

**GOD'S CHRISTMAS GRACE TO FAMILIES: FOUR GRANDMOTHERS OF JESUS**  
**"Grandmother Tamar: Exemplifying God's Sovereign Grace To Families"**  
**(Matthew 1:3, 17; Genesis 38)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) Last Tuesday morning, while riding my bike delivering newspapers, I witnessed a sad event in a marriage. One of the houses near me suddenly erupted with noise as the garage door began to open. I heard a woman yelling at the top of her voice, telling her husband to leave her alone as she needed to go to work. Halfway up, the garage door started to close. Then, just as quickly, it started to open, and I heard the woman yell louder than ever, "Why did you do that?!" I figured that he must have closed the garage door to hide some atrocious act of his, and so started to turn around to head toward the home to intercept what I thought was a dangerous situation for the woman. However, she got in her four-by-four, slammed the door, and pulled out in a hurry, scurrying off down the road and off to work! After the event, I called the police to see what my responsibility should be in the matter, and have followed their legal advice.

But I wonder, "**What kind of peace on earth can this couple possibly have this Christmas?!**"

(2) On the national scene, there are reports now that O. J. Simpson was an abused husband!! That seems hard to believe, but one never knows! Nicole Brown Simpson's sister claims that Nicole often told her that O. J. would one day kill her and get by with it due to his fame as a football superstar! "**What kind of peace on earth is possible for O. J. and the Brown family, and for O. J. and Nicole's children this Christmas? How can it be possible?!**" That's a good question!

(3) This last week, I have been confronted with several desperate family situations through contacts with attenders of Nepaug Church. The question about family happiness this Christmas keeps coming up.

(4) In fact, a relative of ours who has recently experienced divorce turned down an invitation to have Christmas with others in his extended family! His pain is intense enough to make loneliness seem welcome right now! We need to address such needs!

(We turn to the "Need" section of the sermon notes . . .)

Need: "*Though Christmas is considered a time of family harmony, I know cases where domestic relationships are so awry that there seems to be no redeeming value even to call the parties 'a family!' In such instances, what hope is there for Christmas?!*"

- I. **If ever there was a case of no redeeming value in a family, it existed in the relations of Judah's family with daughter-in-law, Tamar!**
  - A. Tamar was an outsider, coming from the wicked Canaanite stock opposite what the godly patriarchs chose for marital partners:
    1. Abraham did not tolerate his son, Isaac being wed to an evil Canaanite girl, Gen. 24:3.
    2. Isaac and Rebekah grieved deeply over the marriage of their son, Esau, to Canaanite women, Gen. 26:34-35. Consequently, they even sent their other son, Jacob away from Canaan to avoid his marrying a Canaanite girl as had Esau, Gen. 27:46!
    3. Yet Judah, the son of Jacob, arranged for his son, Er to marry the Canaanite girl, Tamar, Gen. 38:6.
  - B. Tamar's husband was so wicked that God killed him, leaving her a widow without a son to carry on Judah's line, Gen. 38:6-7.
  - C. Tamar's legal efforts to carry on her deceased husband's name led to Tamar being abused and rejected:
    1. A practice existed in that era to preserve the deceased husband's lineage when his widow was childless: the deceased's male next-of-kin would produce a male child by the widow, a practice called *levirate marriage*, cf. Bib. Know. Com., O. T., p. 88.
    2. Judah led his other son, Onan to cohabit with Tamar to produce seed in accord with this custom, Gen. 38:8.
    3. However, knowing that he would not inherit his brother's goods were Tamar to have a son, Onan took atrocious sexual advantage of his sister-in-law by repeatedly uniting with her but keeping her from conceiving, *Ibid.* God killed Onan for this, Gn. 38:9-10 NIV.
    4. Upon Onan's death, Judah promised to give his youngest son, Shelah to Tamar when he grew up, Gen. 38:11a. Tamar thus went back to her father's house to await Shelah's maturity, Gen. 38:11b.
    5. However, when Shelah grew up, Judah failed to fulfill the levirate law, not giving Shelah to Tamar in marriage, 38:14b!

