

## A MAN'S MAN

### GENESIS 38

Why did God cause Moses to write this chapter? Is there anything profitable for us in the chapter? Martin Luther saw two primary purposes for this chapter being included. First, it is here to rebuke presumption. It is here to remind us that all of us are capable of shameful deeds. The whole of the human family suffers from depravity and is capable of the worst of deeds. The second reason, according to Luther, is that it challenges despair. If God could use the lineage of Judah in bringing His Son into the world, surely there is the possibility that He can use you and me. We are not beyond hope.

I think that there is yet another reason. In the last chapter Joseph is introduced. This man stands tall in the Biblical history as a man of God. His life was very useful in the redemptive work of the Lord. There is not one hint of shortcoming in his life. From his days of youth until his old age he faithfully served the purposes of the Lord. Judah stands in contrast to this. If Joseph is to be seen as a man of God, Judah is to be seen as a man's man. We see in his life the consequence of a man doing man's thing. It is a sad

and shameful story. If you are intent upon doing your own things with your life, it would be worth your time to meditate on this sad chapter.

All of us need to decide which we will be—God’s man or man’s man.

## I. A MAN’S MAN FEELS AT HOME IN THE IDOLATROUS WORLD.

This is the first thing that we notice about Judah. At some point in his life he decided to leave the tents of Jacob and his brothers, and to make his home among the Canaanites. His brother left home because of force, but he left home by choice. He made friends with Hirah who lived at Adullah. He preferred companionship with him to that of his family. While he is living at Adullah, he meets the daughter of Shua, another man of Canaan. We do not learn her name in the text, but we are given the names of her three sons.

Judah’s firstborn son was Er. When he came to a marriageable age, Judah worked out a marriage for him with Tamar, another Canaanite woman. Er had become so much a part of the world of his mother that he did something that greatly displeased the Lord so he died an early death at the hand of the Lord.

Judah followed the custom of the day, called a Levirate marriage, and gave Tamar to Onan in marriage. The purpose of the levirate marriage was for a brother to raise up a descendent for his deceased brother by marrying his widow. Onan was so full of the attitudes of the Canaanite people that he refused to father a child by Tamar. His life became so offensive to the Lord that he too was taken in an untimely death.

These insights into the life of Judah at this point in his life reveal a man who is very much at home in the pagan culture of the people of Canaan. He is no longer be directed by the principles of faith and righteousness that have been a part of his family since the days of Abraham. He is adapting his life to the mores of the culture around him. This is the way life is when a man is a man's man.

Does this sound like anyone you know? Which is the determinant relationship in your life—your relationship with God or your relationship with the culture about you? Are you moving closer to the pagan world in which you live or closer to the Lord? At this point in his life Judah was

definitely moving closer to the world. It would have been difficult to tell by his behavior that he was not a natural born citizen of Canaan.

## II. A MAN'S MAN HANDLES TRUTH DECEITFULLY.

The next recorded incident that gives us some insight into the behavior of a man's man in contrast to a man of God also involves Tamar. After the untimely death of Onan Judah is reluctant to give Shelah, his last son, to Tamar in marriage. He had begun to think that she must be the source of the problem. The death of two sons was enough to convince him that he did not want Tamar and Shelah married.

Instead of being honest with Tamar about his reluctance, he put her off with some deceitful words. "Live as a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up." He left her with the impression that it was only a matter of time until the marriage would happen. Moses tells us what was really in his mind: "He might die too, just like his brothers." He really had no intention of arranging the marriage. He was ready to get her out of his family before another death took place.

This will almost always be a part of the life of the man who is being a man's man. Truth will be something that you use for your own advantage. If it is to your advantage, then you tell the truth. If it is not to your advantage to tell the truth, then you will hedge with it or change it. You will manipulate the facts as it suits you. The man of God always sees his word as something important. He will turn away from the path of deceit because he knows that the Devil is the deceiver while God is the person of truth.

What is your relationship with the truth? Are your words trustworthy? Can others make a decision on what you tell them without fear? Can they depend on you? Can you imagine the disappointment that came to Tamar when it became obvious that the words of Judah were not trustworthy? She made a very significant decision to return to her father's house as a widow because she trusted an untrustworthy word of her father-in-law. She was deceived! Are there people that would point an accusing finger at you?

### III. A MAN'S MAN INDULGES HIS SENSUAL DESIRES.

I trust that you do realize that the actions of Judah are indefensible. This record is not included for our emulation in any way, but rather for our warning.

