persons, brothers and sisters, this is not about abortion. This is not about what some say that a woman has a right over her own body to do whatever she wants to do with her own body in the sense of being able to have an abortion.

That is a lie from the father of lies. Abortion kills another human being. A human being who happens to be living in the body of that woman.

[16 : 10] And we know that it's nothing to do with the woman's own body because if it was, she would die and not the child. And so I want to be very clear this morning.

When we talk about the autonomy that we have over our bodies, it does not give any license or place for abortion. As a matter of fact, protection needs to be given when another person is going to be harmed, even if that person happens to be living in the body of a woman.

And in truth, brothers and sisters, there's no graver and greater injustice known to man than the intentional killing of an innocent, helpless child. The worst crime that we can commit is to murder someone.

And the worst murder that we can commit is to do it against a helpless, innocent child in the womb. But here in Genesis 34, although natural law was as real then as it is now and it always has been, Shechem violated natural law by raping Dinah.

He had no right to do so. His powerful position being the son of the ruler of the land gave him no right to do so. But there was no law in the land against it.

[17 : 41] A natural law is not sufficient to restrain Adam's fallen race. Just imagine if we had no written laws and we all said, well, what we're going to do is we're going to respect natural laws.

The law that we could see God has revealed in creation. That he's created us in his image and his likeness and we have to be respected as people with dignity and worth. And therefore, we're not going to interfere with one another.

Therefore, we're not going to interfere with the property of one another. So imagine if the world really did operate that way. But friends, Adam's fallen race cannot operate that way.

And what we see is Shechem is an example of that. He violated natural law in raping Dinah.

I think we should be very clear that Dinah's rape really is not the first rape. I mean, we would be very simple-minded to think that in all of human history, this is the first time that a woman was raped.

[18 : 51] No, it's the first time that a woman who was raped is recorded in Scripture. It's not the first time that women were raped.

God created men with more strength than women, naturally. Not all men, but generally speaking, almost exclusively speaking, God has created men by design to be stronger than women with physical strength.

And in our fallen world, when only natural law existed, fallen men whose eyes were darkened to natural law violated women by rape and in other ways.

And here in Genesis 34, the rape of Dinah is memorialized. in the history of Israel.

And it helped to make the case that laws against rape were needed. And we see these laws later on in the books of Exodus, see in Exodus 22, and Deuteronomy, also in Deuteronomy 22, given by Moses, by the Lord, to Moses for the children of Israel.

[20 : 28] So as this law came into place, they would not have complained about it. They would have seen the need for it. But this sad account of the rape of Dinah not only makes the case for laws against rape, it also makes the case for having laws that state the punishment for rape.

How did the sons of Jacob respond to Dinah's rape? Look again at what it says in verse 7. The sons of Jacob had come in from the field as soon as they heard of it, and the men were indignant and were 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.

And we should remember that Jacob's family was complicated. Jacob had four sets of children with four different women.

Two were wives, two were concubines. Dinah was Leah's child. Leah bore him six sons. And so naturally, Leah's blood brothers, her six blood brothers, would have been more incensed than her half-brothers.

And what we see is that two of Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, they were especially incensed about what Shechem did. When you read the account, you see different levels of being angry.

[22 : 14] And these two clearly were the most angry. And this took place at a time when not only was there no law against rape, it was a custom thing that you didn't do certain things, there was also no law against what happened when rape was committed.

There was no one in the land to whom they could have gone and they could have complained. So there was no law about what should happen to rapists.

And again, there were different attitudes about it in Leah's own family. Sadly, it didn't bother her father.

We're told in verse 5 that when Jacob heard about it, he was able to keep his peace until his sons came home. two of Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, took revenge by murdering Shechem, murdering his father Hamor, and murdering all the males in Shechem.

And then all the sons of Jacob came and they plundered the city. They took the wives, they took all the children, they took all the livestock, they took all of the possessions.

[23 : 39] It says, they even took what was in the field. They went and took the crops out of the field. They plundered the land to nothing. And the Lord knows what they did with the women and what they did with the children.

