

The Ugliness Of Sin

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Date: 29 March 2026

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[0 : 00] Please take your Bibles and open them up this morning to Genesis chapter 34.! Genesis chapter 34.

As a disclaimer, if you read ahead this week, as I often encourage you to do, then you will know that this chapter is a difficult one.

Some texts in the Bible are more difficult than others, and one of the blessings and curses at the same time of preaching the way that we do working ourselves through books of the Bible is that we can't just work around or skip the hard parts.

We have to deal with it. And so here in our passage this morning, we come face to face with the ugliness of sin. So if you found Genesis chapter 34, let's stand in honor of the reading of the Word of God this morning.

Now Dinah, the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the women of the land.

[1 : 05] 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 those 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. And 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.

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.

[2 : 16] 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. 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 sister 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.

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.

[3 : 21] 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.

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 to the gate of his city.

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

[4 : 27] 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? The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever.

Father, we thank you even for hard passages like this that bring us face to face with the reality of sin, the ugliness of sin, the impacts of sin.

And we pray now, would you give us great wisdom to deal with our own sin and also to respond with the sin all around us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

You may be seated. How should Christians respond to sin? Some of you know what it's like to have bad neighbors or to live in a run-down house and you just can't wait to move out of the neighborhood, move into that dream house down the road.

[5 : 37] Your neighbors are rude. They are loud. The repair list at your house is longer than you can possibly keep up with. And so finally, you have this opportunity to move out and move into your dream home.

Everything looks great. You sign the papers. You move everything in. Everything is perfect. But then it all starts to happen. You go and take a shower and the hot water heater has gone out. A little bit of rain comes and water starts to drip through the roof. If you lay down to sleep and the dogs next door start to bark, you start to realize pretty quickly that grass is not greener on the other side after all, is it?

This paradise that you thought was going to be perfect is not, in fact, paradise. Well, Jacob, if you remember from last time where we left him, Jacob has just made his way into Shechem.

And where we left him last week, all was well. He had finally moved away from all the issues that were there with his father-in-law Laban. Twenty years of misery there.

[6 : 46] Tensions with his brother Esau have been resolved. The Lord just continues to bless and to protect and to watch over Jacob. And now at last, where we left him last week, it seems like he's putting down roots.

He's built a home. He's raised up an altar of worship for the Lord. He is at peace and all is well until... Our passage this morning here in chapter 34.

It's like we're shocked back to reality, aren't we? And we see very clearly that the grass is not greener here in Canaan. And this land is not paradise.

But that shouldn't surprise us because, of course, we know only about four chapters in all of the Bible picture perfect paradise for us, don't they? We have about two chapters in the beginning in the Garden of Eden, this perfect garden paradise.

And then about two chapters at the end, at the end of the book of Revelation, of this future coming of Christ creating the new heavens and the new earth, this coming paradise. But everything in between is riddled with the curse of sin.

[7 : 54] And guess where we live? We live here in the in-between. I know that you see the impact of sin all around you, don't you?

We see sin's impact on our community. We see sin's impact on our country. We see sin's impact on the world in which we live. We see sin's impact on our own families and our own friends and our own neighbors.

And so as difficult as passages like this are, it's good for us, it's important for us to look at them and understand them because Christians need to see sin for what it is.

And we need to respond to it with the hope of the gospel of Christ. So this morning what I want to do is ask the question, how should believers respond to sin?

And we're going to see three answers here this morning. This will be our outline if you're taking notes. God's people must recognize, must resist, and must respond to sin.

[8 : 58] God's people here outside of the garden paradise, we must recognize sin, we must resist sin, and we must respond wisely to it. So first, let's look and see.

Christians should recognize sin for what it is. Take a look there at verse 1. And Jacob, you remember, Jacob has 11 sons at this point. He has one daughter named Dinah.

She hasn't really come up much at this point in the narrative until now. And verse 1 tells us that now that they're in this new land, they've relocated, Dinah goes out to see the women of the land.

You know, she's curious. She's never been here before. She probably wonders what are they like and how do they dress, what do they do. She's curious about their ways. I think that this is, on Dinah's part, an act of innocent curiosity.

But of course, you would think that maybe Jacob, as her father, who's lived a little bit longer, who has personally experienced some of the negative effects and impacts of sin in his own life, maybe he would be a little bit more protective of his daughter, but who knows?