The next episode that involved Tamar is the most shameful of all. When Tamar realized that Judah had no intention of her being married to Shelah, she began to lay a plot for Judah. In the meantime his wife that he had taken from among the Canaanites died. He is on his way to Timnah to oversee his servants in the shearing of his sheep. He has his close friend Hirah from Adullah traveling with him.

When Tamar heard that he would be traveling by her town on the way to Timnah, she took off her widow's attire and dressed herself as a temple prostitute. Some scholars claim that it was a practice among the Canaanites that every married woman would have to sacrifice her chastity at least once during her marriage by acting as a temple prostitute. It was a part of her devotion to her false god. They believe that this was the way that Tamar presented herself. She would be so hidden under veils that it would be impossible for Judah to know that she was actually his daughter-in-law.

When Judah saw her sitting by the road, he was attracted to her. He made an arrangement for her to be his companion in sin. When he did not have the required goat to pay for such an arrangement, he gave her his seal and its cord, which he wore around his neck, and his staff to hold until he sent back

the required goat. Thus he bought the sexual favors of his own daughter-in-law for a night. Under the rules of that day and our day this was incest. To be sure, Jacob did not realize it was incest, but he did know that it was a violation of the principles of righteousness by which the family of Abraham was to live. At least Joseph, his brother and man of God, knew that immoral behavior was unacceptable.

In that circumstance as a man's man he follows the pull of the sensual appetites of his body rather than the restraints of his moral understanding. Wasn't he just being a man, many would reason? Did he not have a physical need that must be satisfied?

Are you not sensitive to just how immoral our society has become? Not everyone, but the men who are the man's man. The sport figures that our nation admires so much number their sexual partners in the hundreds, or some of them do. Some of them have fathered children by several women out of wedlock. Could this be the reason the nation has been so reluctant to condemn the behavior of our president? After all, isn't everyone doing it? Maybe so, but not those who aspire to be men of God. Sensuality is the way of the man's man—not God's man.

#### IV. A MAN'S MAN STILL REAPS WHAT HE SOWS.

A man's man may not acknowledge God, but he cannot avoid God. He will still encounter the God of the universe who has put into motion the law of the harvest. You will till reap what you sow.

Judah sowed deceit, so he reaps deceit. He deceives Tamar with empty words of promise, so she deceives him with a deceitful deed. You cannot avoid the law of the harvest.

Furthermore, his one night stand with Tamar is not soon forgotten. When he sends the promised goat to the harlot, she cannot be found. Judah thinks that is the end of the matter. Then word comes that his daughter-in-law is pregnant. He is ready to apply the law to her with severity. He commands, "Bring her out and have her burned to death." She is guilty of adultery since she is promised to Shelah in marriage. But then Judah receives the surprise of his life when Tamar sends word that the man who owns the seal and the rod that she has in her hand is the father of her child. When confronted with the embarrassing facts, he is forced to admit that he is guiltier than she. He

had been guilty of breaking his word to Tamar. He was indeed the father of her child.

Do you feel the force of this scandal? Judah has not only been guilty of incest; he has actually been the cause of an untimely pregnancy. Tamar is bearing his child. As it turns out, she was actually bearing twin boys. You reap what you sow.

God has put in place moral laws that operate in His universe. You may choose to ignore these moral laws, but that will not keep them from operating. As you break them, they will break you. This is what happened to Judah and Tamar.

#### V. A MAN'S MAN MAY STILL BE THE OBJECT OF DIVINE GRACE.

Can anything good come out of a mess like this? Sure! The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is still the God of grace. You will have to read the rest of the story of the see the grace.

The twins born to Tamar were named Perez and Zerah. Perez was the first to break out of his mother's womb with a hand even though his brother was

actually the firstborn. However Perez was considered the firstborn. His name means “breaking out”. When you open the New Testament and consider the genealogy of Jesus, you read: “Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar. Perez the father of Hezron.” (Matthew 1:3) There in that holy line of Jesus is the name of Tamar, and the name of her son conceived when she is playing the harlot with her father-in-law Judah. That is grace!

If you have been living as a man’s man, or a woman’s woman, and have made a smelly mess to leave behind as a heritage, take heart—our God is a God of grace. He can make something good come out of your life if you will turn to him in repentance and faith.

What a life of shame only to become a part of God’s redemptive purposes!  
Luther was right—do not despair. There is still hope.