

# Rejected but blessed

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Preacher: Benji Cook

[ 0 : 00 ] Today's first reading is from Genesis 38. So that's Genesis 38 on page 38. It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to a certain Adulamite whose name was Hera. There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. He took her and went into her and she conceived and bore a son and he called his name Ur. She conceived again and bore a son and she called his name Onan. Yet again she bore a son and she called his name Shelah. Judah was in Chezeb when she bore him. And Judah took a wife for Ur, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. But Ur, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord and the Lord put him to death. Then Judah said to

Onan, go into 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 into 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. Then Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, remain a widow in your father's house till Shelah, my son, grows up. For he feared that he would die like his brothers. So Tamar went and remained in her father's house. In course of time, the wife of Judah, Shua's daughter, died. When Judah was comforted, he went up to Timnah to his sheep shearers, he and his friend Hira, the Adulamite. And when Tamar was told, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep, she took off her widow garments and covered herself with a veil, wrapping herself up and sat at the entrance to Enayim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that Shelah was grown up and she had not been given to him in marriage. When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. He turned to her at the roadside and said, come, let me come into you. For he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, what will you give me that you may come into me? He answered, I will send you a young goat from the flock. And she said, if you give me a pledge until you send it. He said, what pledge shall I give you? She replied, your signet and your cord and your staff that is in your hand. So he gave them to her and went into her and she conceived by him.

[ 3 : 04 ] Then she arose and went away and taking off her veil, she put on the garments of her widowhood. When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adulamite to take back the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her. And he asked the men of the place, where is the cult prostitute who was at Enayim at the roadside? And they said, no cult prostitute's been here. So he returned to Judah and said, to Judah and said, I have not found her. Also, the men of the place said, no cult prostitute has been here.

And Judah replied, let her keep the things as her own or we shall be laughed at. You see, I sent her this young goat and you did not find her. About three months later, Judah was told, Tamar, your daughter-in-law has been immoral.

Moreover, she is pregnant by immorality. And Judah said, bring her out and let her be burned. As she was brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, by the man to whom these belong, I am pregnant. And she said, please identify who these are, the signet and the cord and the staff.

Then Judah identified them and said, she is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son, Sheila, and he did not know her again.

When the time of her labor came, there were twins in her womb. And when she was in labor, one put out a hand and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, this one came out first.

[ 4 : 42 ] But as he drew back his hand, behold, his brother came out. And she said, what a breach you have made for yourself. Therefore, his name was called Perez. Afterwards, his brother came out with the scarlet thread on his hand, and his name was called Zerah.

The second reading is from Genesis chapter 39, starting at verse 1. Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there.

The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.

So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake.

The blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field. So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him, he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.

[ 6 : 12 ] Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance, and after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, Lie with me. But he refused and said to his master's wife, Behold, because of me, my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge.

He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?

And as she spoke to Joseph, day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her. But one day, when he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house was there in the house, she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me.

But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house. And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of the house, she called to the men of her household and said to them, See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us.

He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house.

[ 7 : 37 ] Then she laid up his garment by her until his master came home. And she told him the same story, saying, The Hebrew servant whom you have brought among us came in to me to laugh at me.

But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house. As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, This is the way your servant treated me.

His anger was kindled, and Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison.

But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison.

Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed.

[ 8 : 41 ] Well, very warm welcome to you. My name is Benji. If you don't know me, please do you come say hello. I'm on the staff here at Grace Church, Dulwich, one of the assistant ministers.

Evil is a problem, isn't it? If we're really honest with ourselves, it's a big problem. A really big problem. The world seems so full of it. And that question that we hear our friends asking us over and over, I can't believe in a God who would allow dot, dot, dot.

And you can insert whatever the dot, dot, dot is into that. A world that seems full of people like Harvey Weinstein and Jeffrey Epstein, Lucy Letby's and Wayne Gracie's, politicians that are just in it for themselves.

They lie and they cheat and we roll our eyes and we think, same old, same old. I can't believe in a God who would dot, dot, dot. Evil is a problem. But for the Christian, it is potentially an even bigger problem.

And if we're really honest with ourselves, if we're brutally honest with ourselves, we know this. We know that it potentially is an even bigger problem. Christians, we believe in this big doctrinal word called God's sovereignty.

[ 9 : 53 ] And what we mean by that is that we believe that God is in control of every single thing that happens in this world. Every single thing. And so then the obvious question of why would God allow a world where half the world is unreached?

Why would God allow a world where Christians experience cancer and job loss and mental health problems? Why would God allow a world where my children don't respond to the gospel no matter how much I pray for them?

