

GENESIS 38:6-10

MEN WHOM GOD KILLED!

DISHONOURING THE FAMILY

“Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. But Er, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD put him to death. Then Judah said to Onan, ‘Go in to your brother’s wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother.’ 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. And what he did was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and he put him to death also.”¹

God is holy. We ignore this truth to our own detriment. He judges sin, always revealing divine justice. Though all sin is an offence to Holy God, and though all sin shall be judged ultimately, some sins ensure judgement in this life. Among the sins which God judges most harshly and most swiftly are sins dishonouring one’s family. Such swift and terrible judgement speaks to the importance of the family in the divine economy.

Throughout Scripture are found warnings against dishonouring our parents, against dishonouring our lineage. It is a serious sin against the Living God to dishonour the family. To realise the verity of this statement, one need but recall the fifth commandment, the initial commandment to be given with a promise: “Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you” [EXODUS 20:12]. To dishonour one’s parents is to invite God’s wrath. To despise one’s family is to incur swift judgement.

The Wise Man wrote an arresting proverb that I required my children to memorise.

“The eye that mocks a father
and scorns to obey a mother
will be picked out by the ravens of the valley
and eaten by the vultures.”

[PROVERBS 30:17]

Dishonouring one’s family invites divine judgement—judgement that can result in death. Overarching this current series of studies of individuals whom God killed is a verse that we do well to always hold in mind. Whenever I am reading accounts of divine judgement, I always hold in mind these solemn words, “These things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did” [1 CORINTHIANS 10:6]. God has provided such examples to warn against behaviour that displeases Him, against attitudes and actions that are unworthy of His people.

Though undoubtedly there have been other individuals who were killed because they defied the Living God, among the first accounts to be included in the Word of God are two brothers—Er and Onan. These two sons of Judah should have stood in the lineage of the Saviour; instead, they were put to death by the LORD God for their actions. What can we learn from the failure of these two men to honour their family? Let’s explore the divine text to discover what God would have us learn.

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THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL — The deaths of Er and Onan did not happen in a vacuum; these two brothers grew to manhood in what can only be described as a dysfunctional home. Perhaps one could argue that all homes are dysfunctional to one degree or another, but the home in which these boys grew to manhood appears to have stood out for its lack of a strong father in the home. As a great grandson of Abraham, Judah, their father, should have been a model of righteousness; however, early in his life he revealed a bent toward the self-life. Though Judah's name is intimately associated with the Messiah, he didn't start well in life.

Other than being named as a son of Jacob by Leah, Judah's youth is otherwise unknown. His character is first revealed in a dark incident that cast neither him nor his brothers in a positive light. Ten of Jacob's sons are tending the family flocks in Shechem when Jacob sends Joseph to check up on them. Of course, you will recall that his brothers were quite put out with Joseph because he was a favourite of their father. Jacob appears not to have given much thought to the matter, but jealousy was simmering in his family.

Joseph was the firstborn of Rachel, Jacob's favourite wife. Jacob had been tricked into marrying Leah when he thought he was marrying Rachel. The story is sordid and the consequences are devastating and long-term [see **GENESIS 29:1 ff.**]. Rachel attempted to manipulate God and her husband, but she remained barren while Leah was giving birth to multiple children. Unlike modern families, in which children are often seen as a burden to the family, throughout most of history, children have been welcomed. It seems that only in societies marked by extreme affluence are children seen as a drain on parents. Wealth tends to blind people to what is truly valuable; and modern society has grown both affluent and incapable of realising the value of children. It can be said of our society that we know the cost of everything and value of nothing.

Jacob was less than a sterling model of servants of the Living God. As he grew older, he moved ever closer to a godly walk, but the formative years for his children ill-prepared them for life. His children displayed a disregard for their father; in fact, they appear callused and cold at times. Only after years had passed would these boys begin to demonstrate emotional maturity; and this maturity arose out of a sense that they are being confronted by God for the evil they had done toward their younger brother and their father. But, I'm getting ahead of myself.

