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Let's resume our study now this morning in Genesis. We're in chapter 38, moving ever closer to chapter 39. And we have seen this really sad state of affairs in the household of Jacob.

Once again, we're reminded of the fact that Jacob does not seem to be paying much attention to his own household. As we saw when his sons raided and pillaged Shechem. As we saw when his daughter Dinah was loose and consorting with the Canaanites there.

As we have seen with the attitude of the brothers toward Joseph, Jacob seems ineffectual. Even though he is Israel, he has the promises, he has been through a lot and learned a lot. You get the idea that maybe he's coasting at this point or he's got his attention turned elsewhere.

I don't know how much there is to focus on when you're living out in the wilderness in a tent and all you have are your flocks and your herds and your family. But Jacob seems singularly unaware and not in control of a lot of what's going on in his own household. It is a reminder to us, among other things, of the fact that even after we have spent time, perhaps years, pursuing an understanding of the Word of God and have learned a lot and grown, it is no time to take off our pack and assume that our momentum is going to carry us straight to glory.

We are commanded to be diligent, to watch and to pray. You would tend to believe that if Jacob's relationship with God were healthy and vital, these things would not be sneaking up on him. He would not be the victim of deception.

He would not be having his wife, in effect, Bilhah, fall into the hands of his son, Reuben. Many of these other things seem to indicate that he's kind of out of touch. And it is going to be the source of a lot of suffering and a lot of unhappiness for Jacob because if he had been on top of this, his son would not have gone into slavery, at least in our what-if history.

And yet God is still going to take Jacob because with his failures, with his warts and flaws and the cracks in his particular pot, you know, they used to talk about how people are psycho-ceramics, they are cracked pots, and all of us have cracks in our makeup. We have flaws and it's going to trip us up. And these are the areas where God can demonstrate his transforming grace and his healing power.

And we can be transformed by the renewing of our minds, but we can't assume that this is taking place. We have to be diligent to seek it and pursue it. So he is certainly an example of that.

But we left Judah here having had a good time with a lady by the side of the road on the

way to the sheep shearing and seeking to pay the debt that he incurred there. He can't find her to exchange the goat or the kid for his identity. And he has given away his identity in exchange for a very short-term pleasure.

And of course that in itself is emblematic of what we often do. We can trade away who we are, especially in the spiritual realm, who we are in Christ, for some momentary gratification or the meeting of what we think is an urgent need. And sometimes when you do that, you can't get back that which you lost.

But we're going to see in Judah's case that he will get these things back at the point that he acknowledges his transgressions. It's quite an interesting picture of what happens to us in the light of 1 John 1.9 and other passages. So in verse 24 of chapter 38, it came to pass about three months after Judah was told, Tamar, your daughter-in-law, has played the harlot.

He was told some little birdie came and whispered in his ear. And without any further investigation, he doesn't call Tamar in and say, Tamar, what is this? Judah doesn't seem to be overly endowed with the milk of human kindness and affection. His sons die and he's just all business.

His daughter-in-law is accused of something and there's no indication that he even looked into it. He says, drag her out here and let's burn her. If you look in the Law of Moses, there are not very many occasions where the penalty is to be burned.

The only one I can think of is the daughter of a priest who prostitutes herself. The judgment there is to be burned. And there is one other that I cannot call to mind, but it was an exceedingly rare thing.

Certainly, the penalty for adultery is severe. But burning, we wonder where Judah came up with this. And you get the idea that this is a reflex of outrage.

And we often see this sort of indignation and emotional outburst right before someone says, Thou art the man. And when Nathan goes to David and tells the story of the rich man that had all the flocks and the poor man that had one lamb and the stranger comes to visit the rich man and he wants to prepare him a meal and so he goes and takes the lamb of the poor man and slaughters it and gives it to the visitor. And David says he is outraged and he invokes a very severe penalty and Nathan says, Thou art the man.

And sometimes in the lives of believers we are brought to a point of great indignation and outrage only to discover that it is ourselves that we should be indignant over, that we should be outraged about and that the penalty, the just penalty is really greater than we ourselves would care to bear. That's what happens with Judah. Bring her out and let her be burned.

When she was brought out, she sent to her father-in-law saying, By the man to whom

these belong, I am with child. And she said, Please determine whose these are. The very same imperative, Hithiel imperative that was used by the sons of Jacob when they brought out the blood-stained tunic and said, Examine this.

