

Guest Preacher - Rev Florian Weicken (Zurich Presbyterian Church)

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Preacher: Rev. Florian Weicken

[0 : 00] Genesis 38. Now this chapter almost rudely interrupts the story of Joseph.

! The previous chapter, and we will look at the previous chapter tonight,! tells us about the conspiracy of the brothers to kill Joseph, but then in the end they didn't kill him, but they sold him as a slave to Egypt.

And then we hear at the end of chapter 37, meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard.

And what we would expect is that the story is continued. And then we have this chapter 38, and the story of Joseph is only continued in chapter 39.

And of course, especially because it is a chapter full of sin, we ask ourselves, why is this chapter here? Why is this chapter here? And I want to just emphasize two reasons why this chapter is here.

[1 : 03] The first one is that it does explain to us why it was necessary for Jacob's family to go to Egypt, for the people of Israel to go to Egypt.

Because what happens here in chapter 39, that the sons of God, like in Genesis 6 actually, the sons of God, or the sons of the holy ones, they start to mix with the Canaanites.

They start to mix with the Canaanites. The holy seed started to mix with the Canaanites. We see that in the very first chapters. And then providentially in Egypt, they're kept from mixing.

Why? Because the Egyptians thought they are an abomination to them, because we're shepherds. And the Lord used that to keep the holy seed pure.

Of course, not ethnically, but spiritually. That they would still hold on to their faith. The faith that a seed would come to save them. A Messiah would come to save them.

[2 : 09] That's the first reason why this chapter is here. It explains to us why they had to go to Egypt. The second reason, well, is that a predecessor of the Lord Jesus Christ is presented to us.

Naturally, we maybe think that Joseph would be the predecessor. He's a much godlier man. And particularly in chapter 37 and 39 and 40, he is actually shown to us and presented to us as this godly, young, and then also older man.

He's spiritual. But no, Judah is the predecessor of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we see here Judah did not deserve this.

Absolutely not. In this chapter, he is presented to us as a man who is or was a filthy sinner. And in this chapter, it is shown to us that it is truly by grace we are saved and not by our own merits.

And this is very emphatically shown to us in this chapter. Judah was a sinner, yet he is in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3 : 26] Tamar was a sinner, yet she is in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ. And no doubt both of them are in the eternal genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ through faith, which we are all part of through faith.

Now, the title of today's sermon is Judah and Tamar. Very obvious. And I have three points to this sermon. The first point is the lost son Judah or the prodigal son Judah.

It's a classical story of a prodigal son. Secondly, the misguided faith of Tamar. The misguided faith of Tamar. And thirdly, the most wonderful part, the triumph of grace.

The triumph of grace. As we trace in afterwards Judah's life and see how grace triumphed in his life and changed him. Let's look at the first point.

The lost son Judah. And Judah is here presented to us as a prodigal son. Yes, he did not ask for the inheritance, but he went away from the family.

[4 : 36] He went away from his father. He went away from the brothers. It is said to us in verse 1, Now, why did he go away from the family?

We can't be certain. Maybe he had good reasons for it. The family dynamics weren't particularly great. And this family, unfortunately, although they were a Christian family, but the dynamics weren't particularly great.

But he went away and lived among the Canaanites. He lived in the world as one of the world. That's exactly what he did.

He walked away from the covenant and walked into the world. Yes, it is even described to us that the Canaanites, the wicked people, they became his best friends.

Twice it is emphasized to us that this man, Hira, the Adulamite, was his friend. Verse 12, we see it at the end. He and his friend, Hira, the Adulamite.

[5 : 46] And then verse 20, it says again, When Judah sent the young goat by his friend, the Adulamite. The writer, Moses, wants to show us something.

He became friends with the world. He did not want to have fellowship. With his believing father and mother. But he wanted to have fellowship with the world.

Why did he like the world so much? Why did he like the world so much? Now, it's obvious when you read this chapter. He desired the pleasures of the flesh.

He desired the pleasures of the eyes. And he desired the pride of life. And two particular things are shown to us in this chapter that show us that he was walking and seeking after the desires of the flesh.

One is that he was driven by sexual desire. He was driven by sexual desire. I think this is pretty obvious. But just one hint here as well. In verse 2, it is said, Now, the name of the woman is never told to us.

