

Judah's Pledge

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Bible Text: Genesis 38; Ephesians 1:11-14

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Turn with me if you will in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 37 and go to verse 26, Genesis 37 verse 26. That's page 61 if you are using the Bibles in the pews.

Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed.¹

Here is the first thing that is recorded about Judah as an adult man. He is not an old man here. If you study the chronology carefully, you discover he is a man in his early 20s and you discover that everything that takes place that we are going to be looking at this morning takes place before he is 45 years old. So we are looking at about a 22 year time span. And in that 22 year time span, he has three children born, and he has his wife die. And so we see the beginning of his adult life here. He is somewhere between three and five years older than Joseph.

Joseph is 17 years old. Joseph has made his brothers jealous. And so the brothers decide they are going to kill him. Reuben, a double-minded man, plans to save Joseph and says, "Let's throw him in this pit," planning to come back later and rescue him. But he walks away, and in the meantime Judah says, "Hey, let's not kill him. Let's make some money on the deal." And so Judah is the brother who says, "Let's sell him into slavery. We'll make 20 shekels on the deal." And that's what he does.

Then the brothers come back—the 10 brothers come back to their father. They have got Joseph's coat of many colors. They have splattered blood on it. They deceive the old man into believing that Joseph has been killed by a wild animal. And so we look at the end of this chapter, verse 34, turn the page—page 62—Genesis 37 verse 34.

Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and daughters...²

¹ Genesis 37:26-27 (All Scripture references are from the New International Version of the Bible unless otherwise indicated).

² Genesis 37:34

Notice daughters. He had Dinah, but he had other daughters that are not named. “All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. “No,” he said, “in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son.” So his father wept for him.”³

I want to make a comment at this point that God does not give to us the right to grieve on and on. We are to love this world with “weaned affections.” That is not just things; it’s people. That’s the ideal Christian life. It was expressed in Puritan New England to love world with weaned affections.⁴ What does it mean to love the world?

Well, we are obviously commanded in Scripture not to love the world in one sense, but the world includes our children and our wives. It is everything of this life. Are we to have no feelings for children, for wife, for parents, for friends? No, we do love the things of this world, but not in a worldly way. We love them with weaned affections. What does it mean to love with weaned affections?

It means that when God takes things from us—as he will—that we are to labor to get over those things. We are to have as our ideal David who when God struck his boy, and the little boy is hanging between life and death, David is grieving, and David is mourning and he fasts. And he is pouring out his heart to God. But then when his servants come with the news that the boy is dead, David gets up. He washes himself. He puts on clean clothes and he . . . what? Anoints himself. And he goes in to the tabernacle, and he worships God and then he eats.

I am telling you that grieving on and on is of the devil. Is it natural? Of course, it is natural. But it is also of the devil. God expects you to love your wife and your children and your grandchildren and great grandchildren and your father and mother and things such as houses and lands with weaned affections because God takes from us things as he chooses.

I want you to see something about Jacob at this point. He mourns with an inordinate mourning. His grief is unbounded and it goes on for years. He is still grieving 22 years later, and I want to tell you that’s wrong. It’s sinful. It is evil. And it is destructive to people all around you.

God expects you to do what? To drink deeply of the gospel and to say, “I’ll see him again,” and to get over it.

How do you get over it? You get over it by telling God your heart. “God, I have a pain in my heart I cannot cope with, I cannot deal with. But I am going to praise you anyhow.”

³ Genesis 37:35

⁴ “There is another combination of virtues strangely mixed in every lively, holy Christian: and that is, diligence in worldly business, and yet deadness to the world. Such a mystery as none can read but they that know it.” . . . In New England the phrase to describe this attitude soon became: loving the world with “weaned affections.” It was applied not only to one’s love of his property, but also to his love for wife, children, parents and country’ [Perry Miller, *The American Puritans* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1956), pp. 171, 172.].

You have got to labor to have a “hallelujah anyhow” attitude because it is the heart of the matter. Your emotions are under the control of your will. And you need to choose to praise God with your mind until the praise gets into your emotions. And praise does get into your emotions. It takes time.

God doesn't expect you to snap out of things immediately. It takes time. But to mourn for 22 years was a very destructive thing in this man's life as we will see in a moment.

Look at verse 36.

Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.

