

Amazing Grace

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[0 : 00] Jesus. Tonight we're going to finish looking at Genesis chapter 38 and we'll look at the final 19! verses of the chapter. As we saw last week, Genesis 38 gives us an overview of approximately 20 years of Judah's life. And these years started immediately after Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt. Despite the sordid behavior documented in chapter 38, it's an important chapter in redemptive history. You've heard this quite a while now, but the main point of the book of Genesis, including Genesis 37 through 50, is to show the progression of that redemptive history or how God will redeem his people from the curse of sin. Throughout Genesis, including the account of Joseph, God shows that he's faithful to preserve the line of the seed who will redeem God's people. Chapter 38 fits into the life of Joseph by showing why God sent Joseph to Egypt and by giving us a glimpse into the magnitude of God's grace. That's the main idea we began discussing last week. The events in chapter 38 show why

God sent Joseph to Egypt. These same events give us a glimpse into the magnitude of God's grace. So we're going to read the whole chapter again, do some quick review, and then we'll get into new material.

So starting with verse 1, it says, It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to a certain Adulamite whose name was Hira. There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. He took her and went into her, and she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Ur. She conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan. Yet again she bore a son, and she called his name Shelah. Judah was in Chezeb when she bore him. And Judah took a wife for Ur, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. But Ur, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord put him to death. 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. But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his, so whenever he went into his brother's wife, he would waste the semen on the ground so as to not give offspring to his brother. And what he did was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and he put him to death also. Then Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law,

Remain a widow in your father's house till Shelah my son grows up. For he feared that he would die like his brothers. So Tamar went and remained in her father's house. In the course of time, the wife of Judah, Shelah's daughter, died. When Judah was comforted, he went up to Timnah to his sheep shearers, he and his friend Hira the Adulamite. And when Tamar was told, Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep, she took off her widow's garments and covered herself with the veil, wrapping herself up, and sat at the entrance to Enium, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that Shelah was grown up, and she had not been given to him in marriage. When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. He turned to her at the roadside and said, Come, let me come into you. For he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law.

[3 : 42] She said, What will you give me that you may come into me? He answered, I will send you a young goat from the flock. And she said, If you give me a pledge until you send it. He said, What pledge shall I give you? She replied, Your signet and your cord and your staff that is in your hand.

So he gave them to her and went into her, and she conceived by him. Then she arose and went away, and taking off her veil, she put on the garments of her widowhood. When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adulamite to take back the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her.

And he asked the men of the place, Where is this cult prostitute who was at Enium at the roadside? And they said, No cult prostitute has been here. So he returned to Judah and said, I have not found her.

Also the men of the place said, No cult prostitute has been here. And Judah replied, Let her keep the things as her own, or we shall be laughed at. You see, I sent this young goat, and you did not find her.

About three months later, Judah was told, Tamar, your daughter-in-law, has been immoral. Moreover, she is 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.

[5 : 08] And she said, Please identify whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff. Then Judah identified them and said, She is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah, and he did not know her again. When the time of her labor came, there were twins in her room.

And when she was in labor, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, This one came out first. But as he drew back his hand, behold, his brother came out, and she said, What a breach you have made for yourself. Therefore his name was called Perez. Afterward his brother came out with a scarlet thread on his hand, and his name was called Zerah. Chapter 38 breaks into five sections. We looked at the first two last week, so we'll just do some quick review. The first section came in verses 1 through 6, and that's where we saw the family tree. These verses do more, though, than show us Judah's family tree. These are the verses that hold the key to understanding why God sent Joseph to Egypt. Judah married a Canaanite woman and had three sons by her, and marrying a Canaanite woman was against the will of God for his people because of the Canaanites' abominable religious practices. Moses later documented that concern when he wrote these words in Deuteronomy 7, verses 3 and 4.

Those verses say, You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons, or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. Leaving his home and marrying a Canaanite were only the initial indications of Judah's downward spiral. The situation became even worse when Ur reached marriageable age.

Judah picked Tamar to be Ur's wife. We can't definitively say that Tamar was a Canaanite, but she likely was. After all, that's where Judah and his family were living at the time.

