

The InnerCHANGE

Online Edition for the Cross Point Community



Title: You're Better Than That

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Series: Forefathers

Text: Gen 34,35

Synopsis: "You're better than that." At some point in your life I hope you've heard that from a coach, teacher, parent...maybe even a spouse. In response to poor performance I hope someone said, "You're better than that. Sadly, though, many of us have never heard that from anybody. We accept failure as if it is the expected behavior. The clear message is, "You're not better than that and that is exactly what we expected."

It seems this is what is happening in the life of Jacob. Having just wrestled the God/man and having been given a new name and new identity, a new Jacob emerges. His name is now Israel and he is to return to his land of origin and fulfill his destiny of nation building. But he doesn't quite get there. He stops in Shechem, a city far north of his land of origin. While he is in Shechem, the unthinkable happens. The prince of Shechem, who is also named Shechem, rapes his daughter Dinah, who has grown up in the city and is now a teenager. Jacob's sons, most of whom are in their twenties, exact a terrible revenge on the city by tricking the men into getting circumcised, thus forming a bond with Jacob and his family with the thinking that they will be made wealthy. While they are recouping from the painful procedure, the brothers kill all the men of the city and take captive the women and children. Throughout these terrible events Jacob once again demonstrates little but cowardice and faithlessness. The only thing he can say is, "You have brought terrible trouble on me."

Then God does something remarkable. Instead of chastising Jacob for his lack of faith, he reminds him who he is. He reminds Jacob that he is the God that met him decades before when he was fleeing Esau. God reminds him of the vow he took then to make Bethel a place of worship and his destiny to be the father of a great nation. God reminds Jacob of his new name and identity. In effect he says, "You're better than that."

This must have been stunning to Jacob. Certainly he had never heard that before...not from his estranged father or manipulative mother, not from his abusive uncle or jealous brother. After all these years, the only one who kept reminding him of his destiny was God.

For Jacob, like each of us, most of our journey of faith is about the constant reminder that we are new creations in Jesus. We are given a new name and identity. We have a destiny to be rulers in the Kingdom of God with Jesus. Yet most of us live far below that expectation. And when we do, God reminds us, as he did Jacob, "You're better than that."