At that time, Judah left his brothers and went down to stay with a man of Adullam named Hirah.⁵

You understand that the old man's mourning, the tears of the man are like acid on the heart of Judah. Why? Judah is the reason that the boy is gone. Judah is the reason that that boy has been sold into Egypt. It was Judah who said, “Let's don't kill him. Let's make 20 shekels on the deal.”

So Judah is down there next to his father's tent and at night he hears the old man crying, sobbing night after night. And it tortured him because he had guilt he hadn't dealt with. And it drives him away, and he leaves the people of God and he becomes a Canaanite. Isn't this a striking thing? The first Jew becomes a pagan in the beginning of his life. Judah, who would be chief over his brothers, Judah from whom the very name Jew is derived, Judah, who gives his name to the Simeonites and the Levites and to the Gadites and the Danites, becomes a pagan. He becomes a Canaanite for a season.

Look at what happens. He leaves the people of God. He can't stand to be in earshot and eyesight of his mourning, grieving father because his father's grief is a torture to his guilty soul. And so, look, he becomes a Canaanite.

We read beginning in verse one.

At that time, Judah left his brothers and went down to stay with a man of Adullam named Hirah. There Judah met the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua. He married her and lay with her; she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, who was named Er. She conceived again and gave birth to a son and named him Onan. She gave birth to still another son and named him Shelah. It was at Kezib that she gave birth to him.⁶

⁵ Genesis 37:36-38:1

⁶ Genesis 38:1-5

So I want you to see here that Judah has abandoned the people of God at this point in his life. Isn't it an amazing thing that the first three sons of Jacob are cursed by him. And it is his fourth son who is the first to receive a blessing. Yet at this stage of life there will be no blessing, only a curse, because this man is acting like his brothers, as we will see. And he is raising his children to be Canaanites as you will see in a moment. They are no different than the world. He has married a Canaanite woman. He has got Canaanite friends. He has abandoned the people of God, and he is raising his children like Canaanites and so then we see here in verse six, "Judah got a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar."⁷

Now at this point Er—and, by the way, if you are too chilly, we may need to adjust things. But I want you to think, again, of the chronology. At this point he probably is getting a wife for his teenage son who is probably 16 years old. You've got to make this fit into the biblical chronology.

Look at verse seven. "But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the LORD's sight; so the LORD put him to death."⁸

You've got to say something about life. Nothing happens by chance. Nothing happens by mere coincidence.

Now, this doesn't mean that everyone who dies early in life is under God's curse. That is certainly not true. In fact, the very opposite is stated to be the case over the book of Kings where it says that the Lord took a young man's life to spare him from the terrible things that were about to happen.⁹ So sometimes an early death can be a gift of God to spare someone from terrible events. And that is recorded in the book of Kings.

But here we are told that Er was wicked, and God killed him.

May I say something? Every obituary that you ever read could say, "So and so was born and on April the 13th, 2008, God killed him." Does that bother you to hear it that way? "So and so was born and on April the 13th, 2008, God killed him while he was sitting in church not paying attention."

Now God doesn't kill people directly. God permits the devil to do the work. Satan loves to kill people. God simply is enforcing the law that he created the world with and that is, "The wages of sin is death."¹⁰ And since all have sinned, all will die until Jesus comes. And it is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment.¹¹

⁷ Genesis 38:6

⁸ Genesis 38:7

⁹ "Abijah son of Jeroboam . . . is the only one belonging to Jeroboam who will be buried, because he is the only one in the house of Jeroboam in whom the LORD, the God of Israel, has found anything good" (1 Kings 14:1, 13).

¹⁰ Romans 6:23

¹¹ See Hebrews 9:27

But in the case of Er, he is singled out in Scripture here as a judicial curse; he dies an early death.

Verse seven. “But Er, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the LORD’s sight; so the LORD put him to death.”¹²

Now, at this point we need to introduce a legal concept from the ancient Near East, going back 4000 and more years. And that is levirate marriage, levirate marriage? What is levirate marriage? Not only in the Old Testament, but in the ancient Near East—and later this is recorded and codified in the Torah—if you were a man, and you married a woman, and you died without her having a child, it was the moral obligation of your next of kin, even if he is already married, to take an additional wife along side his own wife and to take your widow into his home and to produce a child, and the child that would be born to her from his next of kin would be counted as his child. Therefore, no one’s line would die out.