Or my partner won't respond to the gospel no matter how much I pray for them? Why would God allow a world like that? Evil is a problem. It's a really big problem.

Is it a problem that is too big for God? Is it? And our world in Genesis, you probably didn't think that you were going to have all that lovely graphic detail on a Sunday morning from our reading.

But it's very real, isn't it, this morning? The world of Genesis, because it's our world, is a world that is equally full of evil. There's no difference. We saw right from the Garden of Eden that man took matters into their own hands.

[10:57] And the very first children, well, how did they behave to one another? Well, Cain murdered his brother Abel. Lamech, Cain's son, was then boasting, saying, well, whilst Cain only murdered one man, I would murder seven.

The Tower of Babel, I'm trying to get rid of God. Humanity saying, I'm going to reach God myself. I don't need him at all. It's a desperate time. So God's solution way back in Genesis 12 was to say, if I can just get one family, just one, doesn't matter if the whole rest of the world is evil.

If I can just get one, then everything will be okay. So he chooses Abraham's family, and we're kind of crossing our fingers, thinking, yes, this is going to be the solution. Abraham's family doesn't matter if everybody else is evil, as long as they're good.

And what do we see? Incest, murder, adultery, rage, backstabbing, brothers killing brothers.

Is evil too big a problem for God? If God's big solution, Abraham, I will make a nation from your one offspring. And God can't even do that. Is evil too big a problem for God?

[12:07] We're going to have only one point this morning. Just one point. And we're going to see it in two case studies. That's where the handout is going to be particularly helpful. You'll see that point one and point two are the same, not a typo.

We're going to see the same points across two case studies. We'll spend most of our time in the first case study, so don't worry if you're feeling really hot and sweaty and thinking we're only halfway through. Most of the time will be spent on the first one.

And the point, whilst it's simple to hear, is enormously difficult to grasp. It is this. Our evil, God's good.

Our evil, God's good. And that's what we're going to see over and over and over again. So the first case study is chapter 38, our story of Judah.

Our story is shocking, isn't it? I'm sure as you had to kind of take a double take at some of the details as Laura read that out. How is that in the Bible? You might be thinking. It is though basically that the author of Genesis has taken all the evil that you could possibly imagine and tried to pack it all into one story.

[13:13] That's essentially what's happened. What if I just take the most wretched, vile, evil little man and see what God does with it? That's basically what we're doing this morning in Genesis 38.

And the evil starts basically right from the off. I wonder if we noticed that. So Genesis chapter 38 verse 1. It happened at that time Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to a certain Dolomite whose name was Hera.

Now this is wretched. He's a coward. He's a complete coward. Why? Because if we look just across the page to the chapter before at verse 35, this is talking about his father Jacob.

All Jacob's sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him. But Jacob refused to be comforted and said, No, I shall go down to Sheil to my own mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

Judah has basically, in his mind, killed his brother. He sold him to slavery. He returns home and obviously his father's weeping. And what does Judah, the very good, very faithful son do, leaves.

[14:19] He's like, I can't cope with this. Can't cope with the confrontation of my guilt. Can't cope with my father who's weeping at something that I am responsible for. So he leaves. He leaves. What does he then go on to do?

Verse 2. There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shewa. He took her and went into her. And she conceived and bore a son. I wonder if your kind of Genesis alarm bells are ringing when you see saw and took.

Saw and took. What does that remind you of? Eve in the garden. She saw that the fruit was good. She knew she should not take it. She took it. And here we know. Judah knows that he shouldn't be

taking a Canaanite wife.

He saw her. He took her. Whilst his father is mourning his brother's death. Charming. To say the least. He has three sons by his wife Tamar.

Sorry. Not by his wife Tamar. Sorry. By his Canaanite wife Shewa. The first verse 6 is Ur. And he gets for Ur a wife called Tamar. Who is also. That's a Canaanite name.

[15:20] So Judah has entirely given up on listening to the command about not intermarrying. And not only has he had a Canaanite half son. He's then gone and thought. Hmm. I will get him a Canaanite wife.

It's going really, really well so far. A coward. A lecherous old man. And now completely ignoring the commands of God over and over. But verse 7. Ur's.

Judah's firstborn was wicked in the sight of the Lord. And the Lord put him to death. Now we might not be too surprised when we realize that Ur in Hebrew was evil. Spelled backwards. That's quite a parenting faux pas potentially to call your son evil.

Spelled backwards. But we're not told exactly why he was wicked. He was just wicked. He was put to death. So the role of basically continuing Judah's family line is given to Onan.