So one of the reasons that God leads Jacob's family into Egypt is to prevent their assimilation with the Canaanites. No similar threat of assimilation existed in Egypt because the Egyptians maintained the strict segregationist policy against all foreigners. We looked at several verses last week to back up that statement, including Genesis 43, verses 30 through 33, and also Genesis 46, verses 31 through 34. Except for Joseph, we saw that Jacob's sons lacked the character and fortitude to keep themselves separated from the pagans whose practices would further corrupt the line of the seed.

[8 : 04] Because of that, God had to send them to the Egyptians who would force the separation. The Egyptians' religious beliefs were wrong, but the Egyptians followed their own convictions better than God's chosen people followed the will of the one true God.

Without the disgusting events chronicled in chapter 38, we wouldn't see how far down Judah had fallen. And without the disgusting events chronicled in chapter 38, we wouldn't know why Jacob and his family were sent to Egypt.

Remember the main idea of the passage. The events in chapter 38 show why God sent Joseph to Egypt, and these same events give us a glimpse into the magnitude of God's grace.

The second section of the chapter came in verses 7 through 11. There we saw the family trimmed because the family tree lost two of its branches.

Look at verse 7 again. It says, Then after Ur's death, Onan repeatedly pretended that he would do his duty and provide Tamar with the child.

[9 : 18] However, he did not want to lose any of his inheritance, so he was careful to never father a child by Tamar. And verse 10 told us what God thought of those actions.

Verse 10 says, Two of Judah's three sons were now dead.

Shelah was next in line to marry Tamar, but Judah had no intention of letting Tamar marry Shelah. Rather than admit that, Judah lied to Tamar instead.

And that's what we see in verse 11. There it says, Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, Remain a widow in your father's house till Shelah grows up, for he feared that he would die like his brothers.

So Tamar went and remained in her father's house. Judah effectively sentenced Tamar to a life of widowhood with no children to look after her in her old age.

[10:15] That would be a hard life because of how women were treated then. And we know that Judah's treatment of Tamar is opposite of what God's word commands for how widows are supposed to be treated.

So put yourself in Tamar's position. She was victimized by Onan. Then Judah lied to her. But Tamar believed what Judah told her. So she returned to her father's house to wait for Shelah to grow up. So we've seen the family tree and the family trimmed. So now we start the new material for this week. In verses 12 through 23, we see the father tricked.

The father tricked is the next thing we will look at. The years passed. Shelah comes of age and it becomes clear to Tamar that Judah had no intention of giving her Shelah to fulfill the family responsibility.

She had remained loyal to her deceased husband, desiring to raise up seed for him. She had not married another Canaanite, but now she realizes that she's being forced into barrenness by Judah's lie.

[11:26] And so the stage is set for the rest of the story. And we see that stage being set in verses 12 through 14. Look at verses 12 through 14 again.

They say, In the course of time, the wife of Judah, Sheva's daughter, died. When Judah was comforted, he went up to Timnah to his sheep shearers, he and his friend Hira, the Adulamite. And when Tamar was told, Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep, she took off her widow's garments and covered herself with a veil, wrapping herself up, and set at the entrance to Enim, which is on the road to Timnah.

For she saw that Shelah was grown, and she had not been given to him in marriage. The Hebrew opening of verse 12 literally says, Now the days became many, indicating that a long time has passed as we enter the next part of the story.

Once again, Judah's life in Canaan is struck with another untimely death. This time his Canaanite wife dies. Judah mourns for a while, but when the mourning is done, he decides to join his sheep shearers at Timnah.

[12:38] Sheep shearing after the work was done usually turned into times of revelry and partying. Indications are that Judah has fully recovered from his grief, but Tamar after all these years is still dressed as a widow.

Someone informs Tamar that Judah's time of mourning is over, and that he was rejoining the party scene. We see evidence in these verses that Tamar knew her father-in-law's bad character well.

She sets a trap for him by dressing as a prostitute. And what woman would risk posing as a prostitute unless she had reason to believe that her trap would be successful?

She knew her father-in-law well enough to know that all she had to do was advertise her availability, and she would snare him. His appetite apparently was well known in that part of the world, which tells us something else about Judah's character.

In other words, it gives us even more evidence of how far Judah has gone down. A woman's veil was not the garment of a harlot, but that of a betrothed woman.

