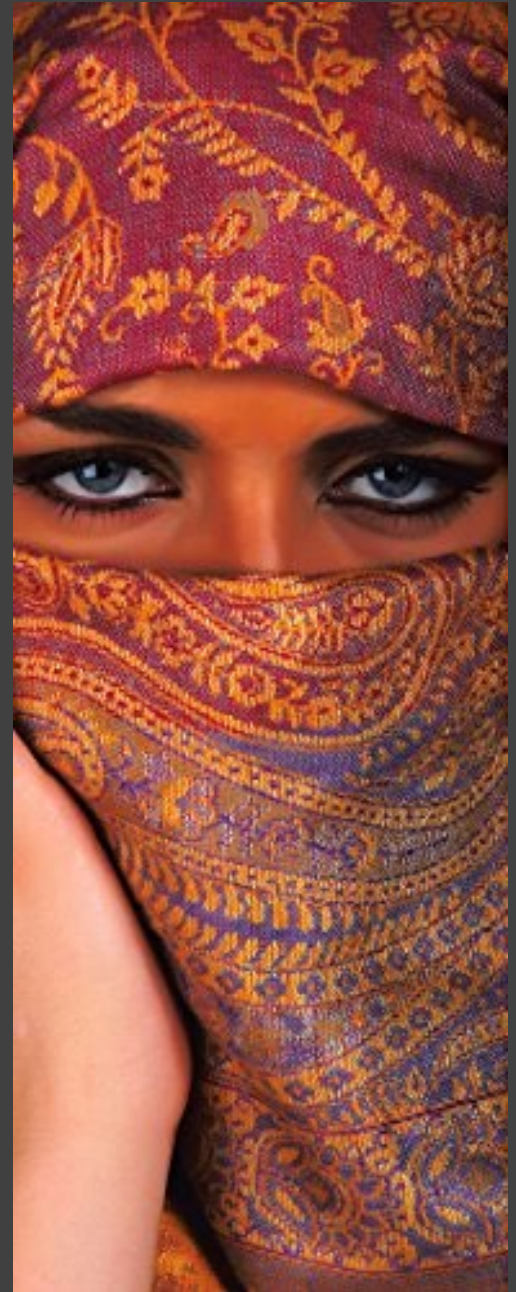


And You Thought
Your Family Had
Problems!
—Tamar



GENESIS 38:24-26

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.

- Judah's first son **Er** married a girl named **Tamar**. But Er was so wicked that "the Lord put him to death" (Genesis 28:7).
- The ancient custom of **Levirate Marriage** required the surviving brother of a man who died without children to marry his brother's widow, so as to continue his brother's family through the children that might be born of that marriage.
- Judah's second son, **Onan**, however used the law of Levirate Marriage for his own sexual gratification.

Genesis 38:9

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.

- Because Onan took advantage of Tamar and refused his responsibility, God took his life too.
- Judah had a third son, *Shelah*, who should have then married Tamar, but Judah tricked her into waiting until Shelah was old enough to marry while he had no intention of ever allowing Shelah to marry Tamar.
- With her family's future in jeopardy, Tamar decided she would have to take matters into her own hands if she were to be granted the rights of the levirate custom.

- When the time seemed right, Tamar disguised herself as a **prostitute** and lured her father-in-law Judah into having sex with her.
- Judah promised to **pay her a goat** in return for her sexual favors and as a **pledge** of payment he left his **seal** (which hung from a **cord** around his neck) and his **staff** with her.



GENESIS 38:14

a circassian | frederick arthur bridgman, 1881

AND TAMAR PUT OFF from HER
the GARMENTS of her WIDOWHOOD,
covered herself with her veil & wrapped herself,
AND SAT in the ENTRANCE of ENAIM, WHICH IS BY the WAY in TIMNAH; FOR
SHE SAW that SHELAH was GROWN UP, & SHE was NOT GIVEN to HIM to WIFE.