So, in other words, let’s say that Jethro dies, and he has no child. So it is his brother’s duty—if he has a brother and, if not, it goes to another relative. It might be his uncle Jed—it becomes his duty to marry Jethro’s widow and to produce a child by her. And that first child would be regarded before the law, in terms of also inheritance, would be regarded as what? As actually Jethro’s child.

Now, you need to have that in your mind because that is very much a part of this story that we are going to read.

So the next of kin has an obligation. And, by the way, if the next of kin refused to carry out the obligation this is what happened to him. The widow would go up to him and spit in his face. Do you know that was recorded in the law? The widow would go up and spit in his face and he would have to take his sandal off and give it to her so he was then called “the man with only one sandal,” or “the man without a sandal.”¹³ Is that odd?

Well, God took that ancient custom and he codified it into the Torah, so under the law of God, if we were still under that law today, that would be your obligation. If you have a brother and your brother doesn’t have any children and he is married. It would be your obligation to add another wife and then to raise up a child who would then be regarded legally as the heir of your brother. You’ve got to understand that.

Now we read further, verse eight.

Then Judah said to Onan, “Lie with your brother’s wife and fulfil your duty to her as a brother-in-law to produce offspring for your brother.” But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so whenever he lay with his brother’s wife, he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from producing offspring for his brother. What he did was wicked in the LORD’s

¹² Genesis 38:7

¹³ Deuteronomy 25:7-10

sight; so he put him to death also. Judah then said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, “Live as a widow in your father’s house until my son Shelah grows up.” For he thought, “He may die too, just like his brothers.” So Tamar went to live in her father’s house.¹⁴

Now, I want to point something out in verse 11. It is subtle in verse 11. It gets very explicit at the end of the chapter. You see here hinted at, a character flaw in Judah. Judah is a blame shifter at this point. Judah is a person who wants to blame other people for his sins and miseries and troubles. Who is he blaming at this point? It is not his wicked son Er or his wicked son Onan. He says, “This girl is bad news. I had better get her out of here because if she hangs around very long I am going to lose my other child to her.” Do you see that is what is in thinking here? And he is not laying the responsibility where it belongs.

You know, responsibility for Er lay with two people. You could say three. It lay with Er himself, but it lay fundamentally with what? A daddy who did not raise his son in church.

Now, you say, “Oh, that is anachronistic.”

Of course, it’s anachronistic. There is no church at this point. We have to go to Acts chapter two for the establishment of the Christian Church. But the people of God are around, and it is analogous to the Church. I am going to say it. To lay...the problem of the death of Er at the feet of his daddy who didn’t raise his son among the people of God. Is that harsh? It is the truth. If you want a church that is just going to be comforting and just give you something nice to think about and go home, you are in the wrong place. Find another church.

I am going to tell you the truth. And I am not going to gloss over passages like Genesis 38. Hey, if the Holy Spirit puts it in the Bible, it is appropriate for Sunday morning talk. And if it offends you, I’m sorry. Go to another church. It is the Word of God. The death of Er in this case can be laid at the feet of a father who did not raise his son to know God. And I will tell you why, because at this point—I submit to you—that Judah didn’t know God. But something happens in his life in this chapter that will show you differently.

And so we can trace the blame to Judah himself. And we can trace it to Er. But look what he is doing. He is shifting the blame. “It is that daughter-in-law of mine. That daughter-in-law of mine—we don’t want her around.” And so he says to her, “Look here, Tamar, why don’t you go live with your folks? I’ll call for you one day when Shelah gets a little older. He’s not yet 16 and is not ready for marriage.”

By the way, you know, we put off marriage...if we married younger, then other people would have to raise your teenagers for you. That’s sort of a joke.

¹⁴ Genesis 38:8-11

Verse 12. “After a long time Judah’s wife, the daughter of Shua, died.”¹⁵ Now, we don’t know how long a time it was, but you have got to fit all of these events within 22 years, and so it may be a year or two, but it can’t be very long. But it is a long time relative to what is happening.

