

**Date:** February 22, 2026

**Title:** From Shame to Salvation

**Passage:** Genesis 38

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Summary:

I. Judah's fresh start (v. 1-5)

II. Consequences of wickedness. (v.6-10)

III. Judah's blame of Tamar (v.11)

IV. Tamar tries to make things right (v. 12-23)

V. When hidden sin comes to light (v.24-30)

Key Truths:

- No matter how sinful you have been, God can redeem your life. God can use your experiences as a testament of Him and use them for His glory and your good.
- God's plan is not for a Christian to marry a non-Christian.
- True friends are those who draw you to God. The best friends are ones who bring you to God.

Application Points:

- Do not underestimate the power of sovereign grace.
  - Do not assume that God only works through impressive people. He moves His plan forward through ordinary, broken, messy lives. If He could bring the Savior into the world through Judah and Tamar, then He's not done with you either.
- When God opens your eyes, receive the mercy He offers you.
  - When God exposes sin, it feels like stepping from darkness into bright sunlight (painful, humbling, embarrassing). But that exposure is mercy. It is your chance to make things right with God and with others.
- Believe in Grace and trust in Christ.
  - God does not expose you to destroy you. He exposes you to reshape you and to show you the need you have for Him. Your failures can become the very tools God uses to make you humble, compassionate, and useful.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- What point(s) in the sermon did the Lord most impress upon you?
  - How will you believe and accept that God offers you His grace?
  - How will you allow grace for others?
  - What's a takeaway from the sermon you can apply to your life?
  - What next steps will you take in response to the truths you have heard or seen?
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## **Introduction**

The church is the hospital for sinners and not a museum of saints.

- we exhibit how great God is and how undeserving we are of His grace.
  - Not about lifting us up as moral models.

Genesis 38 - key points:

- There is no sin that is so egregious that God cannot forgive you for.
- There is no life that you have lived that God cannot transform and redeem for His glory.

Why is Genesis 38 in the Bible?

- Moses is the author of Genesis.

### 2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Context of Passage:

- Genesis 37

### Genesis 37:1

Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan.

- the focus is Jacob.

### Genesis 3:15

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

- Promised Messiah - a special offspring to bring about a new kingdom.
  - Ever since, subsequent people wondered whether this or that child was the Anointed One.

Genesis 38 - main points

- No matter how sinful you have been, God can redeem your life. God can use your experiences as a testament of Him and use them for His glory and your good.

**Passage:**

## Genesis 38

### EXPOSITION

#### I. JUDAH'S FRESH START (v.1-5)

##### **Genesis 38:1-5**

***It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. He took her and went in to her, and she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er. 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 Chezib when she bore him.***

##### ***It happened at that time***

- Context? After Judah (among his brothers) had sold Joseph to slavery.

Judah's prior handling of Joseph

##### **Genesis 37:25-28**

Then they sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him. Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.

Joseph's prior deception of Jacob

##### **Genesis 37:31-33**

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." And he identified it and said, "It is my son's robe. A fierce animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces."

##### ***Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to a certain Adullamite***

- Judah decided to leave his family and sought to start afresh.

***There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. He took her and went in to her, and she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er.***

- Judah was rejecting God's plan (God had commanded them not to parry a Canaanite)
- Judah started to assimilate with the nations around him.

- Judah began compromising

Likewise, do not follow Judah's example:

2 Corinthians 6:14

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

- God's plan is not for a Christian to marry a non-Christian.

***turned aside to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah.***

- True friends are those who draw you to God.
- Best friends bring you to God
  - Bad friendships destroy good habits.
  - Good friendships build good habits.

Observation:

- This relationship was borne out of lust, not true relationship.

*Saw...took*

- meaning = sinful lust

Genesis 3:6

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

Genesis 6:2

the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose.

Genesis 12:15

And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

***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 Chezib when she bore him.***

- Judah was very disengaged father
  - The woman named their sons. (Not the father)
- Judah was very rooted in sin.
  - Chezib = meaning "city of lies"

## II. CONSEQUENCES OF WICKENESS (v.6-10)

### **Genesis 38:6-10**

***And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD put him to death. 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." 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. And what he did was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and he put him to death also.***

***And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar.***

- Tamar: was young around ages of 14 to 16

***But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD put him to death.***

- Er was so wicked that God took him out.

***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."***

- Custom
  - If a brother died, it was the responsibility of the next brother to take the sister-in-law. Any son born would be the heir to the deceased brother.
- Also known as the "Levirate marriage"
  - Was meant to care for the widow
  - Also help keep the possession within the family.