See if you recognize it. The phrasing here is almost identical in Hebrew. It's a very strong *deja vu*.

Please determine whose these are. The signet and cord and staff. So Judah acknowledged them and said, She has been more righteous than I. And in the same way that Judah acknowledges, we saw that Jacob acknowledged in verse 33 of the previous chapter.

He acknowledged it or recognized it and said, It is my son's tunic. That tunic was the identifying mark of Joseph. That was the one sure way of knowing it was Joseph was this unique robe.

And with the blood on it, he says, Yes, that's it. Here Judah acknowledges his signet and cord and staff. He says, She has been more righteous than I because I did not give her to Shelah my son.

And with all of the bad things you can say about Judah in this chapter, this is his one redeeming moment. Like David, when faced with the reality of his transgression, which isn't by the way soliciting the harlot, what is he acknowledging here? His sin was in betrothing his son Shelah to Tamar and then not honoring that covenant. Not fulfilling that obligation to Tamar and to his family responsibilities.

That is what should have happened. That's what he promised would happen. He, in a sense, deceives Tamar, doesn't he? Because he says, You return to your father's house and when the time is right, I will marry you to my youngest son Shelah.

And then he does not do it. So, it says he never knew her again. Of course, there's a lot you can wonder about here because Tamar is uniformly in Scripture presented as righteous.

She is one of the four or five women who are mentioned in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ over in Matthew. It's interesting to look at that list of women and figure out why they are mentioned and some of the other very worthy women in the line are not. Do you remember the ones who are mentioned? Tamar is the first.

Well, and even before Rahab, you have Ruth is mentioned. You have Rahab mentioned. And in each of those cases, you have some issue having to do with marriage or being outside the nation of Israel, some seemingly disqualifying feature.

And yet, they are mentioned explicitly as being in the line of Christ. And once again, when you think about it, we sometimes think that there is something that disqualifies us

or that makes it impossible for us to be anything more than a peripheral issue in God's plan. And it's a reminder.

Who could be farther from the grace of God and from the plan of God than a prostitute in Jericho in the days when Israel is coming into the land? They are set for destruction. God has commanded the Israelites, wipe everyone out, man, woman, and child. Even kill the animals.

Take no plunder. Remember, Akin's sin on that same occasion is that he tried to save some of the good stuff out of the city and God had placed it all under condemnation. And Rahab is a prime example of the reason God said that.

She's a harlot. And yet, she has that decision in her heart. When she hears tell of God, she believes in Him.

She places her faith in Him. And God, because of that one glimmer, that spark of interest, and that spark of faith, is able to extend grace to her and she's not just brought into the periphery, is she? She's not just allowed to camp on the edge of the Israelites and, well, you're marginally, we'll put you out here and you can kind of tag along. She moves from being the farthest away to being at the very heart of the reason for the existence of the nation of Israel, which is the salvation of mankind.

And if you don't have Rahab, you don't have the line of Christ. If you don't have Tamar, you don't have the line of Christ. If you don't have Ruth, the Moabitess, you don't have the line of Christ.

And it's a wonderful encouragement to us to remember that it doesn't matter how far away you are. If you're from Moab, that entire people that was a product of incest, it doesn't matter if you're the harlot in Jericho, it doesn't matter where we are. The thing that counts is not circumstance.

It's not sin, failure. It is the grace of God and response to it. If God is seeking throughout the earth to find someone who's willing to turn to Him, who's willing to appreciate Him, who's willing to claim His saving grace, not only for salvation from the lake of fire, but daily salvation.

And when He finds it, God will literally move the heavens and move the earth to demonstrate the greatness of His grace. It's a wonderful encouragement. So as a result of this union, it came to pass at the time for giving birth, we've jumped six months further forward in time now, that behold, twins were in her womb.

So it was. Now right away, when you hear twins, what do you think of? When's the last time we saw twins in Genesis? Or his old granddad and great uncle Esau there, they were twins in the womb. And here we have some struggling in the womb at the point of birth, just as they were struggling in Rebecca's womb.

So it was when she was giving birth that one put out his hand, and the midwife took a scarlet thread and bound it on his hand, saying, this one came out first. And lest we think we're reaching forward to the Rahab analogy, that scarlet thread was hanging in her window just like it's tied around this child's hand. And the midwife says, this one came out first.

So she knows at this point that there are twins. How she knew that, maybe she was just very experienced. But without sonograms and x-rays and all the things we have today, they had their own methods for figuring these things out.