[7 : 10] Why not? Because she was just an object of his desire. He saw her. He took her. He went into her. That's it. That's all what she was for him.

And we see then, of course, the weakness of Judah a bit later as Tamar is exploiting that weakness. And the second thing, what we see here is that he was probably also driven by wealth and success by career considerations.

When you read a little bit earlier in chapter 37, 26, it was Judah who was particularly concerned with the money, wasn't he? By selling his brother.

He says, What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? That was his main concern. We can make money out of him. And then in verse 18, in our chapter, we read that he had a cord, a signet, and a staff.

And that was usually in that time a sign of wealth and a sign of an honorable man in this culture. Not very honorable, of course, but that was a sign in that culture.

- [8 : 27] The question is for you today, where do your desires lie this morning? Do you seek after the world like Judah?
- Or do you seek after righteousness and grace and mercy in the Lord Jesus Christ? But you may ask yourself, what about Judah's Christian upbringing?
- What about his Christian upbringing? And of course, they were Christians. Yes, they would not have called themselves Christians, but they waited for the Lord Jesus Christ and the Messiah. And his parents, Jacob and Leah, they were Christians.
- What about his Christian upbringing? Has he forgotten everything? No, he hasn't forgotten everything. He hasn't forgotten everything. Some things stuck with him even there in Canaan.
- One thing we read is that he was actually concerned about the seed, about the importance of the seed. Verse 8, look at verse 8. Then Judah said to Onan, go into your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her and raise up offspring for your brother.
- [9 : 35] Why did he want him to do that? Yes, of course, to take care of Tamar as well. That was a lot, to take care of the widows. But there was always the hope in ancient Israel that the next seed, the next offspring may be the Messiah.
- And that's why the regulation was in Israel that no name should be plotted out because every time a son was born, they hoped maybe this is the one.
- And it seems that he remembered that. That was even before giving of the law, before the giving of the law. So he knew there's a seed to come. There's a seed to come.
- There's a Savior to come. And maybe the second thing we see that he has not forgotten everything is the shame he felt when they could not find the cult prostitute. Look at verse 23.
- Judah replied, let her keep the things as her own or we shall be laughed at. He was concerned about the shame. And that's also the reason why he only sent his friend to bring the goat.
- [10 : 48] He didn't go himself. He was a little bit ashamed of what he had done. But all these things were just mere information in his head.
- They were not really effectual. He did not put his trust on these things, what he had learned about the seed to come. Because Judah walked in darkness.
- He did not walk in the light. He walked in darkness and he heaped up sin after sin. He wasn't even really bothered by it. Yes, maybe the conscience sometimes kicked up a little bit.
- But he wasn't really bothered by the sin. And we see that in several instances here in our text. One is that he brought up wicked sons. Now, of course, the parents are not always responsible what the children do later in life.
- But if you have brought up two sons the Lord kills, you may have considered what you have done in your upbringing. He brought up wicked sons.
- [11 : 57] And he may have never been around. I think there's a hint for that, that he was not really around and he was an absent father. Look at verse 5. Yet again, she bore a son and she called his name Sheila.
- Judah was in Chetzeb when she bore him. He wasn't even there when she gave birth to that son. He couldn't care less about him and the mother.
- Then the next thing we see in Judah's life, how he walked in darkness, is that he walked in superstitious beliefs.

We see that particularly in verse 11, where he kind of says to Tamar, Now, Judah did not ask himself whether we have done something wrong potentially.

He thought, this woman is bad luck for my sons. That's why she has to go. That's why she has to go. And then, of course, in the whole story, we see that he was a liar.

[13 : 12] It was never in verse 11 really his intention to give Sheila to Tamar. But he just wanted to get rid of her so that she's gone. And he probably did that often, that he said something, but he did something different.

That's why Tamar wanted some pledges. She couldn't trust him. She couldn't trust him to say the truth. And later on, we see, of course, as well, that he was a hypocrite.

When someone brought the news to him that Tamar is pregnant, he said, kill her, burn her for this great and hideous sin.

But he actually didn't look into his own heart at that very moment. And isn't it interesting when we compare him to Joseph later in chapter 39, particularly when it comes to shame or to sin or to temptation, Judah had no problem, really, no problem to sin.