[13:47] Assyrian law actually forbid an unmarried woman from wearing a veil. The irony of the veil was that it not only hid her identity, but it also could have signaled that she'd been given and pledged to another, and of course that would be Sheila.

Her desperate act was driven by a sense of injustice. On one hand, Judah has broken his promise to Tamar to let her marry Sheila. On the other hand, she'd not done anything to deserve becoming a forgotten widow.

Her husband's deaths were not her fault, regardless of what her father-in-law thought about the process. But let's read verse 15 to see how well her trap works.

Verse 15 says, When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. You might be thinking, I thought you just said that a veil was not the garment of a prostitute. So which is it? She has a veil on, and Judah thinks she's a prostitute. Well, verse 21, which we'll cover soon, actually explains that. In verse 21, the specific term meaning a cultic prostitute is used.

[14:57] An ordinary harlot wouldn't hide her face, but would do everything she could do to make herself more alluring. A sacred prostitute, though, would hide her face from her client as a means of maintaining the fiction that the sexual embrace they would share was a spiritual act and not merely

physical.

The sacred prostitute was regarded as an instrument of the goddess Asherah, so lying with her was regarded in Canaan as an act of worship.

Judah, obviously, was very familiar with these concepts. So Judah was using the Canaanites' religious practices as justification to minimize the significance of his own sin.

And we see that Judah takes the bait like a fish, swallowing a lure hook line and sinker. So look at verses 16 through 18. He turned to her at the roadside and said, Come, let me come into you.

For he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, What will you give me that you may come into me? He answered, I will send you a young goat from the flock.

[16:06] And she said, If you give me a pledge until you send it. He said, What pledge shall I give you? She replied, Your signet and your cord and your staff that is in your hand.

So he gave them to her and went into her, and she conceived by him. Judah made it very clear what he wanted, so they negotiated the price. Tamar's shrewdness really showed here because she knew exactly what to request from Judah.

She made the request, though, in a way that never triggered Judah's suspicion. Judah's offer is exceptionally generous. We may not be too excited to get a goat, but he clearly is paying more than the going rate for a prostitute.

If a young goat was the usual fee charged, a few weeks' worth of work would leave a prostitute wealthy and with a sizable flock. But the going rate for a prostitute is not what interested Tamar. She wants something much more valuable and incriminating to hold as a pledge. So she asked for three things. One of those is the seal. The seal was a cylinder-shaped object worn on a cord around the neck, which she also asked for.

[17:18] And the seal was a man's unique insignia. The staff, which was the third thing she asked for, usually had a carved ornamental top that uniquely marked its owner.

Together, these items amounted to Judah's personal identity, and they were worth far more to Tamar than the young goat that he would later try to send. Judah falls for the trap.

Without realizing what has happened, Judah has become an early victim of identity theft, and it's his own daughter-in-law who's the thief. She's done it legitimately, though, because Judah had failed to keep his word.

What Judah gave Tamar as a pledge would be roughly equivalent to us giving someone our social security card, our passport, and our driver's license.

He gave her three things, but each of those things was uniquely identifiable only to him. Why did Tamar ask for three things when any one of those three could be used to identify Judah?

[18:20] Well, the answer to that is, once again, her shrewdness really shows through here, the custom of using three pieces of identification is attested to in Canaanite literature.

To make a positive identification, the local culture required three different items. Tamar knew that, and she worked the plan so that she obtained three different items from her father-in-law.

It doesn't really say why the culture required three different items, but perhaps if somebody tried to be identified by just one item, that person could always say, well, I just lost it, and she happened to get lucky and find it.

But explaining away the presence of three items would be much more difficult to do. So look again at what Tamar does after her encounter with Judah.

Verse 19 says, Then she arose and went away, and taking off her veil, she put on the garments of her widowhood. Tamar returns to her father's house, she lays aside her veil, and once again, she takes up the garments of a widow.

[19:28] Think about the significance here, though. Judah's father, Jacob, had been deceived by Laban, who gave him Leah, who was Judah's mother, and of course, Jacob was deceived because Leah was behind a veil.

Now Judah, Jacob's son, is deceived by a veil worn by his own daughter-in-law. Putting on her widow's clothes again also exhibited the depths of Tamar's humiliation.