- When he later sent his friend *Hirah* back to pay the goat and retrieve his pledge, the girl was nowhere to be found.
- *Three months* later when Tamar was found to be *pregnant*, Judah condemned her to *death* as a prostitute.

- But when Tamar produced *Judah's seal, cord, and staff*, proving that the child she was carrying was his, Judah admitted that he had not only sinned against God, but that he had wronged Tamar as well.



What lessons can we learn from this very dysfunctional family?

1. Beware, your sins will find you out.

- Genesis 38 begins by telling us that Judah had left his family and moved to a place called **Adullam**, which is 15 miles northwest of Hebron, and he married a Canaanite woman.
- That's where his trouble started.
- Those wicked sons Judah raised were half Canaanite.

- Judah thought he could keep his *immoral liaison* with a prostitute a *secret*.
- He also played the *hypocrite* by condemning Tamar to death for the very sin that he himself was guilty of.
- People use all sorts of devices to *lie* about and *cover up* their sins, but in the end, none of them work.
- None of us can *cloak* our sins forever.

Galatians 6:7-8

⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Hebrews 4:13

¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we

2. The evil you plot against another will come back to bite you.

- Just prior to this story, Genesis 37 tells how, in a fit of jealousy and hatred, Judah and his brothers *sold* their brother **Joseph** into slavery in Egypt.
- To cover up that sin, Judah **deceived** their father Jacob into believing Joseph had been killed by a wild animal.
- Now **Judah had been deceived** by his own daughter-in-law.