And he was only a little bit ashamed if other people found out about it. That's why he was ashamed of the goat when they brought it, but they couldn't find her. Let's just say that's over.

[14 : 23] We don't think about it anymore. Come back. We couldn't find her. But when we compare that to Joseph, when he was tempted, he did not say to Potiphar's wife, well, someone may find it out one day.

No, he said, I cannot sin against God. What a difference of attitude in these two men. In Judah, back then in chapter 38, or then in Joseph in chapter 39.

But who brought Judah to reconsider, or who confronted Judah with his sins?

Well, it was a Canaanite woman, Tamar, who confronted him with his own sins. And that brings us to the second point, the misguided faith of Tamar.

Who was this Tamar? Who was this Tamar? Well, most probably, although it is not actually said to us, she was, well, she is actually said here in verse 2, she was a Canaanite.

[15 : 27] No, sorry. I'm confusing her now with Judah's wife. So it's not said to her, Tamar, who she was, but she was most certainly a Canaanite. Then we see how Judah took her for her firstborn, for his firstborn son, Ur.

In verse 6, Judah took a wife for Ur, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. Isn't it interesting to see that he was very controlling about the wife of Ur, but he himself did not want his father to have any say in his future wife.

He walked away from the family. That's quite often what happens, by the way. Those who are rebels want absolute obedience from those who are under them, because they are the ones who are in control.

Then Ur died, and Onan should have raised the seed for his brother to do the duty of a brother-in-law, but he didn't do it.

With that, how he wasted the semen on the ground, he also did actually reject the seed to come. He didn't want to have the seed coming in the name of his brother.

[16 : 46] With that, because they had the belief that the seed would be, or the Messiah would be the seed, at some point, he rejected also the Messiah. And God killed him as well, like Ur.

And we ask ourselves, does God do that today even, that he may kill people? And he does. He does. He killed Ananias and Sapphira for their wickedness.

We cannot mock God. He's a holy God. But back to Tamar. Eventually, she should have married Sheila, or at least that had been promised before she had been sent back to the, or when she was sent back to the father.

But it is also interesting to see that this was not quite the right thing from Judah to do, that he sent her back to the father. He should have really cared for her and the family. But he didn't do that because he wanted to get rid of her.

And the story should have ended here when, as soon as he sent her away, the story should have ended there. But it did not end there in God's providence. And it did not end there because Tamar had a plan.

[18 : 01] What did she do now? And verse 11, it is said that she was sent back to her father's house, but she would have probably already suspected that Judah doesn't want her to come back.

And she was right in the end. Look at verse 14. For she saw that Sheila was grown up and she had not been given to him in marriage.

And therefore she made a plan. She knew the weakness of Judah and she heard about this feast. She hears about the sheep shearing, usually in those days, that meant that a lot of feasting was going on and presumably also a lot of drinking.

We know the story of Nabal and Abigail. And Nabal was also sheep shearing when he was drunk and afterwards. But she heard about the feast and she also knows Judah's weakness and she knew that he could be easily enticed.

Do you see the slavery of Judah in that matter? The slavery of sin that he could not resist it. He always had to sin.

[19 : 14] That's exactly what the natural man is. The natural man has to sin. And eventually she executed, though, her plan. She dressed up as a prostitute.

He thought she's a prostitute. He turned to her. They agreed on the price. Price, verse 17, it is said. They agreed on the price. And she asked for a pledge because she probably could not trust him.

And then he gives the pledge. What pledge shall I give you? She replied, Your signet, your cord, and your staff that is in your hand. Well, the equivalent today would be basically the passport and the driver's license.

Everyone knew what that signet meant. It was a signet from Judah or then the court that was given were all kind of identity markers of a person.

So he left the passport and the driving license there. And then she takes these things and she's not to be seen again. Now, how should we categorize, though, the actions of Tamar?

[20 : 21] How should we categorize the actions of Tamar? Did she do rightly? Did she act rightly? Of course not. She didn't act rightly.

She sinned in the way she acted. She deceived. She seduced. Unfortunately, a little bit according to the pattern in that particular family.