Do we see that in verse 8? Then Judah said to Onan, go into your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her. And raise up offspring for your brother. Now our modern sensibilities might hear that and kind of, I think that's kind of grim.

[16:21] But in this period in time, this is exactly right. And we need to continue the family line. Ur was not able to do so. And so Onan needs to take up responsibility.

They won't be Onan's children. They will be vicariously his older brother Ur's. And that's exactly Onan's problem. Verse 9. Onan knew that the offspring would not be his.

So whenever he went into 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. Two for three. It's not going well. Judah's lost two of his three sons.

So what does Judah think to himself? This is a classic case now of blame the victim.

I wonder if we notice that in these verses. What's Judah's thinking? Then Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, Remain a widow in your father's house till Shelah my son grows up. For he feared that he would die like his brothers.

[17:17] So Tamar went and remained in her father's house. In other words, what he's saying is, it's not my fault as a father that my two sons have so mistreated you that God put them to death.

It's your fault, Tamar. And because I'm going to send you back to your father's house. It's almost as if he's essentially saying, I wish you were dead. I wish you never married into my family. Back you go.

Out of sight, out of mind. And poor Tamar, who's just been mistreated and mistreated and mistreated. Well, get her out the picture. I want nothing to do with her.

I don't want to look at her. Story continues. Verse 12. In the course of time, the wife of Judah, she was daughter, died. When Judah was comforted, he went up to Timnah to his sheep shearers. He and his friend Hera, the Adulamite.

And when Tamar was told, Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep, she took off her widow's garments and covered herself with a veil, wrapping herself up. She sat at the entrance to Anain, which is on the road to Timnah.

[18:15] For she saw that Sheila was grown up and she had not been given him to marriage. Judah never came good. When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face.

He turned to her at the roadside and said, Come, let me come into you. For he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. Our author gives no comment about the despicableness of this.

It is just taken as self-evident. But it's even more despicable when we realize it's not just engaging in prostitution, but it is cult prostitution. We know that from later in the passage from verse 21.

This is Judah speaking. He asked the men of the place, Where is the cult prostitute? In other words, he knew who it was supposed to be. And the reason we're given this detail about sheep shearing is because at this time, what would happen is that you really wanted lots of baby sheep.

And the logic went that if you want lots and lots of baby sheep, what you should do is you should sleep with the fertility cult prostitutes of the temple. Then you'll have loads and loads of sheep.

That's basically how it went. You would sleep with the fertility prostitute.

[ 19 : 21 ] That would somehow please the gods. The gods would bless you with loads of sheep. So not only does Judah engage in prostitution, he is also engaging in essentially pagan practice at the same time.

There's no thought of hesitation. The author doesn't give us any hint of that. He sees her. He wants her. He takes her. It is that. It is that vial. But he gets more lecherous, sadly.

Verse 16. He turned to it at the roadside. Come, let me come into you. For he did not know that she was a daughter-in-law. She said, What will you give me that you may come into me? He answered, I will send you a young goat from the flock.

And she said, If you give me a pledge until you send it. He said, What pledge shall I give you? She replied, Your signet and your cord and your staff that is on your hand. So he gave them to her and went into her.

And she conceived by him. Notice that there is no pause here. It is just one after the other, one after the other. He doesn't have payment. Pretty pathetic. He just sees her and wants her.

[ 20 : 19 ] He says, Oh, I'll give you a goat later. That's basically what he's saying. And she savvily is like, No. I need some kind of guarantee. So what does she ask for?

She asks for the cord, the staff and the signet ring. Which is essentially like saying, I want your Amex, your national insurance number. And I don't know, access to your bank account.

That's effectively what she's saying. And did we notice that without even... Now that's a lot. That's a lot. That's a huge risk, one might say. I don't know how much is on your particular credit card. But I would never give my credit card to anyone.

That sounds pretty terrifying. But for Judah, that is a price he doesn't even pause to think about. He's consumed with lust. He sees her. Yeah, sure.

Have my ring and my staff and my cord. I don't care. He gives them. He goes into her. And she conceives with his daughter-in-law. And verse 19.

[ 21 : 15 ] Then Tamar arose and went away. And taking off her veil, she put on the garments of her widowhood. When Judah sent the young goats, this verse 20, by his friend the Adullamite, to take back the pledge in the woman's hand, he did not find her.

And we've seen, and this is where the author really drills in essentially that this is a cult prostitute. And the story jumps. So that in verse 24, about three months later, Judah was told, Tamar, your daughter-in-law has been immoral.

