

WHEN IS IT RIGHT TO DO WRONG? (Tamar—Scandalous Grace)

ser5044 Women Who Made a Difference, Pt 3

May 15, 2022 E & L

I. (HOOK) POINT OF INTRIGUE

A. I can count on two hands, maybe even one hand, the sermons I have repeated in my tenure of 40 years.

Today's sermon is one of them. It's one of my favorites; and soundly fits this month's sermon series, *Women Who Made a Difference*.

NOTE: Although repeated, the sermon is still wrapped and presented differently each time.

The first time I preached this sermon was January 8, 1984 while working through the book of Genesis. I entitled it, "The Interruption." I did so because it appears to come out of nowhere with little if no connection to what preceded it. But it has every connection with what comes after it, and the lessons within the text are profound.

B. Let's address "the interruption."

Genesis 38 is a peculiar chapter in many ways:

1. It interrupts the narrative of Joseph, beloved son of Jacob, leaving him at the home of Potiphar (Captain of Pharaoh's army) without explanation.
2. If it were found in between *Isaiah chapters 40* and *41* it might make more sense. Not chronologically, but because *Isaiah 40* is the perfect preface. (**Let's look at it.**)

Isaiah 40: 12-31 (selected)

12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, or with the breadth of His hand marked off the heavens?

Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?

13 Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD, or instruct the LORD as His counselor?

ISAIAH 55:8 God says, "For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways," says the LORD.

23 He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

LISTEN, WAR IS UGLY, AND NO ONE WANTS TO SEE INNOCENT CITIZENS IN ANY COUNTRY DIE—UKRAINE, RUSSIA, ETHIOPIA, IRAQ, LIBYA ... WHEREVER. Yet, let us never forget that God is sovereign over the affairs of men and rules over nations (**Daniel 4:17**). (**Let's continue with our text**)

25 “To whom will you compare Me? Or who is My equal?” says the Holy One.

31 ... *those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. (*repeat with me)

3. This verse (Isaiah 40:31), describes our lead character in today’s sermon—Tamar, daughter-in-law to Judah, the 35th great-grandfather of Jesus the Messiah, and daughter of a priest.

II. (BOOK) THE TEXT — RIGHTEOUS PROSTITUTION

Genesis 38 1About that time, Judah left his brothers and settled near a man named Hirah, an Adullamite. 2There Judah saw the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua, and he took her as a wife and slept with her. [Don’t be shocked...that’s usually what married people do. ☺] 3So she conceived and gave birth to a son, and Judah named him Er. 4Again she conceived and gave birth to a son, and she named him Onan. 5Then she gave birth to another son and named him Shelah

(PRESS THE SAVE BUTTON: Shua gives her husband, Judah, three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah.)

A. Judah’s transgressions

The first two verses of this narrative reveal four costly mistakes made by Judah:

1. He leaves the shelter of the Church (Abraham’s family—(v1) and moves to or near Abdullah, a Canaanite city.

2. He takes a woman as his wife because of her looks (v2)—I know, you say, “What’s wrong with that?” We’ll get there.
3. He enters business with a non-believer, Hirah.
4. He marries a non-believer (**2 Cor 6:14**). God is specific in both the Old and New Testaments—do not be unequally yoked.

B. Let’s look into the mirror.

Have you been there?

1. Left the shelter of the Church?
2. Took a spouse because of his or her looks, only to find out later that what looked good in the beginning doesn’t look so good now.
3. Entered a business partnership with a non-believer?

NOTE! You can enter into a business partnership with a believer and it does not end up the way you think it should. That’s life! But starting with the same value system is a big plus.

4. Married a non-believer?

NOTE! My years of ministry have revealed that nine times out of ten, when a believer marries a non-believer it’s a horror story and not a “happy ending.”

C. Back to our narrative.

6 Now Judah acquired a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar.

NOTE: Judah does a better job selecting a wife for his first born than he did for himself. The nature of her suggested death reveals she is the daughter of a priest, and as the text will reveal, a woman desiring what God desires.

NOTE 2: Guys, you can never go wrong if you choose a wife who wants what God wants. And, ladies, you can never go wrong choosing a man who wants what God wants. ([Back to our text.](#))

7But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the LORD's sight; so the LORD put him to death. **8**Then Judah said to Onan, "Sleep with your brother's wife. Perform your duty as her brother-in-law and raise up offspring for your brother." **9**But Onan knew that the offspring would not belong to him; so whenever he would sleep with his brother's wife, he would spill his seed on the ground so that he would not produce offspring for his brother. **10**What he did was evil in the LORD's sight, so He (God) put Onan to death as well.

NOTE: We don't have time to further explore the reasons why God put Er to death, but we are going to look into why God put Onan to death.

Deuteronomy 25: 5-6

5When brothers are living together and one of them dies without having had a son, the **widow** of the dead brother shall not marry a stranger from outside the family; her husband's brother is to come to her and marry her and do the brother-in-law's duty by her. **6**The first son that she bears shall be named after her dead husband so his name won't die out in Israel.

NOTE: This scripture is often twisted to fit into a person's position on birth control and masturbation, but this passage has little to do with either. It does, however, have EVERYTHING to do with obeying the sacred commands of God, particularly when it comes to the firstborn, who was

eminent to the lineage and birth of Messiah. Recall, Judah is the 35th great-grandfather of Jesus the Christ.