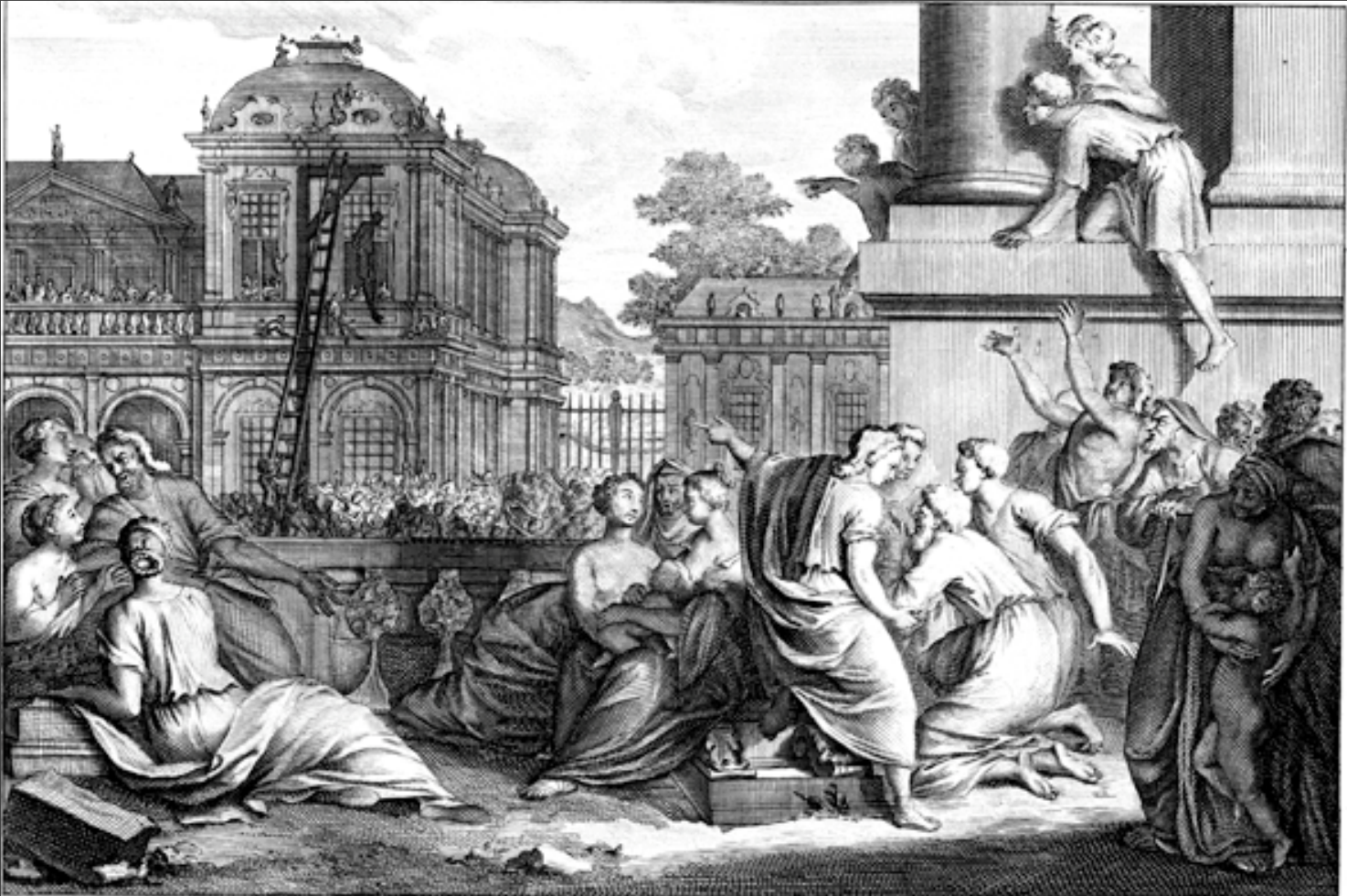


- Sin often has a *boomerang* effect.
- Attempts to trap or destroy another eventually turn on the schemer and he is destroyed by his own devices.

Proverbs 26:27

²⁷ Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on him who starts it rolling.

In the Book of Esther, **Haman** was hanged on the gallows he built for Mordecai.



3. God forgives and changes those who confess and turn from their sins.

- Because Judah eventually *confesses and turns* from his sins, God *does not cut him off* like he did Judah's wicked sons Er and Onan.
- God also *changed Judah's heart*.

Years later when Judah and his brothers meet Joseph in Egypt, Judah offers his own life to protect his younger brother Benjamin (Genesis 44:18-34).



