

April 13<sup>th</sup>

## CONSEQUENCES OF HALF-HEARTED OBEDIENCE

*“And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan-aram, and he camped before the city.” GENESIS 33:18*

**A**ctions have consequences. Those consequences can be good or bad. It's the ripple effect of the stone that gets thrown into the water. Each decision builds into another and then into another. Jacob's life has been one of some good choices and some bad choices. Here in Genesis 34, we've arrived at Shechem with a rape, a marriage proposal, and murder. What brought this about, and why does God include it here in the middle of Jacob's life story?

We need to read slowly to notice that Jacob's distrust has crept back into his life. He's finally been freed from Laban. He's reconciled with Esau and made restitution for stealing the blessing. Right before he separates from Laban, God gives him a directive in 31:3: "Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you." But notice how chapter 33 ends after meeting up with Esau...he camps at the city of Shechem and buys property. Jacob is setting up roots not at Bethel, but at Shechem, which is about 20 miles from Bethel. We don't know why Jacob didn't travel all the way to Bethel this time. But we do see that his choice to dwell in Shechem had disastrous consequences.

Dinah is raped by a citizen of Shechem. There's a proposal of marriage. There's a plan secretly devised by Simeon and Levi to kill all the males that were circumcised. How can God include this in His Bible? We can be confident that God has lessons for us to learn here because all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable to train us for righteousness. This tragic event in Shechem goes back to the tragic distrust of Jacob. God didn't tell Jacob to go to Succoth or Shechem. He told him to travel back to the land of his fathers, which isn't Shechem. We can be assured that God's destination was Bethel because of what God says immediately following the events at Shechem: "Arise, go up the Bethel and dwell there."

Most of us miss these actions by Jacob. We miss Jacob's actions here because it is half-hearted obedience that he is guilty of. Maybe we miss this sin because we are also tempted to give half of our hearts to God. We appear to trust God, but we also can keep some back because of our fear or pride. Men, do you see the lesson that God gives here? We must give God our whole hearts. Dinah was raped. Shechem's men are dead. After turning the page from Laban and Esau, Jacob now has to deal with "stinking to the inhabitants of the land." He's afraid...again. And it all starts with his not following through with what God called him to do. He went the direction of Bethel but stopped short. In what ways have you stopped short of following God with total obedience? Will you commit to following Him with all of your heart today?

***Spend some time thinking about God's call on your life. Ask Him for courage to obey Him with your entire heart.***

**For Further Reading: Genesis 34**