So:

After a long time Judah’s wife, the daughter of Shua, died. When Judah had recovered from his grief, he went up to Timnah, to the men who were shearing his sheep, and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went with him. When Tamar was told, “Your father-in-law is on his way to Timnah to shear his sheep,” she took off her widow’s clothes, covered herself with a veil to disguise herself, and then sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that, though Shelah had now grown up, she had not been given to him as his wife. When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. Not realising that she was his daughter-in-law, he went over to her by the roadside and said, “Come now, let me sleep with you.”¹⁶

Remember, in those days women covered their faces with a veil. Even prostitutes did that. And so we read on. “‘And what will you give me to sleep with you?’ she asked.”¹⁷

Verse 17. “‘I’ll send you a young goat from my flock,’ he said. ‘Will you give me something as a pledge...’” The Hebrew word there is the Hebrew word, עֶרְבוֹן, *arrabon*. It is interesting that when the rabbis sought to translate the Hebrew Scriptures for the Jewish people roughly a century to a century and a half before the time of Christ, to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek—because most Jewish people no longer read Hebrew well—they did not translate this Hebrew word, עֶרְבוֹן, *arrabon*—which means deposit, can be understood as earnest money—they did not translate this word, but transliterated it in Greek. It means that they simply took the Hebrew word and spelled it out with Greek letters. And so the Greek word that is there in the Greek translation of the Old Testament sounds exactly like the Hebrew word, ἀρραβών, *arrabon*.

And so she says, “Will you give me something as an, עֶרְבוֹן, *arrabon* until you send it?” she asked. And he said, “What, עֶרְבוֹן, *arrabon* shall I give you?”

Verse 18.

“Your seal and its cord, and the staff in your hand,” she answered. So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she became pregnant by him. After she left, she took off her veil and put on her widow’s clothes again.

¹⁵ Genesis 38:12

¹⁶ Genesis 38:12-16

¹⁷ Genesis 38:16

Meanwhile Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite...to get his pledge back—his, עֶרְבֹן, *arrabon* back—from the woman...¹⁸

See, he left his deposit there.

...to get his, עֶרְבֹן, *arrabon* back from the woman, but he did not find her. He asked the men who lived there, “Where is the shrine-prostitute who was beside the road at Enaim?” “There hasn’t been any shrine-prostitute here,” they said. So he went back to Judah and said, “I didn’t find her. Besides, the men who lived there said, ‘There hasn’t been any shrine-prostitute here.’” Then Judah said, “Let her keep what she has, or we will become a laughing-stock. After all, I did send her this young goat, but you didn’t find her.”

About three months later Judah was told, “Your daughter-in-law Tamar is guilty of prostitution, and as a result she is now pregnant.” Judah said, “Bring her out and have her burned to death!”¹⁹

Now I want that to soak in for a moment. “Bring her out and have her burned to death!”²⁰ What was implicit is now explicit. What was implicit? What was implicit is that Judah is not blaming himself. He is not blaming Er. He is not blaming Onan. He is blaming his daughter-in-law. “She is a bad girl. Man, she is bad news. That girl is bad luck. She has got a hex on her. She’s jinxed. I don’t want her around the place.” See, that’s kind of implicit. It is not explicit. But now it is explicit.

The daughter-in-law is pregnant. He has gotten news of it. And just like folks at the First Self-righteous Church of Pascagoula, they are going to kick her out of Church. Do you think we ought to kick somebody out of Church because they get pregnant? The devil wants to kick people out of church because they get pregnant. Do you know what you ought to do when a girl gets pregnant outside of wedlock? You ought to call her forward.

You say, “Well, that’s embarrassing.”

Look, the church is a place where people get real. It is not a place for fun and games. Southern churches are full of hypocrites—so are northern churches—because they play fun and games. They don’t get real. Look, when a girl is a pregnant, and she is not married, she needs the love of the people of God. You ought to bring her down and lay your hands on her and pray for her. And you ought to help take care of her. If nobody is going to take care of her, you ought to take her in your home and take care of her. And you ought to...if she is in school, you ought to give her the money to take care of her.

Let me tell you something. Giving money to church isn’t where it is at. It’s giving money to God’s people that’s where it is at. When a girl is a single mom, and the man

¹⁸ Genesis 38:18-20

¹⁹ Genesis 38:20-24

²⁰ Genesis 38:24

won't do right by her, and her parents aren't sticking with her, it is the obligation of the church to take care of her and to take care of that child. And you don't go kicking somebody out because they get pregnant.

You say, "Oh, you are going to encourage our kids to be loose."