Back to the incident that reveals the callused nature of these boys, and Judah in particular [**GENESIS 37:12-38:5**]. At his father's request, Joseph was seeking his brothers to see how the flocks were faring. He was wearing a special robe that his father had made for him to distinguish him from the remainder of the family; perhaps it was the only robe he owned. After searching for some time, Joseph did find the flocks and his brothers near Dothan. However, his brothers saw him coming from some distance. They recognised him by the robe he was wearing.

Seeing an opportunity to rid themselves of what they saw as oppressive behaviour toward them, they argued that they would kill him. Reuben, who appears to have been away from the others when this discussion was taking place, was apprised as he returned to the group. Reuben appears to have been horrified at the suggestion to kill Joseph, and he quickly formulates a plan to simply throw him into one of the natural pits found in that area. Reuben had it in his mind to sneak back and rescue him later. Reuben was able to sell his plan. The brothers seize Joseph, strip off his coat that symbolised the favouritism their father had shown toward him and threw him into the pit. Then, they sat down to eat. They were unconcerned that he was pleading with them not to leave him in the pit. How could they eat their meal and ignore their brother's pleas? Their actions can only be described as unconscionable.

Despite his pathetic pleas, the brothers ignored Joseph and continued eating their meal. Years later, these heartless brothers would recall how callused they had been when they mused, “We are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we did not listen” [GENESIS 42:21]. As they ate, they saw a caravan approaching. These were Midianites traders, laden with goods destined for trade in Egypt. It was Judah that hatched a wicked plan that would spare the brothers of blood guilt and yet allow them to rid themselves of their brother, whom they hated. Hatred has a tendency to warp the capacity to think clearly.

Judah suggested that they sell their brother to the Midianites. In doing this, the brothers would not be guilty of killing Joseph, and he would be out of their hair permanently! They drew Joseph out of the pit. How he must have momentarily imagined that they had been playing a cruel prank, but it was now over. Only... The brothers seized Joseph and began to barter with the Midianites. Soon enough, they agreed on twenty shekels as the price for Joseph who was bound and dragged along behind the caravan destined as a slave to be sold in Egypt. One can only imagine the horror he felt as the realisation dawned that he was being sold into slavery by his own brothers! Unbelief must have surged over him as he heard the dickering, and realised that he was the commodity being sold! How he must have protested, crying and begging for his brothers to relent! Alas, his pleas, his cries availed nothing. In a short while, he was gone, bound and dragged behind the caravan.

Reuben had not been present when this was all taking place. Perhaps as the eldest son, he had assumed responsibility to care for the sheep. In any case, upon returning and discovering that Joseph was no longer in the pit, he realised that something terrible had taken place. The brothers admitted what they had done, and Reuben was disconsolate. He was in on the initial action, but he never dreamed that they would actually sell their brother into slavery.

It is a fact that one evil deed opens the door to another evil deed, ensuring that wickedness will always be compounded. A lie told demands another lie in order to support the first, until all life is built on a gossamer platform that is unsustainable. David slept with another man’s wife and his sinful lust led ultimately to murder. Sin is always compounded until it overwhelms the sinner and contaminates all around.

The boys would now be compelled to concoct a story to account for Joseph’s disappearance. They had kept his robe, the robe that caused them such angst, but they could never benefit from it. They couldn’t wear it; they couldn’t keep it. The story the young men made up is related as follows. “They took Joseph’s robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. And they sent the robe of many colors and brought it to their father and said, ‘This we have found; please identify whether it is your son’s robe or not.’” Of course, they knew it was his robe; they had stripped it from him themselves. They had not calculated the sorrow they would introduce into the life of their aged father.

“[Jacob] identified it and said, ‘It is my son’s robe. A fierce animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces.’ Then Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days.”