***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.***

- Onan knew that any son would be counted towards his brother. That son would inherit everything from his older brother.
  - Otherwise, all his older brother's belongings would go to Onan.
    - It was completely selfish.
- Onan wanted the pleasure but not the responsibility to care for Tamar.
  - Man who wants the pleasure but not the consequences of those actions.

***And what he did was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and he put him to death also.***

- Onan was doing a very private action and no other person would have known about.

Key point: Secret sins are always seen by God.

Psalms 139:7-8

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

Romans 2:4

Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

- A delay in judgment or consequences for sin should not be seen as a license for more sin.
- God's patience should lead you to repentance, not sin.

### III. JUDAH'S BLAME OF TAMAR (v. 11)

**Genesis 38:11**

***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.***

- Judah wants to get rid of Tamar because he thought she was cursed (two sons died while they were married to her.)

Judah doesn't see the problem of his own sins but rather blames others.

- Judah didn't acknowledge his sons were evil that lead to their death.
- Judah didn't recognize his poor choices rejecting God's plan.
  - Temptation: Likewise, a parent is always trying to protect a child from consequences.

### IV. TAMAR TRIES TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT (v. 12-23)

**Genesis 38:12-23**

***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. 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 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. 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 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?” 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 in to 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 Adullamite 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 the cult prostitute who was at Enaim 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.” For she saw that Shelah was grown up, and she had not been given to him in marriage.**

- Judah sought to protect his third son from perception that Tamar was cursed.

#### **she took off her widow's garments**

- At this point, Tamar was still young (20's or 30's)
- She had stayed faithful and still wore "widow's clothes" that made her status distinct.

**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.**

- Judah's wife had passed.
  - Tamar had been faithful and waited for his wife to die.

**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 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?” 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.”**

- Judah's interaction with Tamar.

#### **and sat at the entrance to Enaim,**

- Enaim = "opening of eyes"

- This would be the place where Judah's eyes would be opened...

## V. WHEN HIDDEN SIN COMES TO LIGHT (v.24-30)

### Genesis 38:24-30

***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.” 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 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.” 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.***

***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.”***

- Judah's feelings towards Tamar comes out.
  - He quickly judges her to death.
    - But ignores his hypocrisy - proclaimed self-righteousness despite his prior and hidden sins (his prior actions of getting rid of his own brother Joseph, his prior deceptions of his father Jacob, etc.)

***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.”***

- Tamar makes clear who is the father of the baby

***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.***

- After years of blaming others, Judah acknowledged his guilt.
  - Judah recognized how he had wronged Tamar.

Compare:

- Judah heard: “Please identify whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff.”

- Judah's prior deception: “This we have found; please identify whether it is your son's robe or not.”

Key transition point:

- Judah had a change of heart towards God, towards his father, and towards his family.
  - A point of humility (I am not righteous, only God is).
    - Previously: he blamed others.

## **APPLICATION POINTS**

### **1. Do not underestimate the power of sovereign grace.**

- Do not assume that God only works through impressive people. He moves His plan forward through ordinary, broken, messy lives.
- If He could bring the Savior into the world through Judah and Tamar, then He's not done with you either.
- Your life is never too messy for God to turn around.

### **2. When God opens your eyes, receive the mercy He offers you.**

- When God exposes sin, it feels like stepping from darkness into bright sunlight (painful, humbling, embarrassing)
- But that exposure is mercy.
  - It is your chance to make things right with God and with others.

#### John 3:19-20

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

When we are confronted with sin, we initially do not do well.

- Hide
- Be defensive (rationalize or attack them)
- Blame-shifting

Key change:

- Recognize the sin is yours and turn to God.

#### Acts 26:18

to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

- When God opens your eyes, turn to God.

### **3. Believe in Grace and trust in Christ**

- God does not expose you to destroy you.
- He exposes you to reshape you and to show you the need you have for Him.
- Your failures can become the very tools God uses to make you humble, compassionate, and useful.
  - Tamar went from condemn and cursed to declared righteous.

Questions of Reflection:

Will you believe and accept that God offers you His grace?

- "God can forgive me but I could never forgive myself" = piteous pride

Will you allow grace for others?

- even when someone has hurt you?

Chapter 38 begins with lust, rejection, and sins.

- But ends with repentance, acceptance, and breakthrough.
- The Lion of Judah came through this story.
  - Christ came for sinners who thought they were finished.
- Shame is not the end of the story, salvation is.
  - Trust in Christ because He alone is trustworthy.