No, I am not. Let me tell you something. Looseness is in your children because they are your children. May I say it again? Looseness is in your children because they are your children. And I know about most of you. And I also read hearts. And I am going to tell you. This is the human condition. And you can come up with all the rules and regulations you want, and you are not going to keep your children from fooling around.

Legalism has never kept anybody from sin. Only the Holy Ghost can keep people from sin. It takes the Spirit of God changing someone by the grace of God that deals with sin. A church needs to be oriented towards grace and forgiveness and mercy and love.

But we look here at Judah. At this point in his life, he doesn't know God. And let me tell you. Whenever you point your finger at somebody, you've got three fingers pointing back at you.

Can you believe this old man at this point? He's not that old. He's well into middle age because middle age starts at 35.

"What?"

Yeah, it does. So he is well into middle age. He is going to have her what? Tortured to death. Not just bring her here and let me dress her down and fuss at her and bless her out because she is pregnant outside... "Bring her here and let me burn her slowly. Let me roast her. Let me burn her to death."

You know, there is nothing more cruel than religious people who aren't dealing with their own sinfulness. Do you believe that? There is nothing more cruel than religious people who aren't dealing with their own sinfulness. I don't care whether those religious people are Baptists or Methodists or Presbyterian or Jewish or Muslim or Hindu or you name it. Religion is the worst thing that human beings have ever used in this world to do evil with.

Fundamentally, Christianity isn't even a religion. It is a relationship. It is not about what you do. It is about what God has done for you and a relationship born of grace that grows out of it.

But I want you to see here, this old man, he is bloated with self-righteousness and his self-righteousness leads him to a harsh and cruel treatment. What should happen when somebody falls into sin in the Church? They need to be confronted with it. And then if they repent and they ask God to forgive them, they need to be embraced. They need to be loved. They need to be held on to and cherished.²¹

²¹ See 2 Corinthians 2:5-11

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.²²

There are things about your momma that you don't know.

My daddy was always proud of our genealogy, and my daddy's mother was a Salley. Salley was a Huguenot family that moved to Switzerland and then came to America and went up the Edisto River from Charleston and settled in Orange County, South Carolina. And some of them ended up over here in Louisiana.

And he...there was a big book—Daddy always called it the Salley book. I don't think Daddy read the whole thing because there I found one of my Scottish ancestors, a Jane Bruce, eloped with a Yankee. Wow!

And my daddy was always proud of his genealogy. And he said, "You know, Robert," he said, "Our ancestors came over on the *Mayflower* and Isaac Allerton was the lieutenant governor of the Plymouth Plantation."

And then I discovered that Isaac Allerton was the first true American politician because he was caught embezzling funds and was banished from the colony. And Franklin Delano Roosevelt is also descended from that man—and so Isaac Allerton—all I'm saying is—when worship we our ancestors, but we discover they are just rogues and rascals like the rest of us. Nobody is blue-blooded. And the only blood that counts with God is the red blood of Jesus.

So here is this self-righteous man. "You know, we have got this scum in our family, this daughter-in-law who doesn't measure up, and she has gotten pregnant and she has gotten pregnant without being married. Bring her here and let her be burned."

Verse 25. "As she was being brought out, she sent a message to her father-in-law. 'I am pregnant by the man who owns these,' she said. And she added," verse 25, "'See if you recognize whose seal and cord and staff these are.'"

Well, in those days, people all had staffs. It is part of what you had to do. And each person's staff is going to be unique. This is a very unique staff, isn't it? I was given this staff in 1995, when I completed a course in leadership that took over a year to complete with the Boy Scouts of America, and it was a gift. And it is very special. A man found a piece of wood and worked on it and carved it. It was already shaped like that because of vines, but he put all kinds of things on there, my name and other symbols. So this is a special staff.

And anyone who would see this staff would recognize, "Oh, that's Bob's staff." It is something that would mark you out.

²² See Romans 3:23

And in those days men had unique staffs, why? Because each one had one. You needed them when you were out there defending the sheep from a wolf. You have got to be able to swat him good.

Sorry, Don. You know about my lack of manual dexterity and my hand-eye coordination. I'm infamous for that.

So they had a staff, and it was unique, and you knew whose staff was whose. And then people also had a signet ring or some means of identifying themselves. Sometimes it was ceramic. Sometimes it was metal like this ring that was given to me when I had completed 25 years of service here. And this ring is a replica Martin Luther's wedding ring. And it is unique, and you would know it immediately if you saw it.