Again, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Moses wrote this account in Genesis as God was constituting Israel as a nation. one of the laws that he put in place was a law to cover the occurrence of rape and to prohibit it and then what should happen when it was violated. In some circumstances, the rapist was executed. in other circumstances, the rapist was required to take his victim as a wife where he would have seduced a woman who was unmarried. He'd have to pay the bride's price and he was prohibited from ever divorcing her. But Israel's law against rape made no provision for anyone other than the rapist in particular circumstances to be killed.

Israel's law did not support and this is in the future now. This is what we see Moses doing in the future and what Moses does in the future is an indictment on what happened in Genesis 34 because the law that Moses was given by God to give to the nation of Israel did not include murdering anyone or killing anyone other than the rapist in certain circumstances.

[25 : 43] The law that came to be in the nation of Israel was an indictment on what Simeon and Levi did. Simeon and Levi's murderous response and then the greedy response of the brothers to loot everything in the land was excessive and it was wrong by any measurement.

As horrific and as angering as the rape of Dinah was, the response to it by the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, and then the others was wrong and it was excessive.

This account served to remind us again that natural law is not enough to restrain the sinful conduct of Adam's race.

saved. So they living in a fallen world and in a fallen world laws were needed to govern society and to govern members of society and how they should behave.

And brothers and sisters, it is a reminder for us as well that we need laws to govern us because we're fallen people. laws govern us and help us to understand how we are supposed to live together so Israel was given laws they were given laws by God through Moses that covered many things rape included but you know what even after they got laws rape still happened there are two other graphic rapes that are recorded in scripture in the history of the nation of Israel one is, the very next one is in the book of Judges chapter 9 it's a graphic account of the rape of the concubine of a Levite it was a dark time in Israel's history the matter of fact that a Levite had a concubine tells us how bad things were because that was forbidden and in Judges chapter 9 there's an account of a group rape of a woman who in the end died and then in 2 Samuel chapter 13 we have the sad account of one of the sons of David

[28 : 25] Amnon who raped his half-sister Tamar and in response to that his half-brother Absalom killed him and so what we see is that even after laws were given to fill in the gap where natural law couldn't restrain conduct laws were given but even though those laws no doubt restrained some sinful conduct in the form of rape it clearly didn't restrain all and we have these other two accounts recorded in scripture to help us to see that even after the law came rapes continued to happen even after the law came that set out how rapists were to be dealt with we saw people taking revenge and taking the law into their own hands and so this account of the rape of Dinah does more than show us our need for law in truth what it does is it shows us our need for Christ because only Christ can do what the law cannot do the law does help to restrain sinful behavior but the law cannot change our hearts the ten commandments cannot change our hearts and they never were intended to the ten commandments were only given to restrain sinful behavior but the ten commandments could never transform our hearts brothers and sisters only Christ can and this is the second and ultimate reason that we have this account of Dinah's rape recorded in our Bible to point us to our need for Christ and this is my second and final point first our need for Christ when we look at this passage is seen in the lustful passion that ruled Shechem's heart in the first place even before he raped Dinah he didn't just move from zero to a hundred in a split second and put his hand on Dinah no he lusted in his heart after her and only Christ can transform selfish and sexually immoral hearts that lusts after what God forbids but there's no nation on earth that has a law against lust the reason is it can't be enforced because we cannot know each other's hearts only God himself can and although the ten commandments although lust and coveting is prohibited again the ten commandments cannot transform our hearts devalue and cherish others only Christ can do that our need for Christ is seen in

Hamor's attitude Hamor was a complicit father he ignored his son's rape of Dinah and simply ran along with his selfish demand to get Dinah as his wife there's no law against such conduct there's no law against such complicitness only Christ can transform the heart of a weak and complicit

father this account is filled with deceptions and lies outright lies brothers no amount of laws can stop deception and human lying no amount of laws can cause relationships between human beings to be honest and upright and to be transparent and absent of deception in the response of Jacob's sons to the proposal to the proposal that came from Hamor and Shechem to have Dinah married we're told in verse 13 that the sons of Jacob answered Hamor deceitfully because Shechem had violated their sister and their deceit was of the most serious kind their deceit was a hard hearted deceit their deception was so dark and their hearts were so entrenched in darkness that they used the covenant of circumcision to further their deceptive scheme they told Hamor and Shechem the only way that we could agree for you to for Shechem to marry Dinah and for us to intermarry as you're proposing is you all have to be circumcised this was the sign of the covenant that God gave to Abraham a sacred covenant to show those who belong to the Lord the sons of Jacob used it for deception and Hamor and Shechem fell for the deception and then Hamor and Shechem turned around themselves and set about to deceive the men of the city they set about to deceive them into being circumcised and they deceived the men of the city by not telling the men of the city about Shechem's rape of Dinah and that this whole plan to intermarry was really based on self-interest and a scheme that they were going along with so that Dinah could become Shechem's wife Hamor and Shechem deceived the men of Shechem by appealing to their greed only Christ can transform greedy hearts there's no law against greed Hamor and Shechem told the men listen if we marry their daughters and we let them marry our daughters wouldn't all their livestock become ours wouldn't all their possessions eventually be ours and they appeal to the greed of the men and we see the deception in how they pitched this whole thing to the men in verse 10 they told

Jacob and his sons if you come among us and you intermarry with us you'll be able to get property you'll be able to buy land when they sold the story to the men of Shechem they left out the piece of buying land because that would have been a very difficult thing for them to agree with and the men of the city very clear that all of them ran out to the city gate all of them fell for the deception because they all had greedy lustful hearts they were greedy to gain what they didn't work for and so they fell for the deception and then three days later when they were all sore from circumcision Simeon and Levi heartlessly killed all of them and then we see the greed of the sons of

[36 : 47] Jacob if the issue was really just about avenging the rape of their sister they would have taken whatever revenge they wanted against Hamor against Shechem and even the men if they wanted to but the fact that they went after the property the fact that they took the wives they took the children they took all the livestock they took everything out of the field it showed that what was in their heart was more than just revenge what was in their heart was utter greed there's no need to plunder the city in fact what they did to the city was what Shechem did to their sister Shechem raped Dinah they raped the city by plundering it to nothing when they did it because they were greedy they did it because they were covetous they did it because they were hard hearted and brothers and sisters no law can change any of that only Christ can transform hearts that are capable of such wicked deception such heartless murder such greed and plunder but this account although it records the rape of Dinah this account is about

Jacob this account if you follow the story line this is still about Jacob and what we see is that Jacob despite the fact that he had encountered God at Peniel this account reminds us that Jacob is still a selfish a materialistic man yes he met God but he wasn't a perfect man and reminds us that sanctification takes time it reminds us that sanctification is a patient process and we watch a patient God dealing with this man who was still selfish and who was still materialistic what is very clear from this account is that Jacob lost sight of the promises he lost sight of the promises that God had given to him to become a great nation that God was going to bless him in the very first verse of chapter 34 we're told that Dinah went out to see the women of the land now that bit of information helps us to see that Jacob obviously had lived in Sukkoth we looked at that last week and Shechem for a long period of time when Dinah would have left

Paddanaram with Jacob when they were coming back to Canaan she would have been about five years old only about five years old so quite a bit of years have elapsed now that Dinah is a young woman she's old enough now to go out and meet the women of the land the clear implications that she had made friends she was going to see her friends Jacob was now cozy and comfortable in Canaan this is not where God had told him to be if he was following the pattern of Abraham he went and he built the altar in Shechem and then he was supposed to go back to Bethel and build an altar

there we'll see that that's where the Lord will tell him in chapter 35 to go and to build an altar in Bethel but somehow he became very comfortable in Canaan he was comfortable in Shechem no doubt his flocks were increasing and things were going well and he had forgotten that this is something that was forbidden you recall when there was a time for

Isaac to get a wife Abraham made his servants swear that he wouldn't get a wife among the Canaanites and told him you go back to the land and get a wife when it was the time for Jacob they didn't want him to marry a Canaanite they sent him to Laban so you go and you get a wife from there it sent him out of the land but Jacob was very comfortable living in this place and intermingling with the Canaanites and what we see is it ended up being to his demise he was comfortable getting rich getting on and what we see is that when he learns about his daughter's rape he is indifferent to it it brings no outrage you read this entire account and there's not a point at which Jacob shows any outrage or says anything about the rape of his own daughter when you look at how the negotiations went he wasn't even involved in negotiations and I think part of it is because his brothers recognized his sons recognized that he was being indifferent he was not showing the kind of outrage that he should have and they were excluding him from what their plans were but this account ends with

Jacob showing outrage look again at how Jacob was outraged in verse 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 they gathered themselves against me and attacked me I shall be destroyed both I and my household Jacob had one concern himself it's I and my in verse 30 and the reference to his household is laughable it cannot be believed Jacob was concerned for himself and for himself alone and do you know that Jacob took this grudge to his grave Jacob took this grudge of what

[43 : 26] Simeon and Levi did to his grave and we'll read about this later in Genesis 49 as he is on his deathbed and he's blessing his sons when he comes to Simeon and Levi he doesn't bless them he curses them and he brings up this account and tells them about how they murdered men with their sword and he curses them and the truth is even if Jacob felt the need on his deathbed to bring up this account it should have started with his own confession it should have started with his own confession of his passivity and his indifference to the dehumanizing crime that Dinah endured but he ignored his fault and he only focused on the excessive response of Simeon and Levi this is a dark chapter there are no heroes in this chapter they are victims and villains

Dinah is a victim the other men who were murdered in Shechem they were victims their wives and their children they were victims they had nothing to do with Hamor's rape indeed even his father even Hamor although he was complicit and he ran along with it Hamor did not rape Dinah groan Lelishakim was a villain.

Jacob was a villain. His sons were villains for the excessiveness that they inflicted on the land. Victims and villains. No heroes. You know, brothers and sisters, if we take the time to look at this account, every single sin, the law cannot restrain, and only Christ can, but we find in this passage, you and I have committed them.

Haven't we all at one point or another deceived for our own self-interest? Haven't we all at one time or another been excessive in the punishment or the revenge that we exacted on another person or we desired for another person?

[46 : 32] Haven't we desired, coveted, what we ought not to covet? Haven't we been indifferent to things that should have broken our hearts, should have grieved us to the core?

And like Jacob, we were indifferent. Haven't we grown distant from the Lord and cold to the things of God and forgetting the promises of God and finding ourselves in compromise like Jacob?

Brothers and sisters, there are no heroes in this story and we can all identify with everyone in this story. And not only do the people in this story need Christ, you and I need Christ.

And we need Christ not just to save us. See, because when Christ saves us, that's not the end of it. That's really the beginning of it. When Christ saves us, we still battle sin. We still have to fight our flesh.

[47 : 52] We still have to fight the world. We still have to fight the devil. And we still have to go through that process of ongoing sanctification until the day we die.

Until the day we die, we have to say no to ungodliness. We have to say yes to righteousness until the day we die. And then on the day that we die, and on the day that we will stand before the Lord, only perfect righteousness will do.

And so if we get an A for sanctification, that's not enough if it's not perfect. If it's not a 100% A, if it's not a perfect A, it has no currency with the Lord.

And so we need Christ in the very end. And that's why God sent Jesus Christ. That's why God sent him in mercy and love to die on the cross so that sinners like you and me would be able to receive his righteousness as God put our sin on him.

And we can be credited with righteousness, perfect righteousness in the sight of God. not because we are in ourselves righteous, but because God has credited the righteousness of Christ to us.

[49 : 16] No law can produce that. Only Christ can. And so we need Christ not just for salvation. We need him for sanctification.

We need him to live lives that are pleasing in the sight of God. we need him to be accepted before a holy God. And so ultimately we find this difficult passage in our Bible to point us to Christ.

Christ. And if your heart is sad, if your heart is discouraged, it should be.

This is discouraging, but Christ is the one to whom we must look. And he is the only one who can lift our hearts.

He is the only one in whom we could hope and in whom we can trust. Let's pray. Oh Father, we acknowledge this morning that no amount of laws can transform our hearts.

[50 : 45] We thank you for laws. We thank you for the function they have in society, but Lord, we know the laws cannot change our hearts. We thank you for Christ so alone can transform our hearts that we may live lives that are pleasing in your sight.

And we thank you for Christ because on that day that we stand before you, he will be our only plea on the basis of which you will accept us into your presence.

Christ. Would you encourage our hearts, oh Lord, as we live in this dark and fallen world as we battle the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Would you help us to look to Christ and to Christ alone. we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.