It was a family pattern to deceive. She deceived. But she did. In my opinion, something similar like Jacob did, the father of Judah.

Jacob had actually the blessing or the blessing of the seed should have come to him. And he should have waited upon the Lord that these blessings would come to him.

But what did he do? He deceived his father together with his mother, Rebekah. And they took the blessing to themselves in an illegitimate way.

[21 : 22] And something similar is happening here. I believe Tamar had, in essence, a faith given to her by God.

She had heard about a seed in the house of Judah and the house of Jacob. A seed that would come and would be the Savior. But she did not do it rightly to take on this blessing.

She had been promised actually a seed from the house of Judah by Judah himself. But she wasn't given it. And so she took it to herself to get that promise of the seed.

And yes, it wasn't right. She is not and should not be an example of faith to us. She should not. But I want to an example in her actions to us.

But she should be an example of faith, of course, because she had a faith in the seed. But we also can maybe a little bit excuse her in that, that she didn't know really better what to do.

[22 : 30] She grew up or she was part, she didn't grow up, but she was part of a nominal family, a nominal Christian family. And the only things she would have heard were that the seed would come.

And she put her trust into that. And eventually, Judah had to admit that she was better than him. Particularly then, when it's been found out that Judah is actually the father of the children in the womb of Tamar.

And it is said in verse 24, about three months later, Judah was told, Tamar, your daughter-in-law has been immoral. Moreover, she's pregnant by immorality. And Judah said, bring her out and let her be burned.

As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, by the man to whom these belong, I am pregnant. And she said, please identify whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff.

And Judah identified them and said, she's more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Sheila. She's more righteous than I.

[23 : 42] You could also translate it, she's righteous, I'm not. She's righteous, I'm not. And in that moment, and we see it then in the life of Judah afterwards, in that moment he realized his sin and God changed Judah.

And the triumph of grace started in his life. And that brings us to the last point, the triumph of grace. What happens here with Judah?

What happens here with Judah? Well, he's this lost son, he lived for the world, for himself, chased after the desires of the flesh, and suddenly he confesses that she is righteous, I am not.

He confesses his sin. Yes, in the matter itself, he had promised, of course, Sheila to her and he didn't do it. And he took, he had responsibility as well that she was now pregnant.

But I think it goes even further that we have here a confession of his general sinfulness and the turning around, this turning around, of course, which was wrought by the Spirit of God in his heart.

[24 : 58] And why do I say this? Now, look at the confession again. It is said here, she's more righteous or she's righteous, I'm not. And one thing is really interesting here, he does not point to her.

How many times when we are confronted with our own sins do we say, yes, I have sinned, but you also? And he could have easily said that because she sinned as well in this whole thing.

But he simply says, you are righteous, I am not. He takes full responsibility. He takes full responsibility. And then the next phrase is wonderful because here we see already how his life is changing and he did not know her again.

there's already a change happening. He's not in the same way driven by the desires of the flesh.

And I admit, here we have only indications of his change, indications of the triumph of grace in his life. But we actually see later in his life that he was definitely a changed man by the grace of God.

[26 : 16] chapter 38, as you said, is just put between the story of Joseph. And the time frame probably between them selling Joseph and them then going to Egypt is about 20 years.

And it is most probable when we look at all the verses and compare the timings and so on, that when this chapter here ends, 38, that shortly afterwards, Judah goes with his brothers to Egypt.

Well, the first thing we note here, after about 20 years, he seems to be back with his family again. And he's not with the Canaanites.

Then in chapter 42, we see that together with all the brothers, he's confessing sin. In chapter 42, verse 21, he says, or all of them say, in truth, we are guilty concerning our brother in that we saw the distress of his soul when he begged us and we did not listen.

We are sinful. We have sinned. We see again a confession of sin. And Judah was part of that. But it gets even better. In chapter 43, he's actually the one who starts to take responsibility for the whole family.

[27 : 40] The Judah who had run away in the past. And now he's starting to take responsibility for the whole family. 43, verses 2 to 3.

And when they had eaten the grain that they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, go again, buy us a little food. But Judah said to him, the man solemnly warned us, saying, you shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.

And then Judah binds himself in a pledge. verse 8 and 9. And Judah said to Israel his father, send the boy with me, and we will arise and go that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones.