[10 : 04] I mean, maybe Jacob just assumed the best of his new neighbors. Maybe Jacob thought that Dinah could take care of herself. She'd be fine wandering off on her own. We don't know. But regardless, we see pretty quickly that this turns out to be a tragic mistake, doesn't it?

The Shechem, the son of Hamar the Hivite, the prince of the land, sees Dinah, seizes Dinah, lays with Dinah, and humiliates Dinah.

This is absolutely horrible. There's no other way to describe this. This is a tragedy, isn't it? I think even most non-believers would look at this and agree that this is an awful thing that has happened here to Dinah.

This is ugly. It is offensive. It is hard for us to listen to this. It's hard for me to stand up and read this out loud. It is reprehensible what's happened here to Dinah.

But, you know, there's a biblical word that we need to use to describe it, and that word is sin. This whole account is riddled with sin.

[11 : 17] In fact, you notice in all of Genesis 34, the Lord is not mentioned one time, is he? Now, he's right there at the end of chapter 33, the last verse of 33, and he's right there at the first verse of 35.

But here in 34, it's like Moses is showing us this is what it looks like when God is absent from the picture. This is sinlessness and lawlessness to the nth degree.

And when we see horrible things that happen in our world, we as Christians need to talk about it like the Bible talks about it. We need to understand that this is sin.

We need to recognize it for what it is and describe it as the Bible describes it. You know, these three or four short verses here at the beginning here, they teach us several important lessons about sin.

And there are many here, and I've whittled it down to about six, okay? Six lessons in particular that we see here in these first four verses. For one, we learn here again, sin is universal.

[12 : 21] Sin was a problem there in Haran, and now it's a problem here again in Canaan. Sin was a problem in Laban's heart, and now it's a problem in the hearts of Jacob's new neighbors.

Sin is a universal problem. So long as we live outside of the garden, no matter where we are, sin will always be there. We cannot escape it.

You know, the second lesson here, we see sin is confusing. Sin is complicated, isn't it? Look at verse 3. It says he does this horrible thing to her, and then verse 3 says, Now his soul was drawn to Dinah.

It says he loved her. He spoke tenderly to her. I mean, what in the world is that? None of this is rooted in love, is it? But this is a lesson on sexual sin in particular, isn't it?

You know, one reason why God reserves this type of intimacy for within the bounds of marriage is that in this act of intimacy, there's not only a uniting of bodies, but a uniting of souls.

[13 : 26] A uniting of people. Now this guy has feelings for her. He wants to get her as his wife, but should we forget what he just did to her? This is all so complicated and confusing, but that's what

sin does.

It complicates. It confuses. Not only this. Third lesson. Sin is corrupting. Sin is corrupting. Sin corrupts everything. It touches. Good things are turned into weapons that destroy people when sin gets in there and messes it all up.

You realize God created sex. Sex isn't the problem. But when sin comes in and God's gifts are removed from the context in which they are a blessing, but now they no longer bless people, but they destroy people.

Sin corrupts God's good gifts. We can keep going. Lesson number four. We see sin is cyclical. Sin is cyclical.

[14:30] Did you notice a pattern here? We've seen this before. It is a sinful pattern of see, good, take. See, good, take. We saw this in the Garden of Eden, right?

Eve saw that the fruit was good, and so she took. The Nephilim in chapter 6 saw that the daughters of man looked good, and so they took. When Abraham went down to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai looked good, and so they took.

You jump ahead to David. David sees that Bathsheba looks good, and so he took. There's a pattern here to be recognized, isn't there? See, good, take.

There's a pattern. We should learn from this. We have to be diligent, church, to guard our eyes and guard our impulses. And if you struggle with sexual sin, you should know that's not unique to you.

There's a pattern. There's a long pattern, a long history. But we ought to learn to see the pattern and commit ourselves in Christ to break it. Another lesson, number five. We should understand that sin is harmful.

[15:37] Sin is harmful. In all of this talk about sin, we should not forget about Dinah. Dinah is a victim.

It says she's been humiliated. Her life is now forever impacted by this one sinful, selfish act. And we see soon enough the whole Shechemite community is going to pay the price for this sin.

Church, we should realize that sin is always harmful. And we see it here in obvious ways. But we should know even in our most secret sins, even in our most private sins, even when we think that this is a victimless crime, it is not.

Sin is always harmful. It is always offensive to God. But also, one final lesson here, we should recognize that some sin is more outrageous than others.

