

## Drawing Straight with Crooked Lines

*The Assault of the Flesh Upon the Saints*

Genesis 38:1-30

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### I. Introduction

The story of Judah and Tamar reminds us that God is at work even in the sinful moments of our lives – and that in these moments He is summoning us to awaken from our sin and return to the light. Sinful moments in our lives are opportunities either to harden ourselves and descend further into darkness or to repent and grow in the likeness of our Savior Jesus.

### II. A Crooked Story

A. Judah's Departure (vv. 1-5)

B. Judah's Sons and Tamar (vv. 6-11)

C. Judah's Sexual Sin (vv. 12-23)

D. Judah's Confession (vv. 24-26)

### III. Application

A. A Life of Sin (cf. Gen 37:26-27,32; Ps 51:5; Eph 2:3; Titus 3:3)

At the beginning of our story, Judah is living a life of sin. He is in bondage to his sinful nature. And that which is true of Judah is true of all human beings by nature. We are all conceived in sin (Ps 51:5) and subject to God's just wrath (Eph 2:3). *We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners.* We are born with *original sin*: "*we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean.*"

It is evident in our story today that Judah remains enslaved to his sinful desires. He did not live for love of God and neighbor; he lived for love of Judah.

- Judah abandons his brethren and dwells among the Canaanites. (1-5, 12)
- Judah blames Tamar rather than his sons for their deaths. (11)
- Judah deceives Tamar and leaves her childless in her father's home. (14)
- Judah gives way to sexual sin, consorting with a prostitute. (16)
- Judah attempts to cover his sin/shame. (23)
- Judah feigns righteous indignation when he hears that Tamar is pregnant. (24b)

These actions reflect what we already know about Judah. He had instigated the sale of Joseph to the Ishmaelites (37:26-27). He also joined his brothers in deceiving their father, pretending that Joseph was dead, slain by some wild animal (37:32). Judah and

his brothers were “foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another” (Titus 3:3). When we are walking in the flesh...

- ... we will abandon God’s people and associate with \_\_\_\_\_.
- ... we will \_\_\_\_\_ others rather than take responsibility.
- ... we will \_\_\_\_\_ those deserving of the truth.
- ... we will give way to \_\_\_\_\_ sin.
- ... we will attempt to cover our sin, \_\_\_\_\_ our shame.
- ... we will often exaggerate the severity of other people’s sins to cover our own \_\_\_\_\_.

## B. God’s Surprising Work of Grace

Why is this story in Genesis? So that we will learn how God often works to expose our \_\_\_\_\_ and bring us to repentance. God brings us low so that we will come to know our own sinfulness, confess it, and cry out to God for deliverance. If we will, there is hope; if we harden our hearts, things will only get worse.

Judah’s life became increasingly difficult because he kept hiding his sin, avoiding shame, and refusing to take responsibility. He was far from the love of God. So when Tamar presented him with his signet and cord and staff, would Judah continue to *hide his iniquity*, or would he finally *acknowledge his sin* (cp. Ps 32:1-5)? Thankfully, he confessed, and God graciously forgave him. “*He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy*” (Pr 28:13). So notice two things about Judah’s confession. *First, Judah’s confession is \_\_\_\_\_*. He doesn’t just acknowledge his sin silently to God; he openly confesses it. *Second, Judah stops casting \_\_\_\_\_ and takes responsibility*. Judah does not use Tamar’s sin to excuse his own.

## C. A Life of Grace (cf. Gen 43:8-10; 44:1-34)

But is this moment in Judah’s life really that important? We find the answer later in Genesis. When Judah and his brothers asked to take Benjamin with them to Egypt to get grain, Jacob initially refused. But as their situation became more dire,

<sup>8</sup>Then \_\_\_\_\_ said to Israel his father, “Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones. <sup>9</sup>I myself will be surety for him; from my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever.” (Genesis 43:8–9)

Jacob agrees to do so. He sends Benjamin to Egypt under \_\_\_\_\_ care. When Benjamin is arrested, \_\_\_\_\_ pleads for his brother:

<sup>30</sup>“Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad is not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad’s life, <sup>31</sup>it will happen, when he sees that the lad is not with us, that he will die. So your servants will bring down the gray hair of your servant our father with sorrow to the grave. <sup>32</sup>For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father forever.’ <sup>33</sup>Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. <sup>34</sup>For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come upon my father?” (Gen 44:30-44)

\_\_\_\_\_ is a changed man. So what changed him? Why did Judah become a man who was willing to give his life in place of his younger brother? Because of Tamar.

## IV. Conclusion (vv. 27-30; Mt 1:3)