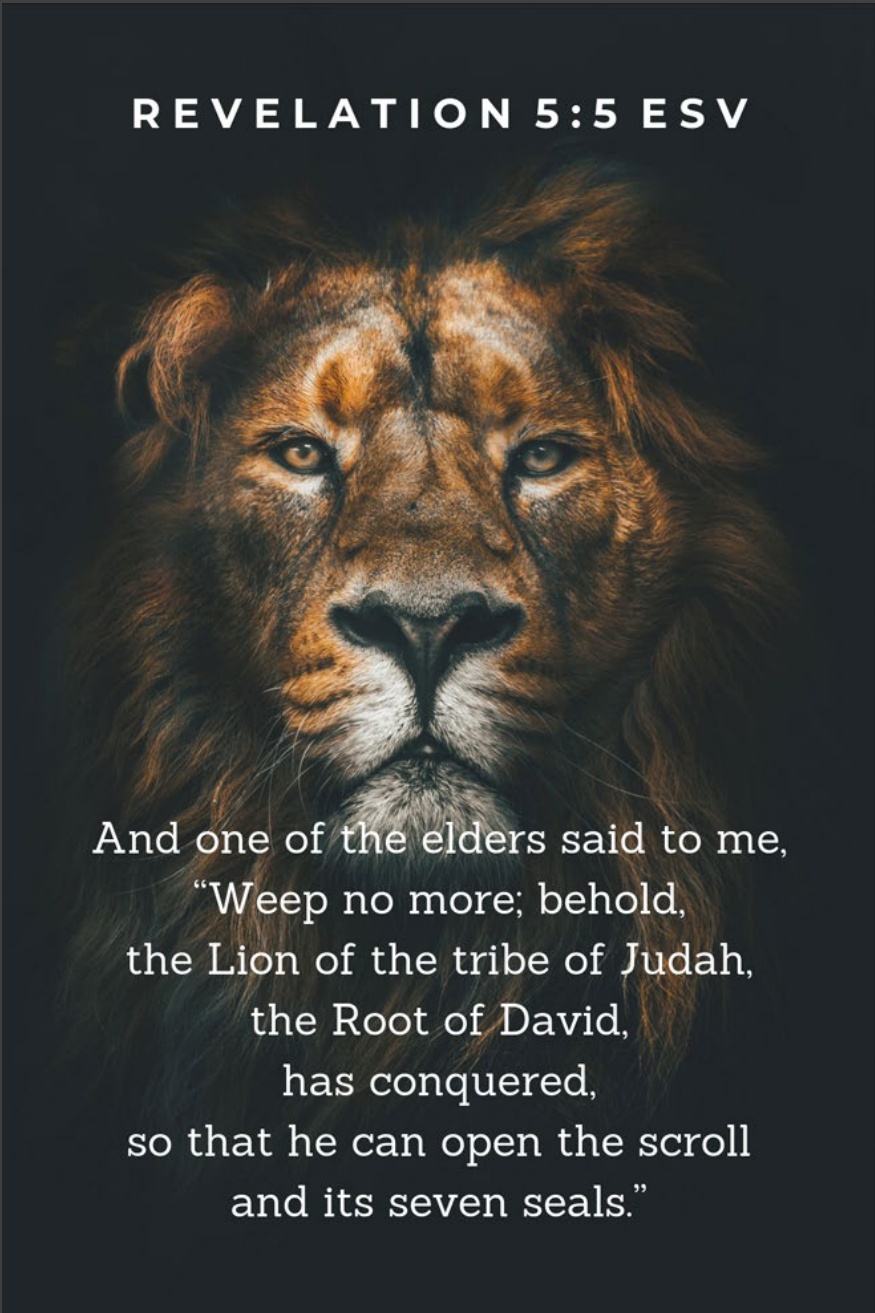
1 John 1:8-9

⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God is exceptionally gracious to Judah.
Through Tamar's son **Perez**, Judah's descendants
become *the royal tribe of Israel*.



REVELATION 5:5 ESV



And one of the elders said to me,
“Weep no more; behold,
the Lion of the tribe of Judah,
the Root of David,
has conquered,
so that he can open the scroll
and its seven seals.”

4. God's grace treats us better than our foolishness deserves.

- All of us have inherited a flawed human nature.

Romans 3:23

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

- Underneath whatever *psychological, physiological, or social* problems you may struggle with, there is something even *more deeply wrong with you: you* are a sinner.
- We are born into a fallen world where we are raised by, marry, live with, and beget other sinners.
- Sin has a firm grip on both the human race and on each human being.
- *We sin because we are sinners.*



- When we are sinned against, we often ask “why?”
- “Why did the other person do this to me?” “Why do I do the stupid things I do? Why?”
- While there may be external reasons that make it more difficult to avoid responding sinfully to the heat of life, the basic answer to the why question is “**because we are sinners.**”

- Tamar's scheme to conceive a child from Judah's line was *desperate, risky, and sinful*.
- Still, God, in his mercy, granted her a child, *Perez*, who would become one of the *ancestors* of Israel's greatest king, *David*, and ultimately the *Messiah* Himself, Jesus Christ.
- And God in his love is ready to meet your sinful foolishness with his mercy and grace if you will but turn to him.

Application

There's hope for everyone.

- If God can use a dysfunctional family like Judah's to bring the Messiah into the world, He can use anyone in spite of their brokenness and sin.
- It's simply a matter of turning to Christ and trusting him to transform your character.

Your real potential flows from your new identity—who you are in Christ.