6. Thus, the "outsider" Canaanite, Tamar was horribly abused and rejected by Judah's family into which she had wed!

II. **However, God's sovereign plan included Tamar within Judah's family as a key toward producing Israel's Messiah!**

- A. God promised to bless man through Abraham's **seed**, Gn. 12:3; 15:4.
- B. From Galatians 3:16 we know that this **seed** blessing comes through the Person of Jesus Christ, the Hebrew Messiah!
- C. As Messiah, Jesus was to be Israel's King, and **His** royal line from the patriarch, Abraham was predicted to be through Judah, Abraham's great-grandson, Gen. 49:1-2 with 9-10.
- D. Since two of Judah's three sons had died, and since Judah failed to give the young Shelah to Tamar in marriage, God allowed a godless event to occur to salvage Israel's Messianic lineage!
  1. God permitted Tamar to disguise herself as a prostitute to seduce Judah **himself** to conceive his child, Gen. 38:13-24.
  2. While cohabiting with Judah, Tamar kept some of his personal effects as proof that the conceived child was **Judah's**, 38:18!
  3. After conceiving, Tamar protected her life from capital punishment by exhibiting Judah's articles! Thus, Messiah's line, by divine sovereignty, stayed intact, Gen. 38:29 & Mtt. 1:1, 3, 17!
  4. In fact, as a sign of sovereignty, God arranged for Tamar to conceive twins, and for the younger son to arrive first as in the case of Judah's father, Isaac (with Esau), Gen. 38:27-30 with 25:21-26. God thus signaled that though Judah's kin would try to thwart the divine plan, God yet sovereignly overruled in their sinful actions to produce His promised Messiah! (Ibid., p. 89)

***Application:*** *To find peace with God this Christmas in the midst of messy family relationships, (1) believe in Jesus Christ for salvation from sin to become part of the spiritual family of Almighty God, Jn. 3:16; 1:11-12! (2) Then, rely on the indwelling Spirit of God for behavior control (Ga. 5:16-23) and (3) obey Scripture for divine blessing, Psalm 1. (4) Then, by recalling the life and times of Tamar, a Grandmother of Jesus, the son of Mary, we trust in God's eternal plan to glorify Himself through our troubled families this Christmas!*

***Lesson:*** *Regardless how bad family relations get, God is sovereign enough to overrule in them to fulfill His plans for all involved, and to do so this Christmas! The proof is in the case of the Canaanite widow, Tamar, a great-grandmother of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah!*

**Conclusion:** (To illustrate the point of the message . . .)

To show that Christ is the answer for very troubled, very wronged family members, here is a testimonial letter written by a girl named Stephanie to Fred Tomaselli at the Fold:

"Dear Mr. Tomaselli,

I want to thank you and all the Fold staff for helping me . . . when I really needed it. When I left to go to the Fold, I thought, 'What good is this gonna do? There's no hope for me. All I want is to die!' I had already been sexually abused and became pregnant by my father. I gave my baby up for adoption -- which I truly hated my mother for. I had no idea where else to turn. I looked to drinking and guys for my help which wasn't right. I ran away, attempted suicide, and was going to a therapist, but still nothing helped. I was hospitalized for 1 1/2 months after my attempt to kill myself, but still nothing.

Then . . . I let Jesus in. I had seen all the others so happy and I wanted it, so after that it all came together . . . Soon after that my mom and I got close . . . I love her so much it would be a disaster without her. GOD gets all the Blue Ribbons!! . . . I pray that all the teenagers that are troubled won't think that dying is the answer. But I'll tell you the truth, in its own way it is; cause once you are born in Christ you die to sin.

With God's Unconditional Love,

Your Sister in Christ,

Stephanie"