And so here Judah has summoned his daughter-in-law there and says, "Bring her out and let her be burned."

But she's got an, ערבון, *arrabon*. She has an, ערבון, *arrabon*. She has a deposit. She has a pledge. And that, ערבון, *arrabon* is Judah's staff and his signet ring on a cord.

And in those days, I want to tell you, it is not unlike a man's driver's license and credit card. Can you imagine Judah dealing with what he thought was simply a prostitute, but she is disguised? And he says, you know, "How much?"

And she says, "Well, how about a goat. And you don't have it with you." Said, "I want a pledge, because, you know, I don't trust you."

And he understands. "I understand you don't trust me, but here, let me give you my driver's license and my credit card."

And you say, "Nobody would be that stupid."

Hey, believe me. I'm a pastor. I've been preaching since 1965. People are that stupid.

But what I want you to see here is this. The amazing thing is that when she pulls out the, ערבון, *arrabon*, when she pulls out the deposit—this is a Hebrew word that is only used three times in the entire Old Testament and they are all three found in Genesis 38.²³ The moment she brings them out, look and see what we read in verse 26.

Judah recognised them and said, "She is more righteous than I, since I wouldn't give her to my son Shelah." And he did not sleep with her again. When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. As she was giving birth, one of them put out his hand; so the midwife took a scarlet thread and tied it on his wrist and said, "This one came out first." But when he drew back his hand, his brother came out, and she said, "So this is how you have broken out!" And he was named

²³ Genesis 38:17, 18, 20

Perez. Then his brother, who had the scarlet thread on his wrist, came out and he was given the name Zerah.²⁴

What I want you to understand is, out of this amazing, sordid saga comes the lineage of king David and, therefore, the lineage of the Messiah, Jesus. It is Judah's child through his daughter-in-law, Tamar, in an unwitting fulfillment of levirate marriage, that comes the ancestor of King David and of the Lord Jesus.

Now, I want you to see something amazing happens. And bear with me for a moment. Do you see what Judah says at this point when he says in verse 26, "She is more righteous than I"?²⁵

I submit to you that out of the most humiliating moment of his entire life comes a turning point in Judah's life. You see, up to this point Judah has been self-righteous. Up to this point he has been a finger pointer. Up to this point he has been a blame-shifter. But at this point he begins to take responsibility. At this point he begins to assume accountability for his own conduct. And he says of his daughter-in-law, "She is more righteous than I am." He begins to question his own integrity. He begins to question his own righteousness. He begins to see himself as he really is. And let me say this. Sometimes in your life you come to a moment in time that you are totally devastated by. It is humiliating. But out of that is the beginning of a freedom in your life you have never known before because you begin to have a true view of yourself and a true view of God. And that is what begins to happen in his life.

And let me show you how that this is not simply subtle, but that, just in a couple moments, how clearly it is worked out.

Judah, I submit to you, begins to know God in this chapter. And the fruit of his knowing God and living up to his name—for his name not only comes to be the name of the Jewish people, Jew, as a contraction of his name—but his name in Hebrew means "praise." It is at this point when he is totally humiliated by the pledge, the, *ערבון*, *arrabon*, that his daughter-in-law has, that his life begins to change. And let me show you what happens as we turn over in the book of Genesis to chapter 44—page 74. You want to read along with me here. Genesis chapter 44 starting at verse 18.

Then Judah went up to him and said: "Please, my lord, let your servant speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself. My lord asked his servants, 'Do you have a father or a brother?' And we answered, 'We have an aged father, and there is a young son born to him in his old age. His brother is dead, and he is the only one of his mother's sons left, and his father loves him.' Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me so I can see him for myself.' And we said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father; if he leaves him, his father will die.' But you told your servants, 'Unless your

²⁴ Genesis 38:26-30

²⁵ Genesis 38:26

youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.’ When we went back to your servant my father, we told him what my lord had said. Then our father said, ‘Go back and buy a little more food.’ But we said, ‘We cannot go down. Only if our youngest brother is with us will we go. We cannot see the man’s face unless our youngest brother is with us.’ Your servant my father said to us, ‘You know that my wife bore me two sons. One of them went away from me, and I said, “He has surely been torn to pieces.” And I have not seen him since. If you take this one from me too and harm comes to him, you will bring my grey head down to the grave in misery.’ So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy’s life, sees that the boy isn’t there, he will die. Your servants will bring the grey head of our father down to the grave in sorrow.”²⁶

Now look at verse 32. “Your servant guaranteed the boy’s safety to my father.” The word that is translated “guaranteed” is a verbal form of that Hebrew word, ערבון, *arabon*.