Each time they saw old Jacob weeping and mourning, they must have felt shame growing in their hearts. Each time they were forced to walk silently in front of his tent, they must have felt fear that he would discover their dreadful deed that had bereaved the old man. They tried to comfort him—heaven knows they tried; but their efforts were without avail. The text informs us, “All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted and said, ‘No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning.’ Thus his father wept for him” [GENESIS 37:31-35].

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Judah had been the primary source of the plan to do evil against Joseph. He had gone along with the initial plan to kill Joseph. Reuben had restrained the brothers; but it was Judah who then hatched the plot to sell him into slavery. Having given himself to do evil, it seems that he could no longer stand to be in the presence of his aged father. He knew that he was the source of his father's sorrow. He knew that he had betrayed his brother. Though the text does not say so, I suggest that his guilt was working to create deep disgust with his actions. It would lead one day to repentance, accepting his guilt in betraying his brother; but he would move deeper into a dissolute life before he could be the divine instrument from whom Messiah would come.

In the closing days of his life, Jacob prophesied of Judah:

“Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
your father's sons shall bow down before you.
Judah is a lion's cub;
from the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He stooped down; he crouched as a lion
and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?
The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until tribute comes to him;
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”

[GENESIS 49:8-10]

Biblical scholars recognise this as a Messianic prophecy—Messiah would come from the Tribe of Judah. But all that lay far in the future; and Judah would have to experience separation from God for a longer time before getting his life right.

Judah left home; he went down to the Canaanites, the very people whom God had told Abraham He would displace. In **GENESIS 12:6**, we read, “Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your offspring I will give this land.’”

Later, the promise became even more specific. “The LORD said to Abram, ‘Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.’”

“When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day, the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim’” **[GENESIS 15:13-20]**,

This is the land that is contested by the world. Having given the land to Israel following the Holocaust, the nations of the world now want to drive the Jewish people from that land. Let me say quite clearly, the Palestinians do not want peace with Israel—they want the extermination of the Jewish people! And the nations of the world appear to be lining up with them to drive Israel from the land.

Those who attempt to fight against Israel are spitting in the face of Holy God! They shall not succeed. God Himself will fight for Israel; and the nations that attempt to destroy God's ancient people will destroy themselves on the anvil of divine might. Any nation that would think to do harm to Israel must heed the divine warning, "Thus said the LORD of hosts, after his glory sent me to the nations who plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye" [ZECHARIAH 2:8].

Thus, Judah went down to live among the Canaanites. There, he married a Canaanite woman named Shua. Shua bore Judah three sons—Er, Onan and Shelah [see GENESIS 38:1-4]. Take a bit longer to examine Judah's house. The first son was named Er, which means "Watcher." The child's bright eyes watched all that went on in the home. He watched his father and mother as they conducted their lives, noting especially his father's neglect of spiritual leadership. He watched also his mother's practise of her hypersexual religion. He watched his father ignore his family's spiritual needs.

A second son was born. I find it interesting to note that he was named by his mother. She named this little boy, Onan, "Strength." That she named him and that she gave him this particular name tells me that she was increasingly the dominant influence in the family. Judah had retreated from taking responsibility to direct the spiritual affairs of the family. Onan grew strong in the pagan worldview and in living the pagan lifestyle.

Then, a third son was born; as she had with Onan, his mother named him as well; she named him Shelah, which means, "The One Who Breaks." It is as though Shua was celebrating Judah's break with the old religion of worship of the Living God. Judah had completely turned from following God, and he had turned to nothing. Really, no one turns to nothing when they turn from worshipping the Lord God; they begin to worship themselves. And Judah was worshipping himself; he was doing nothing, which left him empty and living a futile life.

A pagan woman was running the house; she was exercising influence in all the affairs of the family. The children grow in a home where a weak man lives and a strong woman rules the home. These are not children of promise. They have no guidance to look to the LORD; all their training leads them to look to gratification of their own desires. When Abraham had sought a wife for his son Isaac, he commanded his servant, "Go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac" [GENESIS 24:4]. In addition to this stern command, Abraham demanded of his servant, "See to it that you do not take my son back there" [GENESIS 24:6].

