

42. Dealing with the old nature

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Old habits are hard to break. Whether it is something we want to denounce or just don't want to do anymore, we are comfortable with what we used to do. This is not just the physical area but also in the spiritual one as well.

If a particular old habit is something that goes against the Word of God and what we are not supposed to do as a Christian, then we have to make every effort not to do it. But we often find ourselves doing the exact same thing that we should not. To make the matter worse, our old habits that we should have gotten rid of are passed down to the life of some people who are close to us because they've seen us doing them.

Just because we became born-again Christians doesn't mean that we no longer have bad habits. We still do, but with the power and help from the Holy Spirit who resides in our hearts, we can overcome them.

A. STILL RULED BY THE OLD NATURE

Genesis 33:1-3 Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants. 2 And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last. 3 Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. 4 But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. 4 And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, "Who are these with you?" So he said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant." 6 Then the maidservants came near, they and their children, and bowed down. 7 And Leah also came near with her children, and they bowed down. Afterward Joseph and Rachel came near, and they bowed down. 8 Then Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company which I met?" And he said, "These are to find favor in the sight of my lord." 9 But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself." 10 And Jacob said, "No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me. 11 Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough." So he urged him, and he took it. 12 Then Esau said, "Let us take our journey; let us go, and I will go before you." 13 But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing are with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die. 14 Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children, are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir." 15 And Esau said, "Now let me leave with you some of the people who are with me." But he said, "What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord." 16 So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. 17 And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, built himself a house, and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth. 18 Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and he pitched his tent before the

city. 19 And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money. 20 Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel.

Please note that chapter 33 starts with the old name "Jacob," not the new name "Israel" which represents a godly nature. It means that Jacob was at it again.

It is a rather embarrassing thing for a believer of Jesus Christ to be outdone by an unbeliever in mercy and forgiveness. We ought to be the ones who offer them to unbelievers, not the other way around. God worked in both of these two brothers' hearts and there was no hard feeling.

Proverbs 16:7 When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Jacob was glad to be reconciled with his brother but didn't want to be too close to him. He was still afraid of Esau. Unfortunately, Jacob still acts like "Jacob," because he said he would go to the south with Esau to the area of Mount Seir. Instead, he allowed Esau to go a few days before him and then headed towards the north to Succoth.

It is good for Jacob to come to the Promised Land, and he settled there but he falls short because though God directed him to return to Bethel, he chose to settle at Succoth and Shechem. Remember, partial obedience to God is complete disobedience.

B. 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 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 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, what he did was NOT 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 to the 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 to be in the fellowship with other believers, not just once in a blue moon or only when you are in a tight corner. You need a strong relationship with God.

C. 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 proposal for 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 was right for his family encouraged two of his sons to do something terrible and ungodly in response.

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

D. 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 an evil intention in this plan. Sad to say, Jacob's sons were liars just like their father. Yet they used spiritual words and their own sister, Dinah, as covers for their intended evil.

They felt justified because the men of Shechem treated their sister like 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 just wanted their blood and properties.

E. 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?"

Massacring and robbing the entire town was beyond what one man did. I am sure that you heard a phrase – "An eye for an eye" in the law of retaliation that comes from Exodus 21:24. In Latin, it is known as "Lex talionis," it is the principle that a person who has injured another person is to be punished to a similar degree, not in carte blanche.

This reminds me of some of the anti-abortion activists' misbehaviors. I am all for the Pro-Life movement. But when some of the extremists of the Pro-Life turned to their own crusade by bombing abortion clinics and killing abortion doctors, it became a problem. Yes, those clinics became killing fields; yes, the abortion doctors became murderers of unborn children for pure greed. But that does not give anyone 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 they don't know the Word of God as we do. But we are the children of God. We need to trust God to take care of those who insult us or persecute us. Self-defense and righteous wars are justified in the eyes of the law and God, but doing this kind of thing as Simeon and Levi did does not go with what the Word of God teaches us:

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 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.

F. APPLICATIONS

- 1) When we know what we do is against the Word of God, we must stop it at all costs with the help of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) We should not justify our wrong thoughts and actions against others because we've been wronged by them.
- 3) Partial obedience to the Lord is complete disobedience.