C. (LOOK) The Bible doesn't tell us why Onan refused to produce an heir for his brother.

1. Maybe it was because of his brother's reputation—remember God put him to death.
2. Maybe it was because he didn't want another child.
3. Maybe it was because he didn't want to be married to Tamar.

Whatever the reason, he profaned a command, which God considered sacred and paid a heavy price—his life and the honor of having his name listed in the genealogy of Christ.

D. So, in brief, Judah promises Tamar his youngest son—but he does not deliver. (Let's pick up the text.)



12After a long time Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died. When Judah had finished mourning, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite [his non-Christian business partner] went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah. **13**When Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep," **14**she removed her widow's garments, covered her face with a veil to disguise herself, and sat at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the way to Timnah. For

she saw that although Shelah had grown up, she had not been given to him as a wife.

15 When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute because she had covered her face. **(show photo)** **16** Not realizing that she was his daughter in law, he went over to her and said, “Come now, let me sleep with you.” “What will you give me for sleeping with you?” she asked.

Judah promises Tamar a young goat but has nothing to give her. So, Tamar asks for a deposit, but it’s not just any deposit. In modern day language Tamar asks her father-in-law for his *driver’s license, safe deposit key, credit card, and signet ring—power of attorney* of his estate (**v18**). Later when Judah sent his business partner to deliver the goat, the townspeople told him there was not, nor had there ever been, a town prostitute at Enaim. **(show photo)**



NATIONAL GALLERIES SCOTLAND
Hirah the Adullamite with the Kid, inquiring for the Harlot (The Story of Judah and Tamar), 1549, Marten...
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Not wanting everyone to know what he had done; Judah leaves the situation alone.

Three months later Judah is told that his daughter-in-law, Tamar is pregnant. **(Let’s pick up the narrative.)**

24b “Bring her out!” Judah replied. “Let her be burned to death!”

BACKGROUND NOTE! *Leviticus*

21:9 says, “the daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by playing the harlot, she

profanes her father. She shall be **burned with fire.**"
 *emphasis mine ([show photo, p9](#))

E. How quick we are to judge and slow to understand. Furthermore, even as Christians, we can easily live a double standard, as did Judah, but God does not. God is a father to the fatherless and a judge of widows (**Psalm 68:5**). And in this case God rendered Judah guilty and Tamar pardoned.

NOTE I didn't say *innocent but pardoned*. There is a difference.

[25](#)As she was being brought out, Tamar sent a message to her father-in-law: "I am pregnant by the man to whom these items belong." And she added, "Please examine them. Whose seal and cord and staff are these?"

[26](#)Judah recognized the items and said, "She is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not have relations with her again.



F. In *verses 27-29* God has the final word: Tamar gives birth to twins, one of which is named in the lineage of Christ.

IV. ([TOOK](#)) MORE RIGHTEOUS THAN I—DOING RIGHT WRONG

A. Tamar waited patiently for the promise of the LORD.

1. She could have married someone else when she saw that Judah wasn't going to give her his youngest son, but she didn't.
2. She knew the family she had married into was "chosen," and she wasn't about to let go of its promised blessing. (Like Jacob, she refused to let go until she received what was promised to her.)

WHAT IS FAITH? "Faith is the substance of things hoped for the assurance of things not seen." *Hebrews 11:1*

3. When all hope seemed to be gone, rather than give up, by faith (action) she made it happen.
4. Her act of prostitution wasn't about sex or money but laying hold of a sacred promise. She had sex with no man after her two husbands had died; and had sex with no man after her solo act of prostitution.
5. There are ONLY four women listed in the genealogy of Christ and Tamar is one of them (Ruth, Rahab, Tamar & Mary).

Psalm 111:2-4

- 2 Great are the works of the LORD;
they are pondered by all who delight in them.
- 3 Splendid and majestic is His work;
His righteousness endures forever.
- 4 He has caused His wonders to be remembered;

the LORD is gracious and compassionate.

B. We live in an age that wants to coddle those who do wrong rightly, but God honors those who do right, even if they do it wrongly. If you're going to err, always do so on the side of righteousness.

V. INVITATION

A. Strangely enough, this story is a picture of “salvation.”

To receive the promise ...

1. She discarded her widow's clothing—her righteous claim to an heir.
2. She covered her face, dressing herself as a sinner—salvation commences with the admission that we are sinners and have no claim to righteousness outside of Jesus.
3. She sat at the gate seeking her savior. God tells us, “I love those who love Me, and those who seek Me find Me.” *Proverbs 8:17*

B. Will you take off your self-righteous clothes (good works) and claim to salvation, and cast yourself solely on the work of Christ?

Admit— your sins have separated you from God. (*Psa 14:1-3; Rom 3: 23*);

Believe – that God did something about your sins through Jesus Christ. (The final Pascal Lamb/Messiah.) (*Lev 17:10; Heb 9: 19-22*);

Commit – yourself to His righteousness by confessing Jesus as Lord and Savior. (*Isa 53:5; Col 1:22*);

Do it today! (Isa 49:8; 2 Cor 6:2).

Father in Heaven, I'm sorry for the things I've done that are wrong: I am a sinner; forgive me. Thank You for loving me and sending your Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty for my sin. Holy Spirit, come into my heart; Jesus be my Lord and Savior. I give You my life. Amen!

ser4044, *When Is It Right to do Wrong? Tamar—Scandalous Grace (Women Who Made A Difference, Pt 3)* Words w/ Invitation 2185 (16.8 minutes)