Now, I wonder if that surprises you to hear that. Some sin is more outrageous than others. Look to verse 5. It says Jacob hears that this has happened, and we'll come back to him later.

[16:45] But Jacob stays quiet. He holds his peace. He doesn't really respond at all. His sons are out in the field. But it says when his sons hear about it, look at their response. It says in verse 7, these men were indignant.

They 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.

This sin is outrageous, they say. It is highly offensive. And of course, yes, we know, yes. All sin, even the tiniest little sliver of sin in our hearts makes us all guilty before a holy God.

We all belong in that category of sinner. The best and the worst person you know. We are all guilty of sin. Yes. But also, not all sins are equally offensive.

Question 88 of the Baptist Catechism asks, Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous? It's an old school word, right? That just means offensive. Are they equally offensive?

[17:53] Answer? Answer? Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.

Jacob's sons are right to recognize here that this act is outrageous and deeply evil. This thing that they've done is deeply wicked.

This is deeply offensive to God, and such a thing must not be done in Israel. Why? Because God's people are called to be distinctly pure and holy as God is holy.

Which is why, second, here outside the garden, God's people must resist the allurements of sin.

God's people must resist the allurements of sin. Look there, starting in verse 8. Hamar speaks up, and he comes with this proposal.

[18:50] He says, The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him to be his wife. Make marriage with us. Give us your daughters, and you can have our daughters.

You dwell with us. The land will be open to you. Dwell and trade in it. Get property in it. This is a proposal to become one people with the Shechemites. Now, Shechem himself speaks up. It's like he has no shame. He says to her father and to her brothers, Let me find favor in your eyes. Are you kidding me? Whatever you say to me, I will give. Ask me for as great a bride price and gift as you will.

I'll give it to you whatever you want. Only just give me this young woman to be my wife. There's another lesson in sin, isn't there? Sin is blinding. He says, I'll give you anything you want. I believe him. He has to have this woman as his wife. But the bigger issue here is this incredibly generous offer. Let's all mix together and let's all be one people.

[19 : 51] You can imagine how that might entice Jacob, right? He'll finally be settled there in the land. They'll be one people. They'll be locals. They won't have to fear for their life or fear for their safety.

There's pilgrims in somebody else's land. He'll finally be able to put down roots. I mean, think of the possibilities. Of course, there's just one problem with that, isn't there?

What is it? God's people are called to be distinct from the world around them. God's people are meant to be distinct and distinctly holy.

God's people are not meant to be one with the world around them. We are meant to be one holy, distinct people.

And behind this generous offer of, come on, use the land. Come on, take our daughters. Come on, be one people with us. Behind that generous offer is a scheme of the enemy to dilute the distinctiveness of the people of God.

[20 : 57] He makes it so attractive, doesn't he? Every now and then I'll go fishing. I'm not very good. I like it. I know that when you go fishing, you don't just drop a hook in the water.

You'd have to be a really dumb fish, right, to go and bite just an unbaited hook. I'm simple. I'll just use worms or cricket, something easy. But people spend a lot of time thinking about the bait. I'm not that smart or that committed. Some people are. They could tell you what type of bait to use for this type of water at this type of day in this certain place for this type of fish. They strategize for how to get that fish to bite that hook, right?

And they're good at it. We should understand that the enemy works in exactly the same way. But the enemy baits the hook, and he has years of experience.

He knows what type of bait works for what types of people and what types of circumstances. He can't make you bite the hook, but man, he is good at drawing you close and making it look so appealing.

[22 : 00] He makes these big, grand offers, right? Eve, take this fruit. You will be like God, he says. Jesus, you bow down and worship me. All the kingdoms of the world will be yours if you only bow down and worship me.

Jacob, you marry with these people, intermarry. You'll have peace in this land. You'll have flocks beyond your wildest dreams. You'll be safe, secure, prosperous, successful.

God's people must resist the allurements of sin because behind the generous offer is a hook that's designed to catch you and drag you to your death.

I wonder if he's tempting you like this in any way, Christian. You can think about it personally, right? Personally with your friends. Where do you go?

Where are you found? What do you do? What do you joke about? What do you watch? What do you wear? How do you talk? Is there any difference at all between you and your non-believing friends and your marriage?

[23 : 10] This is exactly why we're called to not be unequally yoked with a non-believer. And if that's the case, then Christian, you have no business dating a non-believer. And your family.

How might the enemy try and entice your family just to look like the rest of the world? Does your family look any different than others around you? Are you tempted to keep up with the Joneses and keep up appearances?

Are sports or other activities clogging up your schedule so much that you find it hard to spend time with God's people? Do you make time to worship together as a family? You know, the enemy might even try this trick even in the church.

You know, one of the enemy's tactics from the beginning is to mix in non-believers into the community of the church, which is why we as good Baptists, we believe in and we practice what's

called regenerate church membership.

Of course, anybody can come and worship here at church. The door is open to anybody to come into this place. Of course, we hope and we pray that you'll be bringing your non-believing friends to come and to join us for worship.

[24 : 21] But we draw a line, that line being marked off by baptism and church membership around those who have been plucked out of the world by the grace of God.

How is the enemy trying to blur the lines in your life and entice you to become one with the world around you? Church, the believer here outside the garden must be diligent to resist the allurements of sin.

If we haven't seen the ugliness of sin and being reminded to resist it at all costs, then how should God's people respond? Third, here outside the garden, God's people must wisely respond to sin. Did you notice how all these different parties responded to this act? How did the non-believers there respond? The non-believers are blind to how serious this is.

They aren't even aware. If they are, it's like they don't even really seem to care. They view this as a business opportunity. Sure, this happened, but who cares?

[25 : 35] How can we capitalize on it? We'll just take this girl and then we'll take her as a wife and then we'll mix together and we'll all be one big happy family. What's the big deal, right? We shouldn't be surprised when non-believers don't see sin for what it is because they don't have the capacity to grasp the seriousness of sin.

And we should understand that the non-believer can't be expected to think through the same spiritual lens as the believer. They don't understand it as an offense to a holy God.

But for the believer, we ought to see sin differently than the non-believing world. By God's grace, we are aware that sin is an offense to a holy God.

So when we come face to face with the ugliness of sin, we have to think carefully and wisely about how we might respond. Look at how Jacob responds.

Jacob shows us one response here in verse 5. Jacob hears about this horrible sin and what does he do? It says he just stays silent.

[26 : 45] He keeps his peace. Maybe he's just showing restraint, but you notice at no point in this whole story is Jacob ever stepping up to act in defense of his daughter.

He just stays quiet in the face of injustice, doesn't he? This is a passive response to sin. But on the other hand, look at how his sons respond.

He says his sons are out in the field and as Hamar comes to speak with Jacob about all of this, they hear about it. Apparently word spreads quickly, even in the ancient world. And it says that they are indignant.

They are angry. Now I want you to ask yourself, is it ever right for a Christian to respond in anger? Is it right ever for a Christian to be indignant?

The apostle Paul says yes. And the apostle Paul commands us in the book of Ephesians. Ephesians 4 verse 26, he says, Be angry and do not sin.

[27 : 54] You know, those are two commands. Be angry. That is an imperative, church. That is a command. It says, Be angry. There is a place for righteous anger as a response to sin, but it comes hand in hand with a second command and this one is much harder.

He says, In your anger, do not sin. In your anger towards sin in your own life, sin in your family's life, sin in your community, sin in your country, sin in your world, be angry when you see it and do not sin.

Look at what these brothers do. Verse 13. It says, It says, The sons of Jacob answer Shechem deceitfully. The apple apparently doesn't fall too far from the tree, does it? And they say to Shechem, Sure, we'll agree to this, but on one condition, every male among you must be circumcised.

And if you will be circumcised, they say, then yes, we'll agree, we'll be one people, everything that we have will be yours, all will be well. So what does Shechem do? He goes and he does it right away.

He wants Dinah so badly. And then they go and they convince all the men of the gate of the city to go and do the same. And verse 24 says, Every male among them was circumcised.

[29 : 12] All who went out to the gate of the city. Now in their mind, they think, We have just become one people with Jacob and his clan. But verse 25.

On the third day, when everyone was sore from the procedure, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and came against the city while it felt secure and they killed all the males.

They killed Hamor. They killed Shechem. They rescued their sister Dinah. They didn't stop there. They went on and they plundered the whole city. And it makes us, it repeats over and over and over again because they had defiled their sister.

Because they had defiled their sister. They took their flocks. They took their herds. They took their donkeys. They take whatever was left in the city. They take whatever's left in the field.