Galatians 2:20

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- In Paul's statement "I have been crucified with Christ," the verb is in the **perfect tense** (a completed action that occurred in the past but has produced a **permanent, continuing result** that exists in the present).
- The verb is also in the **indicative mood** (it is a statement of fact).



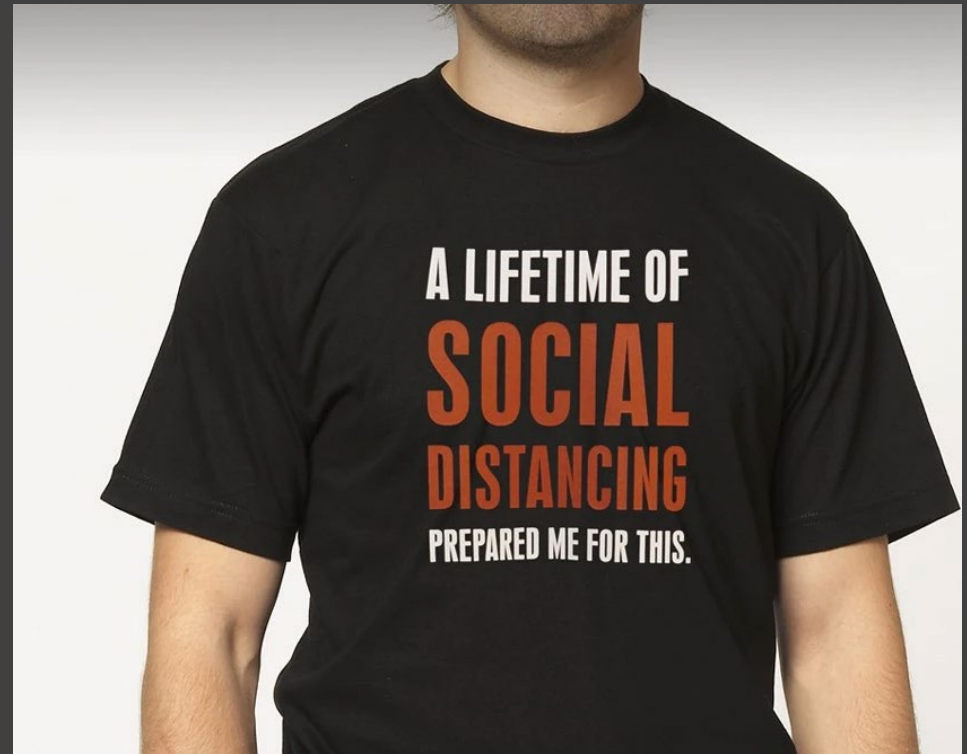
- People are always *measuring their potential*.
- Whether you are taking on a new job, starting a home improvement project, planning a vacation, or pursuing a relationship, in each case you will ask yourself:
- “Do I have what it takes to do this?”



- Perhaps you measure your potential by ***past successes*** and ***advantages***: “I came from a good family. I have a good education. I have the skill and talent to do this. People tend to like me.”

Or, perhaps you measure your potential by *past mistakes* and *inadequacies*

I'm not very smart.
I'm not very popular.
I'm not good with people.
I've been abused.
People take advantage of me.
I can't do anything right."



While your previous experiences of blessing and suffering have an influence on the shape of your life, they are ***not the whole story of who you really are as a believer.***



You have access to a remarkable power to overcome past failures and present weakness that have nothing to do with your family, education, or talent.

- Because of what Jesus did on the cross, every believer experiences a radical, fundamental **change** in **who you are at your very core**.
- When you become a Christian, your sinful nature is crucified with Christ.
- You are not the same as you once were. You have been changed forever.
- You no longer live under the domination of sin.
- You do not have to give in to sin.
- In your continuing struggle with sin, **you can make different choices**.
- You can live in new ways.

Until you leave this world, you will always struggle with your sinful nature. But you have an indwelling power and presence that moment by moment can cleanse you of sin and enable you to live like Christ.

1 John 1:8-9

⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.