Moreover, she is pregnant by immorality. And Judah said, bring her out and let her be burned. The irony should be palpable. Judah, your daughter-in-law has been immoral.

That's like saying to a black cat, this cat is black. I don't know. That's a terrible analogy. But as in the idea that Judah has any moral compass whatsoever at this stage is laughable.

And do we notice Judah kind of immediately gets on his righteous high horse? There's no sense of a court case. There's no looking at the evidence. There's no even hearing what Tamar has to say. He doesn't even look at Tamar or speak to her.

[ 22 : 17 ] What's his conclusion? Verse 24, bring her out and let her be burned. It's brutal. It's utterly brutal. The woman that he has refused to give his third son to, the woman that he sent back to her father's house, upon even a hint of her immorality, despite all the evil that he has done, he says, burner.

Utterly vile. How does the story continue? As Tamar was being brought out, she sent word to the father-in-law, by the man to whom these belong, I am pregnant. And she said, please identify whose these are, the signet, the cord, and the staff.

Then Judah identified them and said, she is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son, Shelah. And he did not know her again. When the time of her labor came, there were twins in her womb.

In other words, so Tamar, very cannily, and it's not pleasant to think that essentially she's had to kind of buy her safety, knowing that this would happen. She manages to confront Judah and say, with the things that he has.

And Judah, upon being found out guilty, then finally admits that she is more righteous than him. Why is she more righteous? Because she has actually tried to listen to the commands of God.

[ 23 : 32 ] A Canaanite woman has actually tried to make sure that Judah's family line continues, whilst Judah would have happily seen her die in her father's house. And then we get some very, very strange details in 27 to 30.

A story that there's two twins, this is reminiscent, I think, of Jacob and Esau, and the older put his hand out and had the ribbon tied around it, and then it's pulled back in. And then the younger actually comes out first.

The one who breached second comes out first. And we might think that is an utterly strange, bizarre detail. Why am I hearing about two twins?

One kind of went, freedom, and then was dragged back in, and then the other came out. Why are we hearing this detail? Well, it's here to show us that God is still in control.

It's a very strange, small, seemingly, inconsequential detail that it should have been. Zerah that came out first, but Perez has primacy.

[ 24 : 35 ] Now, why is that? Well, I want us to turn, flick forward now to Matthew chapter 1. Matthew chapter 1. Matthew chapter 1. Matthew chapter 1.

Starting at verse 1. Matthew chapter 1. Starting at verse 1. 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. Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez, and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, and onwards to David, and onwards to Jesus.

In other words, what this passage is saying is that Tamar, the Canaanite prostitute, and the woman who was looked over, and the woman that had nothing about her that should have kind of drawn us to her, she became not only the mother of King David, but the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And can you just pause for a matter of what that must mean for Tamar? Because Tamar could have never known that this would be how the Lord would use this to her good.

[ 25 : 54 ] She could never have known that she, an overlooked woman, would end up becoming the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ, a foreign, shunned, widowed prostitute, becoming a mother to the saviour of the world.

It's quite popular. I see that some of us like to wear, in our circles, these signet ring things on our little fingers. It's like a kind of, I don't know actually, but I'm told that it's essentially like, this is my family tree.

And there might be history going back, and it's very exciting. And you might ask somebody about their signet ring, oh, what's the family crest mean? And they'll be able to tell you back in 16, whatever it was, this guy did this, and now I have a dove on my ring, or something.

And essentially, it's a way of saying, I'm proud of the family I belong to. I'm proud of the family, which is a wonderful thing, to be proud of the family that you belong to. What if Jesus had been wearing a signet ring when he was born?

And Jesus was approached to say, oh, Jesus, I noticed you have a signet ring with your family crest. Why do you have that? And you go, oh, yeah, well, let me tell you about my great, great, great grandmother, Tamar.

[ 27 : 03 ] Let me tell you about her. She pretended to be a prostitute. What? And she slept with her father, she slept with her father-in-law. And no one has ever heard of her name, apart from this one instance, where she did something quite grim, and society doesn't particularly value her, but I've got her face on my signet ring.

If we were to look back at the family tree of the Lord Jesus Christ, all we would see are broken people in broken situations, the product of evil, and yet, from it, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our evil, Judah was utterly evil, make no mistake, God's good. Our evil, God's good. And we come on to the second case study, and much quicker now.

Our evil, God's good, Genesis 39. We return to the story of Joseph, our hero, and we were left in a kind of cliffhanger last week, where he was kind of thrown into prison, and was being sold to slavery.

And the story continues. So chapter 39, verse 1, Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, and had brought him from the Ishmaelites, who had brought him down there. And the Lord was with Joseph.