She had to put aside her widowhood for the demeaning status of a prostitute. The widow, who's been mistreated by the men of her family, uses the callous whim of her father-in-law to turn the tables on him.

And verses 20 through 23 show us what happened when Judah attempts to pay the negotiated fee. Tamar actually got his goat in a different way.

But verses 20 through 23 say, when Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adulamite to take the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her. And he asked the men of the place, where is the colt prostitute who was at Anaim at the roadside?

[20 : 38] And they said, no colt prostitute has been here. So he returned to Judah and said, I have not found her. Also, the men of the place said, no colt prostitute has been here.

And Judah replied, let her keep the things as her own or we shall be laughed at. You see, I sent this young goat and you did not find her. So essentially there, Judah's saying, I've done everything I can.

Let's just forget about it. We need to move on. He's actually revealing his true colors here again. He reasons that his reputation is going to be hurt if it's learned that a prostitute outwitted him and made off with three things that are so important to him.

So he thinks if he pursues the matter any further, he's going to be ridiculed. He also thinks that because he made an effort to meet his obligation, that he should be satisfied to let her keep the items.

Secretly though, he probably was happy to forget about the whole episode because he figured that was the end of it. He was more concerned with keeping up appearances than he was concerned with reality.

[21 : 44] Verses 24 through 26 make up the next section of the lesson. So now that the father has been tricked, he will soon learn the fateful truth.

So the fateful truth is the fourth section of the lesson. Fateful may seem like an odd word choice here considering that we believe in God's sovereignty.

But listen to this definition of fateful from Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. It defines fateful as involving momentous consequences, decisive, or foreordained.

So involving momentous consequences, decisive, and foreordained. Certainly God in his sovereignty foreordained that the fateful truth would be revealed exactly when it was.

Listen to verse 24 again. It says, About three months later, Judah was told, Tamar, your daughter-in-law, has been immoral.

[22 : 49] Moreover, she is pregnant by immorality. And Judah said, Bring her out and let her be burned. Judah showed himself to be quite the hypocrite here.

He knew that he'd done the same thing. In fact, he'll soon find out that he actually was involved in the very same act. Yet he got all high and mighty when he heard about Tamar.

But his display here was probably more than him being hypocritical. Privately, he likely was thinking, How lucky can I get? I finally have a way to get rid of this troublesome daughter-in-law without having her marry my other son.

Her conduct, he thinks, now releases him from the obligation to give her to Sheila. So publicly, he puts on the face of righteous indignation. In the law, even in that day, adultery was a capital offense.

For some sex crimes, stoning was the sanctioned punishment. For others, it was burning. And from what we can tell, burning was reserved for the more shameful sexual crimes.

[23 : 53] Judah is demanding that Tamar be made an example of the most shameful behavior by her harlotry while she was waiting for Sheila. But look at verse 25 next.

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.

Wouldn't you have loved to have seen the look on Judah's face when those things popped out? But think about Tamar. She appears to be one cool customer here. She's about to be burned alive, but she essentially says, Hang on a second, Judah.

I think you might be able to help me figure out who the father of my baby is. And when Judah sees what Tamar has, he knows the momentous, decisive, or fateful truth.

So let's pause for a second on that sentence where Tamar says to Judah, Please identify whose these are. We've seen that word identify before.

[24 : 59] Flick back a page or two to Genesis 37 verses 31 and 32. 32. Genesis 37, 31, and 32.

These verses summarized how Judah and his brothers tricked Jacob into believing that Joseph was dead, even though the brothers really had sold Joseph into slavery. Genesis 37, 31, and 32 say, Then they took Joseph's robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood.

And they sent the robe of many colors and brought it to their father and said, This we have found. Please identify whether it is your son's robe or not.

So do you see that word? Judah and his brothers had asked their father to identify Jacob's robe and eventually Judah's deception in faking Joseph's death will be exposed.

But here in chapter 38 where we're looking tonight, the same word identify exposed another sin by Judah. When the truth is discovered, Judah conveniently forgets all the legal requirements.

[26 : 11] Here's the irony. Judah had refused to give Shelah to Tamar because he was afraid that Tamar would cause Shelah to die. But now, by being deceived into sex with his daughter-in-law, both Tamar and Judah have committed a crime worthy of a death sentence.

