

28. Never too late to restart with God

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I have seen many people who make awful messes in their lives. Some got involved with illegal drugs, alcohol, gambling, or pornography. The list can go on. It is not only the bad things can make their lives difficult. When they do good things too much without any control, it turns out to be problems, also.

Jacob left Haran where he stayed with his uncle Laban the con-man for over twenty years. He had two wives and two concubines and eleven sons, one daughter, servants and large flocks. Jacob thought he was going to bite the dust when he heard that his brother Esau and his four hundred men were coming toward him. But God made peace between Jacob and Esau.

Instead of heading to Bethel as God told him to do so, Jacob connived his brother Esau again and chose to settle his camp outside of the city of Shechem.

Jacob is about to find out hard way when you are in a wrong place with wrong people, it is a matter of time that you will end up doing wrong things. But our God is so gracious to extend His everlasting grace to all of us to make a brand new start all over again. It is like God is telling us, "It is never too late to restart with Me all over again on this earth."

A. AN ANCIENT DATE RAPE

Genesis 34:1-3 Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. 2 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. 3 His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young woman and spoke kindly to the young woman.

It is a known fact that there are so many date rape incidents in many of university campuses including U of A in Tucson. These young girls go out with guys who had wicked mindsets and they ended up getting raped.

Mom and dad, it is very important for you to make sure that your children understand that there is a tremendous amount of dangers and consequences for them to walk into the ungodly places with ungodly people.

No one can say Shechem loved Dinah, because he raped her. He had a strange way of showing his love to her. As a matter of fact, that is NOT a true love. Because true love respects the other person's wish, not ignores it.

Jacob was supposed to be in Bethel, not in Shechem. By doing so, he put his family in unnecessary danger. By the way, the name of the Lord was never once mentioned in chapter 34. God's wisdom was absent while Jacob was dwelling in this area. When we disobey God, we put ourselves and our loved ones in harm's way.

Maybe you are doing this to your family. Are you dragging your family down? Are you taking your family into a wrong direction? What do you need to do? As Jacob needed to get back to Bethel, you need to get back to God's Word the Bible and daily prayer and coming to church regularly, not just once in a blue moon or only when you are in a tight corner. You need a strong relationship with God.

B. A PROPOSAL OF COMPROMISE

Genesis 34:4-12 So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young woman as a wife." 5 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. 6 Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. 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. 8 But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "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. 10 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." 11 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. 12 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."

This was a dangerous challenge to Jacob and his family. Irresponsible intermarriage with the Canaanites could prove especially harmful for this family with such a destiny in God's redemptive plan.

Hamor and Shechem probably thought themselves generous. They acted as if money and marriage could make Dinah's disgrace go away.

Jacob was paralyzed with fear for his own safety against these people. His refusal to do what is right in regard to his family will encourage two of his sons to do something, something ungodly in response.

When God-appointed heads do not take appropriate leadership, it creates a void, which is often filled with more sins.

C. THE DECEIT THAT RAN IN THE FAMILY

Genesis 34:13-24 But the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully, because he had defiled Dinah their sister. 14 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. 15 But on this condition we will consent to you: If you will become as we are, if every male of you is circumcised, 16 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. 17 But if you will not heed us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone." 18 And their words pleased Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son. 19 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. 20 And Hamor and Shechem his son came to the gate of their city, and spoke with the men of their city, saying: 21 "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. 22 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. 23 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." 24 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.

Simeon and Levi have evil intention in this plan. Sad to say, Jacob's sons were liars like their father. Yet they cover it up with spiritual words, and used Dinah as a cover for their intended evil.

They felt justified because the men of Shechem treated their sister as a prostitute, but they prostituted the sign of God's covenant for their own murderous purpose. They had no intention to give Dinah to Shechem. They wanted their blood and properties.

D. THE BLOODBATH

Genesis 34:25-31 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. 26 And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out. 27 The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled. 28 They took their sheep, their oxen, and their donkeys, what was in the city and what was in the field, 29 and all their wealth. All their little ones and their wives they took captive; and they plundered even all that was in the houses. 30 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." 31 But they said, "Should he treat our sister like a harlot?"

Certainly, they justified this murder and theft by saying they and their sister had been disgraced, but the punishment clearly does not fit the crime.

This reminds me some of the anti-abortion activists misbehaviors. I am all for the Pro-Life movement and I believe that abortion should be banned exception to save mother's life or rape case. At the beginning they started to protect unborn children. But some of the extremists of the Pro-Life turned to their own crusade against abortion clinics and doctors, it became a problem. Yes, those clinics became killing fields. Yes, the abortion doctors became murders of unborn children for profits. But that does not give any one of us a license to kill them. God will take care of them. Those doctors are going to wish that they did one less abortion when they stand in the presence of God at the White Throne Judgement Seat. But it is our place to pray that they may come to know Jesus as their Savior and Lord. Then they will stop what they do.