Though Jacob had to flee from home because he had stolen the birthright, Rebekah had persuaded Isaac to set him back to Paddan-aram to find a wife. Isaac's directions to Jacob were, "You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women. Arise, go to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel your mother's father, and take as your wife from there one of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. May he give the blessing of Abraham to you and to your offspring with you, that you may take possession of the land of your sojournings that God gave to Abraham" [GENESIS 28:1-4]!

Despite the actions of his great-grandfather, his grandfather and his father, Judah did take a Canaanite wife; this was marriage based on chemistry and not on principle. It was as if Judah was turning his back on his heritage. I want you to hold this thought: Jacob occupied the place of the birthright since each of his older brothers had sinned in egregious fashion. Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, had slept with his father's concubine [see GENESIS 35:22]. Simeon and Levi deceived the men of Shechem, slaughtering them. These brothers earned their father's scorn. His prophecy concerning these three eldest sons notes their character flaws.

“Reuben, you are my firstborn,
my might, and the first fruits of my strength,
preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.
Unstable as water, you shall not have pre-eminence,
because you went up to your father’s bed;
then you defiled it—he went up to my couch!

“Simeon and Levi are brothers;
weapons of violence are their swords.
Let my soul come not into their council;
O my glory, be not joined to their company.
For in their anger they killed men,
and in their willfulness they hamstrung oxen.
Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce,
and their wrath, for it is cruel!
I will divide them in Jacob
and scatter them in Israel.”

[GENESIS 49:3-7]

FAMILY SIN COMPOUNDED — “Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. But Er, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD put him to death” [GENESIS 38:6, 7]. Having sinned by marrying a Canaanite, and make no mistake, this was a sin, Judah compounds his sinful behaviour by taking a Canaanite wife for his eldest son, Er.

The name “Tamar,” means “Date Palm.” It seems to convey that she was tall and slender. Whatever her looks, Tamar proved to be a woman of character. Tamar is also the name of a daughter of David the king [2 SAMUEL 13:1]; also, Absalom named his daughter “Tamar.” Thus, though the name was a Canaanite name, it entered into the Hebrew vocabulary after this incident with Judah’s family. The Bible is silent about the particular sin of which Er was guilty, informing readers only that, “Er, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD put him to death” [GENESIS 38:7]. There is no particular benefit in attempting to determine what his sin might have been. It suffices to say that God does judge sin; and some sins are sufficiently egregious, flagrant, blatant that they cannot be ignored. Apparently, whatever wickedness that Er had embraced fell into this category. Therefore, God put him to death.

My father often “consoled” me when I was ill by saying, “Only the good die young.” That proverb is not really supported by Scripture. In fact, Scripture appears to indicate that an early death may be due to divine displeasure. Among the Proverbs is one which warns,

“The fear of the Lord prolongs life,
but the years of the wicked will be short.”

[PROVERBS 10:27]

Let me caution you that the Proverbs are generalised statements based upon observation; they are not absolutes. Wickedness disposes one to a brief life; but not all that die young are wicked.

Though he was a miserable comforter, Bildad still gave voice to the perception that the wicked die young, when he said,

“Can papyrus grow where there is no marsh?
Can reeds flourish where there is no water?
While yet in flower and not cut down,
they wither before any other plant.
Such are the paths of all who forget God;
the hope of the godless shall perish.”

[JOB 8:11-13]

Eliphaz was another of Job’s comforters. He also wanted to make this maxim an absolute truth. He said,

“Let [the wicked] not trust in emptiness, deceiving himself,
for emptiness will be his payment.
It will be paid in full before his time,
and his branch will not be green.
He will shake off his unripe grape like the vine,
and cast off his blossom like the olive tree.”