[ 28 : 18 ] Excuse me. And he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.

So Joseph found favor in his sight, and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house. It seems like, despite the fact that Joseph had been sold into slavery, everything is going really, really

well.

Things are really, really rosy. Seems to be what's going on. Sadly, though, Joseph was a very, very good-looking chap. That must be hard. And Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

Verse 7, And after a time, his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph, and said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said to his master's wife, Behold, because of me, my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge.

He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? What a contrast to Judah, by the way.

[ 29 : 19 ] Judah sees women and takes them, over and over and over again. And the Lord somehow, through Judah, brings about the Lord Jesus Christ through his reign, through his lineage. And then we have poor Joseph, who has visions from God.

His brothers try to kill him. You think, Give this guy a break. And then he arrives, and things seem to be going really, really well. He's being put in charge of the house. He's like, Okay, this is going really, really well. And then the master's wife tries to sleep with him.

And what is his answer? No. And it's really interesting, isn't it, that the reason he gives. How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?

But sadly, Potiphar's wife is not placated. Verse 11, One day, when he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house were there, she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me. But he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got out of the house.

And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and had fled out of the house, she called to the men of the household, and said to them, See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice.

[ 30 : 25 ] And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice, and cried out, he left his garment beside me, and fled out of the house. Then she laid up his garment by her, until his master came. And she told him the story. And verse 19, As soon as his master heard the words of his wife, she had spoken to him.

This, the way your servant is treated me, his anger was kindled. And Joseph's master took him, and put him in the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. Seems that Joseph has done everything right for the Lord, so far.

Joseph hasn't put a foot wrong in this story. And somehow he's gone from favored son, to in the king's prison, with his brothers wishing he was dead, and Potiphar, his master, wishing the same. You take a perfectly innocent man, and then you pour all the evil on top of him. And can God do anything with it? That's the question. What happens when the innocent suffer from evil?

We saw Judah as evil, and he deserved bad things to happen to him, and somehow God still uses it for good. What about in this case study, where you have a very perfect man, evil poured out onto him?

[ 31 : 27 ] Well, can good still be used? Skilt still come from this. And we're not told the full details. That will be up for the next sermon. But have a look with me at verse 22. At 21, sorry.

But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him steadfast love, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison.

Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed.

Now, we don't know yet how God is going to turn this story for good. The only thing we can say for certain is that God is still with him. God is still with him. And we'll see as we go through the rest of the story exactly how that plays out.

It plays out enormously and wonderfully. But can we at least see, as we put these kind of two case studies together, these are vile stories. They are full of the worst kind of things and the worst kind of human behavior.

[ 32 : 30 ] And yet in both, God has managed to turn that evil, our evil, to good. Our evil, God's good. Now, to close, as we think about our own context, and we started, didn't we, by thinking about, well, what about the evil in our lives?

We're not in a king's prison, hopefully. What about the evil in our lives? Well, of course, we have a much, much better example than even Genesis 38 and 39 to look to when it comes to understanding that God is far greater than the evil that we see out there and the evil that we have in here.

And because I wonder if you've ever paused to think for a moment that the cross is the most evil, despicable, vile, horrendous of all things that humanity has ever done.

We cannot think of a man who is less worthy of suffering and who experienced more. The infinite God murdered by his creatures, the innocent put to death by the guilty, the life giver tortured, the eternal one killed, the divine king, a slave, the perfect, punished, the undeserving, abandoned.

The cross is wicked. It is so wicked. It is bizarre that we have it as jewelry. It is bizarre that we have it tattooed on us. It is utterly evil. It is wicked.

[ 34 : 00 ] And yet, our evil, it is the one moment in human history where death is crushed to death, Satan defeated, the serpent's head crushed, the crowning of the king of heaven, the very glory of God.

Make no mistake, we as humanity meant the cross for evil. It was utterly evil. It was wicked. God meant it for good, ultimate good.

There's a question at the bottom of your handout. How does seeing how God uses evil reassure us when our own life is dark? It would be great if we could be chatting about that together. But the last point of application I'd love us to leave us with is that, Christian, is this not enormously comforting? All of us will experience very, very dark, very, very painful things, either because of the evil within us or the evil without us. And we can despair thinking, is God greater than this problem?

But atheism and other worldviews have nothing to offer you when it comes to evil, nothing to offer you whatsoever. Bad things happen, so what? Tough luck, that's chance.

[ 35 : 07 ] The cross says, bad things happen, our evil, the world's evil, I will use it for good.