I want you to let that sink in. The Hebrew word, ערבון, *arabon*, deposit, guarantee, first installment, earnest money, pledge, is only used three times in the Old Testament. But the verbal form is used more than that. And here Judah uses the verbal form.²⁷

Bear with me for a moment, and let’s see if we can connect these dots. You see, up to the time of Tamar, Judah is what? Not only is he not accepting responsibility or accountability for his actions, he is shifting them to other people. But now, not only does he accept responsibility—notice he confesses his sin—but he does something else. He not only accepts responsibility for himself and his actions, he accepts responsibility for someone else. He accepts accountability for someone else.

I want you to see what he says. Look at it, because he is repeating what is said earlier in the book of Genesis. The old man never did let Benjamin go with Reuben because Reuben said, “If I don’t bring him back you can kill my boys.”²⁸

Do you know what Judah said? Judah said, “Daddy, I will be responsible for this boy. I myself will be an, ערבון, *arabon*”—if you want to translate the verb that way— “I myself will be an, ערבון, *arabon* for this boy. If I don’t bring him back, then I will bear the responsibility, the guilt of it for the rest of my life.”²⁹

Do you see the principle of substitution? Do you see here how the first Jew has come to know God and has come to take responsibility for his own actions, for his own conduct? And now as he has matured in his walk with God, he is now taking responsibility for other people. He is now offering himself as a substitute.

²⁶ Genesis 44:18-31

²⁷ ערב, *’arab*

²⁸ See Genesis 42:37

²⁹ See Genesis 43:9

Let's read further, because it is very powerful. So he says, "Your servant guaranteed..."³⁰ That is, "Your servant [committed himself to be an, עֲרָבוֹן, *arrabon*] for the boy's safety to my father.' I said, 'If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!'"³¹

It is amazing that the old man saw something in Judah he didn't see in Reuben. Reuben said, "If I don't bring him back, kill my sons." But he sees in Judah, "This man is taking responsibility seriously. This man has gone from being a philandering, womanizing, skirt-chasing man, who shifts responsibility, to taking responsibility for his own conduct. And now this man is willing to take responsibility for the safety of my youngest boy."

And that is why Jacob lets Judah take Benjamin down to Egypt.

Now hold on. It gets better. And, "I said, 'If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!'"³²

Verse 33.

Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father.³³

Do you see the amazing change in the character of Judah? Before, when he heard the old man weep and cry because his son Joseph was no more, the guilt drove him away to become a pagan living among the Canaanites. But now he said, "I am going to take responsibility for my father's peace of mind. I made myself an, עֲרָבוֹן, *arrabon*, a pledge for my brother and I am willing to give up my freedom for the rest of my life. Don't take Benjamin." Joseph had had his cup hidden in Benjamin's sack, if you remember the Bible story. He said, "Don't take Benjamin. Let him go back to my father so my father can have peace and joy the rest of his life. Let me go to prison and be your slave forever."

Now, I want you to see two truths. Turn with me, if you will, to Ephesians 1:11, and we are almost done. Two great truths. In this sordid story, because Genesis 38 is one of the most sordid and vile incidents recorded in all of Scripture. In the middle of it are buried two precious jewels that are a foreshadowing of the gospel. Ephesians chapter one—page 1818. And we will begin reading at verse 11 to get us to the context of verse 14.

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for

³⁰ Genesis 44:32

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Genesis 44:33-34

the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit....³⁴

The New Testament uses this Greek word, ἀρραβών, *arrabon*, the transliteration of the Hebrew word, עֶרְבֹן, *arrabon*, three times.³⁵ And in all three cases, they are used of the Holy Spirit.

So I want you to understand the Hebrew word is used three times only, all in Genesis 38, referring to what? Referring to Judah's signet ring and staff. But the New Testament uses the Greek transliteration three times, each time of the Holy Spirit. And what he is he telling us about the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 1:14. He is the, ἀρραβών, *arrabon* of our inheritance. What does that mean?

It means that if you go out to buy a home—let's say you are going to buy a \$100,000 home and you...there are several folks, perhaps, interested in it. But you say, "Well, I want to buy this home."

"So, well, I've got other folks interested. Do you have...are you willing to make some kind of pledge, some kind of commitment? Are you willing to put some earnest money down?"

You say, "Yes, I will give you \$1000 in earnest money which is guaranteeing my interest in the house."

What happens if you back out on the deal a week later? What happens to your \$1000? You forfeit that \$1000. Your \$1000 is—to use the Hebrew word—an, עֶרְבֹן, *arrabon*. It is like this staff and this signet ring. It is earnest money. It is a deposit. If you don't live up to your commitment, you lose it.

Now I want you to understand something. Jesus has earned for you and me, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is an, עֶרְבֹן, *arrabon*. The Holy Spirit is a deposit, a pledge. What does that mean? It means that when you receive the Holy Spirit he is yours to keep. And he is your guarantee that you are going to happen.

"How do I know I am going to go to heaven when I die?"

It is not up to me. It is not up to my goodness or my faithfulness. It is up to Jesus who has given me the, עֶרְבֹן, *arrabon*. I have got the, עֶרְבֹן, *arrabon*. I have the deposit. I have the pledge. The pledge is the Holy Spirit. God will not abandon the Holy Spirit. God will take the Holy Spirit to heaven, and he will take me along with him.

³⁴ Ephesians 1:11-14

³⁵ 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:14

I want you to understand that the security of the believer is found buried in this sordid tale in Genesis 38, because the Holy Spirit is the, **ערבון**, *arrabon*, the pledge guaranteeing the full payment of your salvation.

But I want you to see the other truth. I want you to see that just as the first Jew, Judah, made himself an, **ערבון**, *arrabon* to guarantee that young Benjamin would be able to go be with Father, I want you to understand that the greatest Jew of all times, the Lord Jesus Christ, that true descendant of Judah, the Lord Jesus Christ, on the cross made himself an, **ערבון**, *arrabon* for you.

It is not just, “Well, I’m willing to go be in prison and be your slave for life.” Jesus dies as your substitute in your place, and by his death he is an, **ערבון**, *arrabon*. He secures, he guarantees that you will go be with Father. I want you to understand something that sometimes in the darkest places are the brightest things. Sometimes in the worst events are the best events. I want you to understand that in this chapter of the Bible that you probably never read when you read children’s Bible stories to your children at night because people said, “Well, that’s just not good for people to hear...” People are too prissy for the Holy Spirit, you know. So they just gloss over it.

I want to tell you that in the most sordid, unseemly saga in all of biblical literature are buried two wonderful truths. The Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of your salvation and Jesus who, like his ancestor Judah, guarantees, at his own personal loss, your salvation, because Jesus died on the cross as your substitute. He secured your salvation so you would go be with Father.

You are like Benjamin, and he is like Judah. He is your, **ערבון**, *arrabon*, and he gave you the Holy Spirit as an, **ערבון**, *arrabon*.

Do you know this Jesus? Do you know this Jesus, this Jesus who is the great descendant of Judah, who becomes a slave for your sin in order that you would be free and able to go back to Father’s house, this Jesus who gave the Holy Spirit as an, **ערבון**, *arrabon* who comes to live inside every believer guaranteeing that one day you will go be with Father?

Isn’t it an amazing thing? If Tamar had not been able to produce the, **ערבון**, *arrabon*, she would have been burned to death, and there would have been no King David and there would have been no Messiah. But she was able to produce the, **ערבון**, *arrabon*. Do you have the, **ערבון**, *arrabon*?

Let’s pray.

*Lord, we thank you for Jesus who is our, **ערבון**, *arrabon* and who has given us the Holy Spirit as an, **ערבון**, *arrabon* guaranteeing our salvation to come. Lord, I pray if there is anybody here today who doesn’t know the Lord, that you would draw them to yourself. Lord, if there is anybody with a need for prayer, that they would come and let us pray for them. We thank you for the abundant provision that is ours through this descendant of Judah, the Lord Jesus who died as our substitute and gave us the Holy Spirit as a pledge. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.*

(b)