They took all their wealth. On top of that, they took all their wives. They took all their children. They took everything in their houses. They captured it and plundered the whole city. They cleaned this place out.

[30 : 19] This is a response of vengeance. They want to make sure that these wicked men will never touch their sister or anyone else ever again.

Now ask yourself, is this the right response? How would you respond? Would you respond like Jacob and keep your peace and stay silent and play it safe?

Or would you respond like Jacob's sons, like the brothers, and be angry enough to go and kill and wipe out a whole city? How would you respond? I think that this passage is meant to leave us with that question.

The passage doesn't really answer that question for us, does it? In fact, it leaves us with a question. Passive Jacob here, he's more worried about what the impact will be for him of all of this.

He says, it's going to make life dangerous for us here. Why would you do that? But then the final words of the story, they raise this question that we have to wrestle with. And the sons respond and say, but should they treat our sister like a prostitute?

[31 : 36] I think that Moses, in writing this story this way, he wants to leave Israel and leave us with this question. How should God's people respond to this sort of wickedness?

Should we stay silent? Should we be indifferent? Should we be angry? Should we take vengeance into our own hands?

And the only clear answer I can give you this morning, church, is that there is not always a clear answer. Here, outside the garden, Christian, the honest truth is we will face injustice.

We will be victimized. We will be wronged. We will be defrauded. We will be sinned against. And we have to think wisely about how we ought to respond in a way that honors the Lord in each and every individual offense.

We know that indifference isn't right. We should see sin for what it is and know that it's an offense against the Lord. But we have to wisely decide when is silence okay and when is it proper to speak.

[32 : 54] There are times when it is right to speak up and there are also times when like Christ we must keep our mouths shut even in the face of injustice. There are times when it's proper to be angry and indignant towards the sin all around us and at the same time we have to recognize the danger of the sin of our own hearts in an angry response.

Yes, we want to see justice come but few of us are in position to make justice happen with our own efforts and Paul tells us in Romans vengeance is the Lord's. He will repay.

All this to say Christian, walking in a world of sin here in between the garden paradise takes great wisdom and is not black and white.

We need the wisdom of the Lord to guide us in our response to evil. We need Him to teach us when to speak and when to remain silent when to stand up and act and when to endure suffering with patience.

But there is one guiding truth that ought to assure us in our response to sin. We know that our God sees, our God cares, and our God will address every single sin.

[34 : 17] And what a comfort it is to know when we are wronged and when we seem powerless to make things right, when we're tempted to take matters into our own hands, what a comfort it is to know that our God will make it right.

Our God will not let sin slide. How do we know? He has sent Christ to deal with the problem of sin. Church, this morning is Palm Sunday and here on Palm Sunday we think about Jesus coming into the city of Jerusalem marching his way to the cross.

Why did Jesus come? Why did Jesus willingly go into Jerusalem to die? Jesus came to deal with and address this whole problem of sin.

Jesus came to suffer and to die for sinners like us. He came to bear our sin and to bear our shame. From the moment that Jesus was conceived in the womb to the moment he breathes his last breath at the cross.

All of this is what we call the humiliation of Christ. If you have ever been wronged, if you have ever been sinned against, if you have ever been harmed by somebody else's sinful decision, if you have ever been humiliated, what a comfort it is to look at the cross and know Christ has been there for us.

[35 : 46] Jesus was humiliated for us. Jesus came to pay the debt that we owe for our sin. He paid this debt with his own perfect life. And Jesus came to crush the powers of sin and darkness.

He suffered and died and was humiliated for sinners like us. But we also know the good news is that his story does not end with humiliation.

Our Lord has risen from the grave and he will come again to judge the living and the dead. You know, one reason why we don't take matters into our own hands is that we know King Jesus will come to judge the world.

So Christian, how should we respond to sin? One clear answer I can give you. We must look to Jesus. We must set our hope on Jesus.

We bring our own sin to Jesus. We come to him when others sin against us. We call others to come to him that they too may be forgiven of their sin.

[36 : 57] We come to him who was made sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. We come to him again and again and again and again until the day when he comes to us and sin will be no more.

Father we praise you for even difficult texts like this that show us the ugliness of sin and we praise you that Christ Jesus has come to rid us and rid this world of this sort of evil.

We thank you that Christ has conquered over sin and death and the devil at the cross and the empty tomb. And we pray Lord come quickly Lord Jesus and put an end to this sword of wickedness.

We pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.