[JOB 15:31-33]

God does judge the wicked; but to make a statement of His judgement must never lead us into imagining that we know how God shall act in a given situation. We tend to forget that our God is a God of mercy and grace; and He always extends grace. Peter teaches us, “The Lord is not slow to fulfil His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” **[2 PETER 3:9]**. Those who repent of evil and turn to the Risen Christ will find mercy and forgiveness. Still, if an individual persists in doing what is wicked, he acts presumptuously, daring the Lord God to do something about that individual’s sin.

I understand that there are people who doubt that God will judge. I am quite confident that I have witnessed God judging individuals, removing them from this life because of persistent sin. In their presumption, they defied the Living God, and He said, “Enough!”

Luis Pantoja was a fellow pastor with whom I had worked in Dallas and later in Vancouver. Doctor Pantoja on one occasion was visiting in a home of a church member. The man of the house was arrogant and rude toward his own family and toward Brother Luis. That man made a statement of defiance toward the Lord God. Luis reacted by cautioning the man that he was defying God. “God will do nothing to me,” the man brazenly declared. “I can say whatever I want.”

“Then, I shall pray that God kills you right now,” Luis said in a calm voice.

“I don’t care,” the man exclaimed.

With that, Luis stood, walked over to where the man was seated, placed his hand on the man’s head and began to pray. He hadn’t gotten much beyond addressing the Judge of all mankind when the man suddenly exclaimed, “That isn’t necessary. I take it all back.” It is good that he did so, for it would not do to defy God. It is good to remember that “Our God is a consuming fire” **[HEBREWS 12:28]**.

DESPISING THE FAMILY — “Judah said to Onan, ‘Go in to your brother’s wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother.’ 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. And what he did was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and he put him to death also” [GENESIS 38:8-10].

Er was “wicked in the sight of the LORD.” Having been raised in the family, Onan was likewise said to be “wicked in the sight of the LORD.” Judah had failed to honour God during the days of his life; these boys had never had a godly father to model their lives after. They were the generation that followed a man determined to do what he wanted rather than doing what honoured the LORD. Let me warn the men who listen, what you are is what your children will be—only more so!

I know a dear pastor friend who came to faith later in life. He was a gifted man who was used by God to build a church where there had been none. The tragedy of his life is that his sons had grown to manhood without a godly influence in their lives. They were in their late teens and early twenties when that father came to faith. He had lived a godless life until he was converted. The one great blot of his life is that though he and his wife are serving God, his sons do not know the Lord. Throughout their formative years, they were trained to pursue their own desires; and that is exactly what they are doing. I know God is gracious; perhaps they will yet come to faith and live for Christ. However, they have children who are even now watching their fathers live for themselves rather than living for God. Give your children a godly model; do so early.

How was Onan wicked? After the death of Er, “Judah said to Onan, ‘Go in to your brother’s wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother’” [GENESIS 38:8]. The marital practise in that day dictated that when a man died childless, his brother would marry the widow in order to produce an heir in the name of his dead brother. The son born of this marriage would not be the son of the man who impregnated the woman, but the son would be his deceased brother’s son. Because he would be the son of the deceased brother, this child would be the legal heir with firstborn privileges. To ensure that people understood the serious nature of what was taking place, the son born of this union would be given the name of the deceased brother. To fail to participate in this practise was to reveal a lack of brotherly love. Such an unloving individual would be viewed with contempt. The practise is known as levirate marriage, from the Latin term “levir,” meaning “husband’s brother.” This was later adopted as part of the Mosaic Law [see DEUTERONOMY 25:5-10]. However, the practise is of ancient origin.

Thus, though Onan would be married to Tamar, any child born of that union would receive all the rights of the firstborn—he would receive the birthright. Onan outwardly accepted the benefits of marriage to Tamar, but refused to fulfil his duty as the “levir.” So far as those about him could see, Onan was honouring his dead brother and his brother’s wife, but he was not about to fulfil the responsibility assigned. The implication is that Onan wanted to obtain the birthright. Since Er was dead, if there was no son born to Tamar, then Onan would be counted as the firstborn and receive the rights of primogeniture.