Leviticus 20.12 calls for the death of both parties if a man has sex with his daughter-in-law. Judah has hit rock bottom here. Check out verse 26.

It says, Then Judah identified them and said, She is more righteous than I since I did not give her to my son Shelah and he did not know her again.

So after all the lies and deception, Judah finally comes clean. He's not saying here that Tamar was righteous. He's saying that Tamar was more righteous than he has been.

That's not saying a whole lot because so far Judah has set a pretty low standard. Being more righteous than Judah, at least at this point, is nothing to brag about. But his confession is significant.

[27 : 20] He's admitting that his decision to withhold Shelah from Tamar drove Tamar to take the desperate action she did. Judah acknowledged her motivation was consistent with the purpose of levirate marriage when Judah had attempted to circumvent the custom.

And that he did not have sexual relations again with Tamar showed that he had repented of his behavior. Although their encounter was wrong, Judah was not satisfied with acknowledging the obvious.

He no longer is ignorant of his circumstances or their broader importance. His insight into his guilt points ahead to the character transformation that he eventually will undergo.

Confronted with his sin, Judah owns up to it, just as David, who comes from his lineage, will also do later when he fathers an illegitimate child. Judah is humbled by the actions of his daughter-in-law who has remained loyal to the family and all along has only wanted to raise up seed by which the family name will continue.

At some point, Tamar had heard and embraced the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That faith had made her persistent in the pursuit of her role in the continuance of the family line.

[28 : 40] Judah sees her faith and he acknowledges it. So let that comment about Tamar soak in for a second. What Tamar did shows that she had believed the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

We certainly can question the wisdom of how she chose to continue the family line, but the evidence shows that she was trying to do what she could to continue that line and to protect God's chosen people.

In that way, Tamar is similar to a woman who came after her. Remember how Rahab lied to protect the spies when the spies came into Jericho. God never condones sin, but God sometimes uses sin to bring about his purposes.

The title of this lesson is Amazing Grace. I told Tom I was going to steal a line from him and say that someday I was going to write a song about that. But think about the amazing grace we have seen so far.

Despite marrying into such a devious, dishonest, dangerous, and any other bad D word you can think of, family, Tamar somehow has come to faith in the one true God.

[29 : 51] Only God in his amazing grace could make that happen. Think about the character witnesses she had in her life to expose her to that faith. Judah, Ur, and Onan certainly had not been good witnesses of the faith to Tamar, yet somehow she still believed.

So that does show the grace of God in choosing her. Judah and Tamar also both know that they've committed the sin worthy of death, but God in his amazing grace and mercy will send someone else to pay their penalty.

Even more amazing than that, we will soon see that Judah and Tamar play significant roles in that coming Messiah. So, so far we have seen the family tree, the family trimmed, the father tricked, and the fateful truth.

We have one more thing to see tonight, and it leads us to the best part of the lesson. In verses 27 through 30, we see the favored twin. The favored twin is what we'll look at next.

So listen to verses 27 through 30 one more time. When the time of her labor came, there were twins in her womb. And when she was in labor, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, This one came out first.

[31 : 11] But as he drew back his hand, behold, his brother came out, and she said, What a breach you have made for yourself. Therefore his name was called Perez. Afterward, his brother came out with the scarlet thread on his hand, and his name was called Zerah.

Judah, who had lost two evil sons, is now given back to sons by Tamar. In the birth of the boys, an unusual situation occurred, and it actually parallels the birth of Jacob and Esau.

Here in this chapter, after one twin's hand came out, the other made a breach and was born first. His name, Perez, actually means breach.

The second twin was named Zerah, which means scarlet. And obviously we see how they got scarlet because of the scarlet thread that the midwife tied around his hand.

The history concerning Jacob's ruling over his older brother was being relived in the line of Judah. And with Judah's dealing with Joseph, he and his brothers sold their younger brother into Egypt, thinking that they could thwart God's design that the elder brothers would serve the younger Joseph.

[32 : 29] But here, God is showing again that the elder can serve the younger. So the unusual nature of this brief birth account, especially with its focus on the identity of the first born, suggests that something significant is going to develop in the line of Perez.

The New Testament shows us that something significant does develop in the line of Perez. So take a minute and turn over to Matthew chapter 1, and we're going to read verses 1 through 6.

Matthew chapter 1, verses 1 through 6. Those verses say, The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nashon, and Nashon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.

You see the familiar names in verse 3? It says, And Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron.

[34 : 06] So Judah, Tamar, and Perez are the same people that are in Genesis 38. We stop at verse 6 when King David was born, but the line continues until we eventually get to verses 16 and 17 of Matthew 1.

verses 16 and 17 say, And Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ, fourteen generations.

Tamar and Judah, both guilty of incest and both deserving of death, produce a son that is in the line of the Messiah. That's the most amazing grace that we see in this chapter.

Once again, God has shown that he's faithful to preserve the line of the seed who will redeem God's people. Last week, we talked about how after first reading the chapter, the question most people usually ask is, why is this chapter here?

Well, without chapter 38 recording what happened, we would have missed this example of God's amazing grace. Chapter 38 then explains why God sent Joseph to Egypt, but it also gives us the glimpse into the magnitude of God's grace.

[35 : 33] So what else can we take away from this chapter? Well, one thing we see is that election does not guarantee ease and earthly success.

Judah is the heir of the promise, and we know that now, he's the forefather of Jesus Christ, but nevertheless, he's lost two sons at the hand of God due to their own wickedness and disobedience. Moreover, Judah's wife dies, his daughter-in-law uses his own indiscretion to deceive him into fathering her children. So this is anything but the picture of earthly success.

Judah's life is going to change eventually, and we'll see that before we get out of Genesis, but for now, he's the epitome of salvation by grace alone. Another thing we see is that the people of God

have always been multi-ethnic.

So the people of God have always been multi-ethnic. Despite all of her deception, Tamar bears not only twins, but an heir of promise.

[36 : 37] Her name is forever written in the genealogy of the promised seed, Jesus Christ, and she's the first woman mentioned in the New Testament. And this is significant for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that she likely is a Gentile.

And even if she wasn't a Gentile, we know that Rahab and Ruth certainly were in the line of Christ. So we see here that God always intended for his Messiah to save people who are of different ethnicities.

And we see proof of that right here. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations and in him all the nations of the world would be blessed.

The addition of Gentiles into the royal line is part of the fulfillment of this promise. And the grafting in of Gentiles through faith in Christ gives us an even greater manifestation of this reality.

So we should see that the story of Judah and Tamar is an encouragement to all who sin and are in need of a Savior, whether they're Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female.

[37 : 47] Just a question for you, how many people have sinned? You're right, Romans 3, 23 gives us the answer that you already know, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

And just in case there's somebody out there who thinks he or she hasn't sinned, listen to what 1 John 8 through 10 tell us. 1 John 8 through 10 say, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us.

But Romans 3, 24 reminds us that we can be saved just like Judah and Tamar were saved. Listen to Romans 3, 23 and 24 together.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The knowledge that each of us is a sinner sets up another thing that we can take away from Genesis 38.

[38 : 59] Most people are more like Judah and Tamar than they are like Joseph. And think about the message that some people might get if we didn't have chapter 38.

The next three chapters of Genesis will focus on the same 20 years or so but they'll look at what happened during Joseph's life during these 20 years. And we'll see what happened to Joseph during the time between when his brothers sold him into slavery and when Joseph sees him again. Joseph is going to show exemplary character that few if any of us could attain. Without the story of Judah and Tamar including their ultimate salvation, we could come to the false conclusion that only people who could be like Joseph and live up to his standard could be saved.

Instead though, Judah and Tamar provide Old Testament proof that salvation is by grace alone through faith in Christ alone. Remember what Paul wrote to the Galatians in Galatians 3 verses 26 through 29.

He said, For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek.

[40 : 16] There is neither slave nor free. There is no male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

So even if we are like Judah and Tamar or even worse, we can still be saved. And that should be a lesson to any of us who know people who think they may be beyond God's grace, including ourselves.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the grace that you have shown us in these chapters. We know we used a trite unfamiliar title for these verses, but let it really sink into us just how amazing your grace really is.

And let us never lose that amazement as we ponder what you have done for us through the death and resurrection of your Son. Help us be ever mindful that no matter what we or anybody else has done, you can still save those people and use us, Father, to be your instrument to help bring about that salvation.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.