

00-01-02c Genesis Custom

Keep your finger here in Genesis 34, but turn over to Exodus chapter 32. Exodus chapter 32. You have to make a New Year's resolution not to talk so much.

Exodus chapter 32, beginning at verse 25. Remember, this whole chapter is about the golden calf incident, and in verse 19, when Joshua and Moses come down, Joshua hears a noise of the people in verse 17 of Exodus 32, and he says, there's a noise of war in the camp. But Moses says, it's not the noise of the shout of victory, nor the noise of the cry of defeat, but the sound of singing that I hear.

And they come near the camp, they see the calf and the dancing. Moses' anger became hot, he cast the tablets out of his hand, broke them at the foot of the mountain. Then he took the calf which they had made, burned it in the fire, ground it to powder, scattered it on the water, and made the children of Israel drink it.

Skip down to verse 25. When Moses saw that the people were unrestrained, for Aaron had not restrained them to their shame among their enemies, Moses stood in the entrance of the camp and said, Whoever is on the Lord's side, come to me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him.

And he said to them, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor. So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day. Then Moses said, Consecrate yourselves today to the Lord, that he may bestow on you a blessing this day, for every man has opposed his son and his brother.

Now, who of the Israelites did these Levites slay? Other Levites. These are their sons and their brothers. The Levites who led the worship of the golden calf are the ones who are slain.

And so the Levites wind up strapping on their swords and going through, and these three thousand who are killed are Levites. And in the same way that in their anger they went and slew the men of Shechem, here there is a poetic sort of justice, a poetic reversal, because the Levites now have to draw the sword and vent the anger of God on the Levites. And the edge of the sword strikes their brothers and their sons.

So there is a lot going on here. We have to remember no matter what the circumstance, that we have the word of God. We have the spirit of God.

And at every point, whether we have just achieved a victory, whether we have just received a blessing, whatever trials, whatever circumstances we find ourselves in, we

have to seek the guidance of God the Holy Spirit through the word of God to set our priorities, to be the motivation for the things that we do and not let ourselves get sidetracked by what we think is righteous indignation, what we think is justice, to get what we think we deserve in a particular situation, to remember who we are and why we are here. If Jacob had remembered that, Dinah would have never gone out to sea and be seen among the people. If Jacob's sons had remembered that, when they were wronged, they would have gone to the Lord and sought out the justice of God rather than seeking their own justice.

And this is a problem that is going to plague the nation of Israel throughout their history. Forgetting God in the heat of the moment and going off in their own strength to accomplish what is right in their own eyes. And it's a powerful lesson and a powerful illustration and example for us that it's easy to get carried away in the moment and forget that this moment is another chance to look to God and to operate in faith, to have the thoughts and intents of our heart be pleasing before the Lord as we do what we do.

Sometimes we are doing the right thing from an outward point of view, but our motivation is faulty. And there's no better illustration of that than Simeon and Levi hacking and slashing and the approving gaze of the rabbis in later years, the author of Jubilees and Judith, saying blessings on Simeon and Levi for going in and avenging their wronged sister. And even in the later years, to not be able to see the error of that way and the consequences in the later history of Israel is to have a great blindness to the truth of the word of God.

We don't want to suffer from that blindness. As we embark on a new calendar year this week, it's an opportunity to renew our commitment to meditating on the things of God and seeking to not only learn them, but make application in the greater and the smaller details of our lives. This is a good place to stop.

We'll resume in happier times in chapter 35 of Genesis next time. But let's close here in prayer. Father, we thank you for your grace.

We thank you for your faithfulness, your long suffering and patience with us as we make our mistakes and learn the hard way so many times in our lives. We thank you for the truth of your word and the ministry of your spirit that enables us to understand it and to digest it. We pray that as we embark on this coming year, as we embark on the remainder of this day and the remainder of this week, that we will be sensitive to the ministry of God, the Holy Spirit, of the truth of your word in our souls.

We will be transformed by the renewing of our minds and that our lives, the thoughts and intents of our heart, will be pleasing in your sight, glorifying to our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We ask these things in his name. Amen.