Onan dishonoured his brother and compounded his sin by allowing his greed to overwhelm him. Onan used the custom for his own gratification without actually fulfilling the responsibility. Dishonouring his family as he did was reprehensible before the Lord; therefore, the LORD put Onan to death. The family was marred by sinful attitudes and sinful actions stretching back all the way to Jacob who stole the birthright from his brother, Esau. Judah had imbibed deeply of the same attitude, and now his children adopted what he had modelled.

Why is this story here. It is an interlude of twenty-two years following the sale of Joseph into slavery and the need of the brothers to reunite to go down to Egypt to buy food. So, the story does serve as *history* to give us perspective. The biblical account of Jacob's family is presented warts and all. It is important for us to know the history of this family.

The importance of the history is that we are provided with a practical warning of the *consequences of poor moral choices* in our own lives. One of the grave dangers for Christians is that we are tempted to live like our neighbours rather than living as the people of God. It is easy to dress as they dress, speak as they speak, entertain ourselves with their entertainment, adopt their attitudes. However, as we read this account of the descent of Judah into a moral morass, we are warned to beware of allowing ourselves to become indistinguishable from the world.

There is a broad aspect that the account is provided to remind us of the importance of the *Community of Faith*. We know that Christians are taught to marry within the Faith. We know that there are serious consequences when we marry outside of the Faith. Judah had left his family, even trying to forsake the God of his fathers. When he immersed himself in the pagan culture, he had no opportunity to build a godly family. Similarly, young women are not likely to find godly men in the bar scene. Young men are not likely to find godly women working in strip clubs. Though it seems painful for the moment, sacrificing the permanent on the altar of the temporary leads to disaster.

Overarching the account of what was happening in Judah's family is the matter of *grace*. It isn't apparent from the short vignette presented in the text for this message, but the story does continue. Those whom we met in the story today were far from perfect individuals, and yet, God will use them. Though Tamar will employ her pagan worldview to get a child, God will include her in the lineage of the Messiah. As Matthew opens the Gospel bearing his name, he writes, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

"Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram" [MATTHEW 1:1-3]. There is Tamar, one of only three women named in the lineage of the Saviour. God will intervene to use her to the praise of His glory, just as He will use you as you bring yourself under His reign.

Judah was certainly not a paragon of spiritual virtue. He appears at this point to be moving in a downward spiral; he hasn't even reached the nadir at this point! He will slide still farther toward the bottom before he is arrested by events. Tamar will confront him with his own failure, compelling him to confess that he is sinful. Then, he will offer his life in exchange for his brother Benjamin. In the process, he will begin the journey to become the lion described by his father's prophecy. He will at last set in motion the changes that move his progeny to stand firm in the Faith and in anticipation of fulfilment of God's promised blessing in the Messiah.

In the same way, few of us are the model of righteousness we long to be. In fact, if the secrets of your life were displayed for all to see, you would be horrified. Perhaps you struggle not to castigate yourself for your failures, and you wonder how God can love you. As you berate yourself after some particular failure, even Satan piles on and reminds you that you really don't have much to offer God.

Here is a truth we each need to seize—God loves us in spite of who we are and in spite of our failures. He sent His Son to die because of our broken condition. We come to Him with our brokenness, offering Him the ruined lives the describe each of us, and He accepts us. God is not a junk dealer; He works to produce the finest gold and silver from the raw materials we present. And He is working in your life, even now.

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This is the message of grace that we present today. Christ Jesus presented His life as a sacrifice because of our sin. He was crucified, buried and has now risen from the tomb. Now, the call of God to each of us is, "If you openly agree with God that Jesus Christ is Master, believing with all your being that He has been raised from the dead, you will be set free. It is with the heart that one believes and is made right with the Father, and it is through agreeing with God that one is set free." The Word of God promises, "Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved" [**ROMANS 10:13**].

May God call many to life and may He confirm those who believe. Amen.