Do you see the concern of Judah now? I will be a pledge of his safety from my hand. You shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever.

And eventually he had to take responsibility in chapter 44. Verse 16, again, he's not starting to point at others or at Benjamin in whose sack and bag they found actually the cup.

[28 : 50] Chapter 44, verse 16, it says, And Judah said, What shall we say to my Lord? What shall we speak? Or how can we clear ourselves? God has found out the guilt of your servants.

Behold, we are my Lord's servants. But it gets even better. We see the triumph of grace even more in Judah's life.

Chapter 44, at the end, verse 30 on. Now he speaks and offers himself up for his own brother.

Now, therefore, as soon as I come to your servant, my father, and the boy is not with us, then as his life is bound up in the boy's life, as soon as he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die.

And your servant will bring down the gray hairs of your servant, of your father, with sorrow to Sheol. You see, the man who had no concern for his family before, walked away to the Canaanites, suddenly loves his own father.

[30 : 00] He loves his own father. father. He couldn't bear to see the sorrow of his father again. And then he goes on, for your servant became a pledge of safety for the boy to my father, saying, if I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father all my life.

Now, therefore, please, let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my Lord, and let the boy go back with his brother, for how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me.

I fear to see the evil that would find my father. And suddenly, this Judah from chapter 38 becomes a type for Christ.

He's ready to give up his own life for his little brother. And by the way, I'm not sure whether Judah could have exactly known whether Benjamin did not take the cup, but he was ready to give his own life.

Is that the same man from chapter 38? It's not. It's not. A man who has been changed by grace.

[31 : 15] This is what we see now in chapter 44. And by the way, I believe the father saw the same thing as well. And it was Judah he blesses in a special way.

Yes, of course, it is a prophecy, and the spirit was working in the father. But can't we also imagine that by the means of seeing now this is really a man of God, my son Judah, a very special man of God, I bless him with this blessing that the true seed, the seed that would save us all, will come from him.

You see the triumph of grace, the triumph of grace in Judah's life, but we see also triumph of grace in Tamar's life. We don't see her life afterwards, obviously, we don't see it, but we see it, we see her standing in the genealogy of Matthew, chapter 1.

Tamar is mentioned there, together with three other women, Rahab, Ruth, and the wife of Uriah, Bathsheba. All four of them were Canaanites or Moabites or Hittites.

No mentioning of Sarah, Rebecca, or Leah. Nothing. Why? So that we and the Jews back in that day would know it is by grace alone that we are saved.

[32 : 50] These women should have been under the judgment of God, but because they believed in the seed to come, they were saved. As we look back now to the seed that has come, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we are saved.

And the one question I have for you today is, what is triumphing in your life? Is it sin?

Or is it the grace of God? Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank you so much for this story and your word and for your dealings with Judah and Tamar.

Lord, you know exactly that we were not better than they were. maybe it was not as obvious, but our hearts were exactly as dark as theirs.

But we thank you so much, Lord, that you have changed us, that you continue to change us. And Lord, we do pray that you would indeed continue to change us into the image of Christ.

[34 : 15] Christ. And we thank you so much that it is all by grace. And help us, help us to be thankful for your great work in us and among us.

Amen. Amen. Then we will sing Psalm 103 from Sing Psalms. Psalm 103 verses 8 to 14.

The Lord is merciful and kind, to anger slow and full of grace. He will not constantly reprove or in his anger hide his face. He does not punish our misdeeds or give our sins a just reward.

How great is love as high as heaven towards all those who fear the Lord. We stand to sing Psalm 103, sing Psalms verses 8 to 14.

The Lord is merciful and kind, to anger slow and full of grace.

[35 : 26] He will not constantly reprove or in his anger hide his face.

He does not punish our mistakes or give our sins their just reward.

How great is love as high as hand towards all those who fear the Lord.

Lord. He from the who fear the Lord. As far as he is from the west, so far his love has borne away our many sins and trespasses and all and all the guilt that won't us leave.

Just as our Father loves his child, so God loves those who fear his name, for he remembers we are dust, and well he knows our feeble flame, and well he knows our feeble flame.

[37 : 13] Receive the benediction. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen.