

**Genesis in Biblical Perspective:  
The Gospel of Christ from Genesis –  
The Life of Joseph #2—Merry Christmas?**

**Genesis 38**

By [Dr. Harry Reeder III](#)

We are going to be looking at a very challenging text of Scripture. I want to have you think about something before I get into the text and maybe you'll see why I titled this with a question mark. In my study of this text I was struck with something and that's this transforming truth, that God's grace is greater than our sin. You might be thinking "That is in the Bible." The only transforming truth I know is in the Bible but I have been stuck by it as I have gone through this text, in many ways. God's grace is sovereign, sufficient and transforming. Your sin is never so great that God's grace can't overcome it and our sin is never so great that God's grace can not only save us when He brings us to repentance and confession but He will use us. In fact, sometimes God delights in taking our great sins and not only forgiving and redeeming us but calling and transforming us so that our greatest points of rebellion becomes the points that He uses us in life and ministry.

Is there any better illustration than the Apostle Paul? He was a religious terrorist who killed Christians and persecuted the church. He not only ends up saved but he ends up a great evangelist and church planter. The very thing he rebelled against now God uses him to lead many to Christ. The very thing he used to persecute the church God now uses him to plant throughout the world and see the world turned upside down. I'm in no league with the Apostle Paul, while there are many things in my life that before God I am utterly ashamed of, I not only know from the Word of God that He is able to forgive me, but even in the face of the violence and immorality that was in my life, you would have not been able to stand around me more than three or four minutes with the profanity and blasphemy that would constantly in every sentence come out of my mouth and now God allows me to teach the Sacred Word with the same mouth. That is astounding.

On the one hand, God has an amazing sense of humor where he uses a blasphemer as a preacher and a religious terrorist to spread His Word throughout the world. You are going to see something just as astounding in our study of Genesis 38. Not only is God's grace greater than our sin and my professor in seminary used to say 'Our sin is worse than we ever dared to imagine and God's

grace is greater than we ever dared to hope' but I think you can really see it as we walk our way through this text and see what God is telling us from it.

This text divides itself up with three time markers. Remember we have just seen Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery and they come back with a concocted story built around a blood soaked garment from goat's blood. Talk about what goes around comes around for Jacob used goats to deceive and is now deceived by a garment soaked in goat's blood. The brothers let Jacob draw his own conclusion that his son, Joseph has been torn apart by animals and they have sold their brother into slavery for a mere twenty pieces of silver. Now let's think of those moments as we start into this text.

When I was a kid I never missed Hop Along Cassidy and I still have my Hop Along Cassidy hat and I think I still have the guns somewhere as well. Hop Along Cassidy was the greatest cowboy who has ever not lived and I would not miss him on Saturdays. Every time you'd watch him you would see him gallop off on his white horse and his black cowboy clothes and something would start to happen. Then the screen would go blank for moment and then graphics would appear and it would always say 'back at the ranch...' All of a sudden we would go back to the ranch to see what was happening and another scene unfolded.

We have watched the betrayal, the treachery, the lies and the deceit from these brothers and now it's on to their deceitful father who is now deceived by his own sons and Jacob is now in absolute grief. We have seen how things have unfolded as Joseph has gone into slavery and now we're at the flashback. Now back at the ranch, what happens with these brothers, particularly one brother? He is not the firstborn brother, on the contrary, he is the fourth brother, Judah. Does that name sound familiar? Jesus is the Lion of Judah. Revelation 21:14 says, *[14] And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.* One of them was the gate of Judah. Come and meet Judah.

First we will look at Judah's decent and his deception. Genesis 38:1–11 says

*[1] It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. [2] There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. He took her and went in to her, [3] and she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er. [4] She conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan. [5] Yet again she bore a son, and she called his name Shelah. Judah was in Chezib when she bore him. [6] And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. [7] But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD put him to death. [8] Then Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother." [9] But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his. So*

*whenever he went in to his brother's wife he would waste the semen on the ground, so as not to give offspring to his brother. [10] And what he did was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and he put him to death also. [11] 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.*

Here is the first section of this chapter after Joseph has been sold off into slavery. Could it be that Judah could not look into the face of his father that he had lied to? Could it be that his participation in the conspiracy of lying, cheating and selling his brother into slavery that he could no longer remain in the presence of his father and even around those whom he had conspired with? There is no honor among thieves or liars. He leaves and notice what the text says, he goes *down* to Canaan. He not only descends to live among the Canaanites (sounds like when Lot pitched his tent near Sodom) but he takes a wife from among them. His best friend is no longer his brothers but becomes a Canaanite. His name is Shua and another man named Hirah. Out of these relationships he takes the daughter of Shua as a wife and the text is very clear in that there is no relational intimacy but sexual activity and on three occasions he "takes" her.

These are not evil words in and of themselves but the combination and its repetition means in relationship to this woman it's safe to say this man Judah was now a man in Canaan as his brother Joseph is a man in Egypt. Judah is taking on the lifestyle of one from Canaan and marries this woman, not for love at first sight but lust at first sight. Out of that relationship comes three sons. They compound the wickedness of the descent of their father. It says their evil was so degrading, so rebellious that God's judgment fell upon them. It fell upon them in a condition that Judah had arranged. He had arranged for his firstborn, Er, to be married. So he takes a Canaanite woman named Tamar and gives her to his firstborn. The firstborn dies. Judah thinks not of God's judgment but simply that he has died.

In the Ancient Near East there was an activity that would later be codified among the Israelites. It was called the Law of the Levirate, the Levirate Marriage. If a man was married there were two aspects that became embedded in the life of Israel. It was as a brother you could not marry into the family of the wife of your brother because once a man married a woman they were one and her relatives were now considered your relatives. For instance, if your wife died you couldn't marry her sister. That would be considered, not biological incest but it would be considered incest. Another thing commanded was in order for the continuation of the generations, if a man died childless then the brother of that man was bound to marry his brother's wife to raise up a child. Judah initially is obedient to this as the father. When Er dies he realizes the responsibility so Er's wife Tamar is given to Judah's second son and then he dies.

Then Judah practices more deception. It's amazing how once you start lying it becomes easier to keep lying. Judah says to Tamar, "I know you're in the family and that you're to marry my next son but he's not quite old enough. So why don't you come in and I'll take care of you in my house and then I'll give you to my third son later." In reality the text informs us insightfully that Judah had no purpose to do that. As I read this I think I kind of understand what is in Judah's mind.

Do you remember the question the Sadducees put to Jesus about the resurrection? Luke 20:27–33 says

*[27] There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, [28] and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. [29] Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and died without children. [30] And the second [31] and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. [32] Afterward the woman also died. [33] In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife."*

The Sadducees thought they had Jesus on this one. We won't go into Jesus' answer but every time I've heard that I have often wondered the fourth or fifth man would have to be the dumbest to marry that woman.

Judah is kind of anticipating this after thinking his first two sons died marrying this woman he says he'll promise this woman his third born but he doesn't intend to give her his third born. So now he deals deceptively but we're fully aware that Tamar is not the reason his sons died but it was their wickedness and the sovereign intervention of God in judgment. Tamar finds herself deceived and in the house of her father in law. Now what happens next? There is a time interval but a short one. We move from the descent and deception of Judah into the further descent and now the depravity of Judah. This time interval would have been less than two years and that would have been the appropriate time for Tamar to have on her widow's garments.

Let's continue. Genesis 38:12–14 says

*[12] In the course of time the wife of Judah, Shua's daughter, died. When Judah was comforted, he went up to Timnah to his sheepshearers, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. [13] And when Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep," [14] she took off her widow's garments and covered herself with a veil, wrapping herself up, and sat at the entrance to Enaim, 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.*

Tamar realized Judah had lied to her about giving her his third son, Shelah. In the Middle East there were women who were considered whores. They would not be allowed coverings or a veil. Then there were the women of the evening known as the temple prostitutes. They would be identifiable but they would be allowed to wear a veil. I am about to give you a piece of speculation. Tamar is about to present herself, not with her widow's clothing but with the clothing of a temple prostitute located in a particular place as Judah has gone on a business trip. She must be to some degree aware of Judah's depravity on those trips. She has positioned herself to take advantage of it with him. Genesis 38:15–23 says

*[15] When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. [16] He turned to her at the roadside and said, "Come, let me come in to you," for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?" [17] 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—" [18] 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 in to her, and she conceived by him. [19] Then she arose and went away, and taking off her veil she put on the garments of her widowhood. [20] When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite to take back the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her. [21] And he asked the men of the place, "Where is the cult (temple) prostitute who was at Enaim at the roadside?" And they said, "No cult prostitute has been here." [22] 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.'" [23] 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."*

Now we find Judah not only descending to Canaan, descending into marriage outside the covenant, descending into lying to his daughter in law but now descending even in his period of grief at the loss of his wife, into adultery and prostitution. Tamar has seen this and is aware of his habits. She has taken off the clothing of widowhood and put on the clothing of a cult prostitute. She took an appropriate place and sure enough the man comes and sees her. What does it cost? They arrange a price and she then asks for a pledge so that he will actually fulfill his promise to her. He gives her his cord, signet ring and staff to fulfill his pledge to her. He then "takes" her.

When I had spoken on this text before someone asked me "Why would he be so dumb to give his signet ring?" I responded in the same way I tell young men and that is make a covenant with your eyes not to look upon that and a covenant with your mind not to think on that which is ungodly because men, if they flee not temptation or seek not the purity of mind, it is amazing how dumb they can become in these matters of sexual immorality. Anything that is in the way of his adultery just merely needs to be accommodated and dealt with.

In my ministry I have seen it time and time again. I have sat with wives who have been abandoned by their husbands in the course of immorality and they have said “Pastor, please help me understand why and how?” I respond, “I’ll listen and help but I will not be able to make sense of it for you.” Sin never makes sense and in sexual immorality, men, in particular abandon all sense as the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life takes hold and removes all the reigns of common sense. Sin is depraved and destructive. Judah has descended into adultery and even left his “credit card” with the prostitute. It is amazing what has happened. Tamar returns home.

I’m going to try and explain something here in this text that is so difficult. I am by no means absolving Tamar but you need to understand, not embedded in Israel law but in the submitted world that she lived, there was the law of the Levirate and if a woman had lost her husband then she was to be married by the brother to raise up seed in the name of her first husband. This was a part of her culture yet not in Israel. If there was not a brother or all brothers had died then it was the father in laws responsibility. She had seen that her father in law was not going to give her the third son and she had left all to be in that family. In the treachery of this Judah had dealt treacherous with her so she with deception will now make him fulfill what his son ought to have fulfilled, to raise up a seed in the name of her husbands. So she enters into it, not with the idea of prostitution but the use of it and in the context this would have been Judah’s responsibility if there had been no more sons. So she has now brought Judah into her life, who has deceived her by her own deceptions. Judah sends the goat back and finds out there is no cult prostitute and thinks that everything has been fulfilled. There is an awakening that is about to take place. Now we come to another time marker. Genesis 38:24–30 says

*[24] 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.” [25] 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.” [26] 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. [27] When the time of her labor came, there were twins in her womb. [28] 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.” [29] 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. [30] Afterward his brother came out with the scarlet thread on his hand, and his name was called Zerah.*

Now God intervenes in the life of Judah. He finds out three months later that his daughter in law Tamar is pregnant. Judah figures that since he did not give her Shelah and she should still be in her widowhood that she has been immoral and wants to burn her for her adultery. It is amazing how easily judgmental we can become of others in picking out specs when there are logs in our own eyes. She sends out the cord, ring and staff and says the man who did this is the one who owns these things. Can you imagine Judah's surprise? He thought he had gotten out of what he had done with this prostitute but now his "credit card" has shown up. The record is there before him. I believe at this moment a conversion is initiated.

Here is a woman who has come into his family. There are the echoes of Ruth here. She has chosen this home and this family and Judah realizes this and says "She is more righteous than I." At least conviction has taken hold in Judah's life. Tamar not only is pregnant with one but two. Now the twins come and as the first sticks out his hand the midwife ties a string on it based on the law of primogenitor. The first will be the inheritor but there is another one who decides to push this one out of the way. The one they thought would be first actually comes second and the scarlet thread is now on the second born. Isn't God's election constantly being shown to us? It was like with Esau and Jacob – not Esau but Jacob, not Ismael but Isaac, not Simeon, Levi or even Rueben but Judah and not Zerah but Perez.

God is not governed by the customs of the day but declares "I will have grace upon whom I will have grace and I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy" and the scarlet thread is now placed on the one whom they thought would be first who is now second, but there was another whom God put the scarlet thread upon and that was Perez. In the midst of childbirth God declares him to be the line of redemption. Having gone through the text I'd like to leave you with some takeaways that might be helpful.

In the life of Jacob, in this tenth book, why is that the focus is on Joseph but here we are back at the ranch looking at Judah? It is because this book is also telling you while Joseph is the chosen instrument of preservation, the chosen instrument of the Redeemer is Judah. It is God's sovereign hand that is accomplishing that. What does this text declare to us? I want to share a couple of things with you on that. As you consider Judah we gain some lesson and the profile of sin. God's grace is greater than our sin but sin has consequences. It is surely true in Judah's life as we see his lying to his daughter in law, his adultery, his deception and all of that while living in Canaan.

That's not where it started. It started back in his treachery with his brother Joseph, his conspiracy among his other brothers, his jealousy, envy and deception. Sin begets sin. So many times we think "I'll just tell this lie" or "I'll just make room for this lust or idolatry but I'll put a fence around it for it will stop right here." Oh no, evil is a descent. The treachery of his brothers, the lying to his

father sends him down into Canaan. Then instead of being in the world and not of the world, he becomes a part of the world. The very things that later will be warned we see in the life of Judah except for God's intervention.

What happens when we contextualize with the world but over contextualize and allow the world in us, instead of being in the world and of the world? I'd like to look at the warning that God gives in Deuteronomy 7 in the context of what we see here. God says "You are My people, a royal people." Now what should you know? Deuteronomy 7:1-4 says

*[1] "When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than you, [2] and when the LORD your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. [3] You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, [4] 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.*

There are two warnings here. One, we are to be in the world but we're not to sign peace treaties with the world and sin. We have not been called to bring the judgment of the sword but we've been called to bring the sword of the Spirit to the enemies of God that they might be converted and brought to Him. To do so we are not to make peace treaties with the value system of this world and its rebellion against God. It would soon destroy us and you must raise your covenant children to marry in the Lord. You must begin to pray with them and guide them. You must begin to pray for the one whom God would raise up for them. God would call you to do that.

I want you parents to take this message to your children. You also need to be careful about the dating system of America in our culture. The car should not rule and reign your decisions. As you allow dating or courtship, don't begin personal relationships with those whom there is no opportunity to bring to a conclusion of a courtship with marriage. That means not just marrying in the Lord but even in the pursuit of marriage, it is to be in the Lord. Is that young man or woman who is spending time with your child, do they know the Lord? It is not simply did they go forward one time and got baptized but do they really know the Lord? Do you sense that God might use them to take your son or daughter to the next level? This isn't a matter of having a marriage or wedding but this is your son or daughter's life.

Just yesterday I had an opportunity to perform a marriage here. Praise the Lord I have been so blessed by what I've seen. Before we even got to the pledges and



vows the son and daughter gave their marriage preparation rings to their dads and moms. It wasn't just the symbolism of the purity ring but a dad and mom had guided them and now they had come to this marriage moment prepared in the Lord.

This was not the case with Judah. First was his line of deception so he flees down to Canaan and then his best friends become Canaanites. He chooses his own wife among the Canaanites and then his sons are given wives among the Canaanites. By the time you get to his sons their wickedness is so great the intervention of God stops their life right in the flower of their youth. Sin has costs. Can I be forgiven? Yes. Can God even use what has happened in my life because of sin? Yes, but this notion that I become more effective for Jesus Christ in sin is an abomination.

I hear it from pastors who go into immorality and then by God's grace, praise God, are restored to the Lord and their marriage. Then I hear them stand in pulpits and say "I shouldn't have done it but I think it's going to make me a better minister." Perish the thought for the Apostle Paul said in Romans 6:1-2, *[1] What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? [2] By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?* Is the road to effectiveness the pathway of sin? Then I'll come back for confession. Or is it, 'God I confess my sin and there is even more that I would have done but keep me from that which brings the descent of degradation not only in my life but my family's and others'? You may stand and say "Yes I'm a more compassionate pastor now because of this" or "I understand how men are thinking because of this" well praise the Lord for any way that He uses our sins and our past but perish the notion that sin prepares us for effectiveness because sin is never private and it's never isolated. It always infects and it always costs.

There are two tombstones out of Judah's family to bear testimony of that. It is two sons as well as his own shame as the descent to a sinful marriage leads to unfaithfulness to the law of the Levirate and unfaithfulness to this woman who has left all to remain in that family. Out of his own pride and arrogance he deceived her just like he deceived his father and then comes his adultery and his arrogant self-righteousness about her immorality. Praise God that God's grace is greater than all our sin but hear the truth. Sin is not to be trifled with. It has consequences even when we're granted forgiveness. Secondly, please note from the text that not only is our sin greater than we ever dared to imagine but God's grace is greater than we ever dared to hope. God reaches in and in this man, Judah, God now raises up the line of redemption. This man's name is written upon the gates of heaven. This man becomes the one whom the Lion of Judah will come. This man who conviction has now come to, who begins to sense his sin and who will go back to be with his father and brothers after this and who will then go with them down to Egypt and will be an intermediary with Joseph in those days, will come the line of redemption, Your Savior.

Look at the blessing that comes from Jacob in Genesis 49:8–12 which says

*[8] “Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. [9] Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? [10] The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. [11] Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes. [12] His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk.*

A Redeemer will come riding upon the foal. The vine of Life will come attached to the colt. Here is God's grace and glory not only working to establish the line of Judah to convict him and to bring him into this relationship with the living Lord and bring through him the line of the Redeemer, but how will that line of the Redeemer come? Let's look at Matthew 1. Merry Christmas. Here is the generations that gave birth through a virgin. Matthew 1:1–16 says

*[1] The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. [2] Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, [3] and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, [4] and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, [5] and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, [6] and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah (Bathsheba), [7] and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, [8] and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, [9] and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, [10] and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, [11] and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. [12] And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, [13] and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, [14] and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, [15] and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, [16] and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.*

Here is an amazing Ancient Near East genealogy that would have been scandalous and we would understand its scandal if we would have lived, why? It is because it has women in it. That is almost as scandalous as the Mosaic Law when it said 'honor your father and mother' and don't commit adultery. You wouldn't have found those things in those other cultures for women were mere property and here are five women in the genealogy and amazingly not the ones we would have picked. We would have picked Sarah, Rebekah and those are not the ones listed here. Out of the five women, four were in prostitution and adultery, four were Gentiles and isn't God shouting out to us "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, O Gentiles converted to the seed of Abraham and the true Israel."

As God opens the light, no wonder that there will be an old man in Luke 2 who will say "Let me hold that Baby before I die for He is a Light unto the Gentiles." See them in His genealogy. Is God dependent on some better people? No, that's not the message of grace. The message of grace is I want to be by God's grace the best Christian I can be for the Lord but the Lord is not waiting for better people, He is saving sinners to make them His people.

There may be someone reading this saying "I have problems in my life and this Christianity may help. I think I'll go get better." If that is what you're thinking then you haven't heard the Gospel. If you could get better He wouldn't have sent His Son, He would have just sent a note saying "Get better." He sent His Son because we can't get better. We are dead in our sins but there is grace greater than your sin and my sin where Jesus Christ now invites you as the old hymn *Rock of Ages* says;

*Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling; Naked, come to Thee for dress; Helpless, look to Thee for grace; Foul, I to the fountain fly; Wash me, Savior, or I die.*

He save kings, liars, cheats, deceivers, murderers, religious terrorists, prostitutes and He even puts them in the line of redemption, because God's grace is sufficient. Here we see His grace and glory turning Judah and then bringing the line of redemption through a woman who said 'I'll stay in the covenant family. I don't deserve to be here but I'll stay even though my father in law is deceptive.' She by faith was more righteous than even Judah was.

Can you see finally God's sovereign hand in all things? Don't you see the hand of God everywhere on this? I don't know how this story was told when they got back home and sat around for the Christmas meal, but I can just imagine as the red thread was brought up someone probably thought of the red stew. Then when the deception was brought up Jacob probably thought "That was in my past." God is able to draw straight lines with crooked sticks. God is able to take ashes and turn them into roses. O how great and amazing is God's grace. The line would not go through the half Canaanite sons under the judgment of God but it

would now come back through Israel, Judah and Tamar, by God's sovereign hand and not by the one they thought would have the scarlet thread but the one God's thread was upon, Perez, all the way down to another woman who would be accused, silently by some, thoughtfully even by Joseph thinking 'was there immorality by Mary?' No, here God's grace not only set aside the woman but prepared her as a virgin, ready to be used of the Lord.

God's grace is glorious. Sin brings descent, destruction and degradation, but there is a Redeemer who doesn't take better people but takes sinners and saves them with grace that is abundant and lavished upon us for Christ's sake, amen. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for these Your people. Thank You for this text through which our Christmas story is told that a Savior has come, not through the people we would have chosen but through the people of Your electing sovereign grace and You have taken them, saved them, changed them, used them and that all things work together for good to those who love God and for those who are called according to His purpose. O Savior, sovereign and sufficient, ride on, King Jesus. Take us with You and use us for Your glory, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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