Simeon and Levi probably thought God blessed their murderous plans with great success. We cannot pay back evil for evil. If we do that we become worse than them in the eyes of God. Because they are sinners and sinners sin. That is what they are supposed to do. But we are the children of God. We need to trust God to take care of those who insult us. Self-defense and righteous wars are justified in the eyes of the law and God, but doing this kind of thing like Simeon and Levi did does not go with what the Word of God says.

Romans 12:19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

Jacob had been living in the life of deceiving people for his benefits, so he was not in a position to tell his boys what to do. He was not a spiritual and moral authority.

Now he is seeing the results of his own wickedness coming back to haunt him.

Why do today's Christians scheme and sin and fail? Because they fail to live up to what they are supposed to do in Christ. So, is it too late? No, you are never too late to restart in Christ Jesus while we are on this earth.

E. REVIVAL IN JACOB'S LIFE

Genesis 35:1-5 Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother." 2 And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. 3 Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone." 4 So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hands, and the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem. 5 And they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that were all around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.

God had called him to go "back to Bethel", back to the place of the vision and the vow. When a person is backslidden, as Jacob was, there is nothing else for him to do but go back to the place of dedication and renew his vows. Before he could take his family back to the altar, however, Jacob had to "clean house" – the foreign gods and the jewelry associated with heathen worship had to be buried.

This shows us the tremendous leadership role men have within the family. A man who gets right with God will see the effect in his family. No matter how hard we try to teach our children godly conduct they will still do what the parents do.

You may say, "Pastor, I don't have a husband." Then you become that role model. Your children don't need to seek a role model from selfish over-paid basketball players or football players or dope addict movie stars or singers. You live in such a godly way that they can proudly say, "My mom and dad are my role models."

It is important for everyone to take a note of what they may have in their home that is ungodly stuff, such as Ying-Yang symbols, buddha statues, dragon pictures or anything to do with occultic things, and promptly get rid of those things.

Here is more important thing to talk about: Many times, we live in lifestyle of partial obedience to God. But God wants us to obey Him with all of our hearts.

F. GOD'S REASSURANCE TO JACOB

Genesis 35:6-15 So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him. 7 And he built an altar there and called the place El Bethel, because there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother. 8 Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the terebinth tree. So the name of it was called Allon Bachuth. 9 Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him. 10 And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name." So He called his name Israel. 11 Also God said to him: "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations

shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. 12 The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land.” 13 Then God went up from him in the place where He talked with him. 14 So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured a drink offering on it, and he poured oil on it. 15 And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel.

When Jacob finally arrived at the place God told him to go, Jacob immediately found great blessing. God appeared to him, God blessed him, and God called him by his new name ‘Israel’. Relationship is restored. God does the same with us, reminding us who we are in Him.

Jacob did not need to hear anything new from God. He just needed to be reminded of what was true, and encouraged to cling to Him with all. It is the same with us. We already know everything what we are supposed to follow God. We need to remind ourselves through His Word that we may stay in the course.

G. THE BIRTH OF BENJAMIN AND THE DEATH OF RACHEL AND ISAAC

Genesis 35:16-29 Then they journeyed from Bethel. And when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel labored in childbirth, and she had hard labor. 17 Now it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said to her, “Do not fear; you will have this son also.” 18 And so it was, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-Oni; but his father called him Benjamin. 19 So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). 20 And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which is the pillar of Rachel’s grave to this day. 21 Then Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder. 22 And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine; and Israel heard about it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve: 23 the sons of Leah were Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn, and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; 24 the sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin; 25 the sons of Bilhah, Rachel’s maidservant, were Dan and Naphtali; 26 and the sons of Zilpah, Leah’s maidservant, were Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Padan Aram. 27 Then Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kirjath Arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had dwelt. 28 Now the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years. 29 So Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, being old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Jacob had a pretty messed-up family. His family makes American soap opera family look like nothing. God used this family, but not because they were such great candidates, but because He had chosen them by His grace alone.

H. APPLICATIONS

1) You are never too late to restart in God while you are alive.

If the devil will tell you, “You are history. God cannot love you the sinner like you anymore.” He is lying to you as usual. Don’t listen to him. There is no sin that too big that God cannot forgive you, nor you are too righteous that you don’t need God. We are all sinners, but God is more than willing to forgive our sins with the blood of Jesus.

2) Partial obedience to God is worse than complete disobedience, because it deceives us to think that we are right on track with God.