So she's prepared. And the first body part to be exposed, well, that counts. You're the firstborn.

So she ties a scarlet thread around, lest they be mixed up and nobody know which is which. It happened that he drew back his hand, and his brother came out unexpectedly. She said, how did you break through? So this breach be upon you.

So his name was called Perez, and Perez means breach or breaking through. Afterward, his brother came out and he had the scarlet thread on his hand, and his name was called Zira. And we get the idea that perhaps this is related, that Zira is related to Sir, which means red or scarlet.

There's some confusion about what his name actually means. But twins. Now think about the situation of Judah.

Judah has gone a long way down the wrong road, hasn't he? He has married a Canaanite, a thing which ought not to be done. He has had evil sons, and they were killed by God, which is unprecedented in the line of the patriarch, certainly. He has gone by the wayside here and ended up inadvertently committing what under the law of Moses is a capital offense.

A father sleeping with his son's wife is punishable by death under the law of Moses. And we'll have to come back to that in a moment, because how can Tamar or whatever her motives be declared righteous when she basically deceives someone into committing that? But the one glimmer of good thinking on Judah's part is there in 26. Judah acknowledged.

And at the point that Judah acknowledged, things turn around. How many sons has Judah lost at this point? Two. God took two away.

How many does he get back at this point? Two. Judah's back to the original complement of three sons that he started out with. And inheritance in the line of Judah will come through one of these three sons.

Who is going to end up with the rights of the firstborn in the line of Judah? Who's the

oldest of these three sons? Sheila. Who's the second oldest? Zerah. The one that stuck his hand out.

That counts for birth. He got the red string. That means you're number one.

And the last in line of those three is Perez. Through which of these three sons is David going to be descended and ultimately the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it Sheila? No. Is it Zerah? No.

It's Perez. It's the line of Perez that's going to result in David and ultimately the Lord Jesus Christ. And this suggests to us that we need to step back and take a look at this whole idea of reversal and deception.

Because if you think about what we've seen in Genesis so far, the first time that somebody was... Well, in fact, we can probably work our way backward. We're starting here in chapter 38 with Tamar. She deceives Judah into actually rectifying a wrong.

The last deception we saw was in the previous chapter where the sons deceive Jacob with the kid's blood on the tunic to demonstrate to him or to convince him that Joseph is dead and not the victim of foul play. Before that, what was the previous deception? Well, I'll just tell you. It was Laban pawning off the younger daughter, the older daughter, in place of the younger.

And that was in Genesis 29, 23-25. Before that, what was the deception, the big deception that Rebekah suggested? Jacob going in as the younger son and purloining away the blessing and inheritance of his elder brother. And you also had goats involved in that.

What was the one before that? We had a pair of incidents that we compared back in the earlier part of Genesis. And it may not be quite as obvious, but if you think about it, you remember, first of all, actually second of all, Lot, after Sodom and Gomorrah, living in the cave with his two daughters, the elder and the younger. And Lot, they get him drunk and they have their way with their own father because they don't think that they're going to have any offspring.

You have a lot of these same issues involved. Here's a father with a daughter, as opposed to a daughter and a father-in-law. Daughter-in-law, father-in-law situation there.

They're actually flesh and blood, but this one night produces Moab and Ammon with Lot's daughters. In the same way, this one occasion with Judah brings about two offspring. And once again, Lot is unaware at the time of what's going on.

He is deceived. He would not consciously do this, but in his unconscious state because of the wine, he participates in this. And that reminded us of the first incident, which was Noah.

And we saw the similarities. Noah, drunk with wine, uncovered in his tent. And we know that the nakedness of the father or the uncovering of the father's nakedness is a euphemism in the law of Moses for the wife.

And I believe, and I certainly wouldn't die for it, and you're welcome to understand it differently, but in the study that we've done in that passage and looking at that vocabulary, what is the sin of Ham when he goes in and sees, quote-unquote, his father's nakedness? Well, that idea of looking upon or seeing the father's nakedness when you get to the law of Moses is talking about having intercourse with that person, whether it's the son's wife or it goes all through the different permutations in the law of Moses. Aunts and uncles and daughters-in-law and all different situations are covered. And the euphemism that is used is thou shalt not uncover your mother's nakedness.

It is your father's nakedness, and it gives you that equivalent all the way through. One of the reasons we drew that conclusion back then is because the curse that is pronounced by Noah when he awakens and learns what his son has done, he doesn't say, Cursed be Ham, does he? Ham is the one that looked upon his father's nakedness. Whatever that means, Ham is the perpetrator.

Shem and Japheth walk backward with the garment and cover up whatever it is that constitutes the father's nakedness. I think it was their mother. You can understand.

Men are men. You have common showers in the military and in sports and all this kind of thing. It's no real big deal for men to see men's nakedness, but it is a big deal where you've got ladies involved.

You've got your mother involved, and that you don't want to have any part of. When they walk backward and cover up, apparently Mrs. Noah got into her cups there as a result of the fruit of the vine, and Ham in some form took advantage of this. My hypothesis, which I offer you, you're free to take or leave, why does Noah say, Cursed be Canaan? Canaan is the fourth son listed of Ham.

Not the firstborn, not the secondborn, not the thirdborn. He is the fourthborn son. When you go back there to Genesis chapter 10 and verse 6, and it is upon Canaan that the curse falls.

Why? Well, if Canaan is a son of Ham as a result of incest that Ham perpetrated with his mother, he is the fruit of that union and the curse falls on him in much the same way that the Moabites and the Ammonites are not a happy bunch and wind up being a thorn in the side of Israel from then on. Certainly the Canaanites are the very emblem of evil throughout the Old Testament, and this is their origin. It would make sense that the reason he doesn't say, Cursed be Ham, let him be a servant to his brothers.

He says, Cursed be Canaan, let him be a servant to his brothers. I would submit that

based on the fact that this vineyard incident takes place right after the flood, that the seven persons who survive on the ark do not include any children for Shem, Ham, and Japheth, that the firstborn son of Ham, he is looking around saying, kind of like the daughters of Lot. There is no woman around here.

I've got my wife here, but we haven't had any children. We must be infertile, so how am I going to have any offspring? Maybe this is his motivation. I don't know.

But he has some wild idea, and he catches his mother in a moment of weakness there, and there is a birth. And Canaan is probably, at least in my theory, and it is a theory, but Canaan is the first child born after the flood, and Noah says, Canaan is cursed, and he will be a servant to his brethren. He is not going to have any rights with the firstborn.

He is illegitimate in 16 different ways. But that's the first, and however you want to construct the thing that took place, something happens where someone is unaware. Either Noah is unaware, or Mrs. Noah is unaware because of wine.

Wine has dulled the senses and blinded the eyes, and something bad happens there, however you want to understand that passage. And this is a form of deception. It is cutting off the perception of a person in some way.

They are unable to perceive what is really happening. They are unable to perceive the truth, and someone takes advantage of them in that condition. That takes place right after the flood with Noah, and or Mrs. Noah, and the result of that is Canaan, and you have that curse.

Then with Lot's daughters, the same thing. Lot is drunk, and he does not know, and his two daughters wind up with child. And there is a deception there.

He is taking advantage of when he can't perceive. Then Rebekah hatches this plot for Jacob, and Isaac is taken advantage of when he cannot perceive, and his senses cannot tell the truth, and they take steps to make sure that he doesn't learn the truth with the skin of kids, and so forth. And then Laban takes advantage of the fact that the wedding tent that night after the celebration, and of course there is going to be feasting and drinking and so forth, and Jacob is not as sharp as he might otherwise have been when he goes into the tent, and they take advantage of the darkness and the veil and all of the other things that keep him from perceiving the truth.

Then of course the sons take advantage of Jacob's blindness. He is not only blind spiritually, but he is blind to the motivation and the attitude of his sons. He has no idea that they felt so strongly about their brother that they would do away with him.

And then finally Tamar takes advantage of Judah as he is on his way by means of a disguise. So the common elements here are, first of all, you have deception through fooling the perception in some way, whether it is a disguise or wine or whatever it may

be, blindness, taking advantage of someone in their weakness, in their area of weakness. They are drunk, they are blind, they are doting father, they are feeling lusty, whatever it may be, you are taking advantage of someone's weakness and deceiving them.

Secondly, all of these situations involve relatives, don't they? This is kind of a scary thing. This is not like the Gibby Knights coming in with the moldy bread and the old sandals. The thing that hurts about this in some ways is that it is so near at hand.

It is one thing for somebody else to treat you badly in a business deal or in a transaction when they are an outsider, but this is within your own household. These are sons and daughters that are doing this to one another. Thirdly, what is the motivation for perpetrating these deceptions? In every case, these people have lost sight of the promises.

They have lost sight of God's covenant promises and they are trying to gain something for themselves by their own effort. They have lost their hope, they have lost their faith and they are going to reach out and grab what they can get for their own purposes. You can even add to this perhaps Reuben in taking Bilhah and Israel hears about it later.

You have that other anonymous whisperer who lets Israel know that Reuben has done a bad thing with Bilhah. Fourthly, in each of these cases, I would argue at least, in each of these cases, you have that idea of the reversal of the firstborn. You think about it, if my hypothesis is correct and if Canaan was the firstborn son of Ham, well, he winds up being a servant to his brother and he loses out.

When you look at Lot's offspring, Moab and Ammon, Lot had the opportunity to be Abram's surrogate son but because of his choice of Sodom and so forth, and you have that language of the two daughters, the elder and the younger, the very same language that is used in the inheritance of the firstborn and so forth. Their whole motivation for doing this is to perpetuate their father's line and they do it outside the will of God. When you get to Rebekah, obviously, Jacob and Esau, the elder winds up losing the blessing.

Laban and Leah, that's the big issue between Leah and Rachel as Rachel is the younger daughter and so Leah gets reversed in there because she's the eldest. Jacob has treated Joseph like the eldest son. He's wearing the multicolored robe of authority.

He's supervising and shepherding his brothers. He's really performing the role that Reuben or Simeon or Levi or Judah ought to be performing. One of these elder sons, he's at that time the second to the youngest and the brothers resent this.

Are we going to be bowing down to you? And the dreams are what push them over the edge to get rid of him. And so they feel like they're being cheated out of their rightful place in the family by this younger brother and that's the motivation for this deception. And, of course, Tamar.

You have all kinds of ramifications of the elder sons and the younger sons and who's going to be ultimately the true heir of Judah. So these are all tied together by that. And finally, you have the issue of why do these reversals take place? Why is it Perez? Why is it Jacob? Why is it these others that end up in the place of inheritance violating all the common laws of inheritance and so forth? Why does that take place? Because God either allows or causes a change to honor those who have faith.

Those who are in a position to claim his grace. Those who will at least acknowledge their wrongdoing. Why is David? David does a terrible thing.

David commits murder, which is a capital offense. David commits adultery, which is a capital offense in Israel. He's got two strikes against him.

How come he does not die and his son does? The saving grace of God is applied to David because David acknowledges his sin. The saving grace of God is applied to Judah. And Judah has the honor of being the tribe from which David and the Lord Jesus Christ will come because Judah acknowledges his sin.

We have no record that Reuben acknowledged his sin with Bilhah. We have no record that Lot or Ham or any of these others acknowledged their wrongdoing. But when you have that acknowledgement, it's such a small thing for us to do to recognize our need.

We talked Friday night about the Israelites and how Jesus coming as the Messiah in his threefold identity of prophet, priest, and king, it was the priesthood that Israel needed first and foremost to solve the sin problem. They were looking for a conquering king. They were willing to acknowledge him as a great prophet.

But they did not see him as the Redeemer. They didn't see him as the suffering servant, the priest who would offer the sacrifice for sin. And we discussed the reason for that.

Because they didn't feel the need. They were ready for a political deliverer. They were ready for a prophet to show them wonders and tell them great things.

What wonderful words these are we're hearing. He speaks like no one we've ever heard. They were ready for the prophet.

They were ready for the king. They weren't ready for the priest. Because they didn't acknowledge that they had a problem where they needed a priest and needed a sacrifice and needed to be reconciled to God and had that expiation of sin.

And Jesus, and this is where these things all kind of, this is my Perry Mason tie together here. There is a deception that takes place with Israel. Israel's perceptions don't penetrate to see who Jesus really is.

Because God wraps Jesus in the robes of the high priest. God presents Jesus to Israel as

the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Which is true.

But that's the one truth. If God had trapped him out as a king and had brought him in with military hordes to drive out the Romans, there would have been great acclaim and they would have acknowledged, here is our Messiah, the long awaited deliverer. Here he is.

There's a lot of ways God could have presented him and gotten the Israelites to go along. But God shows the problem in their soul because they will not acknowledge. Why do they miss out on the saving grace of God in that generation? Why do they put Jesus Christ on the cross? This attitude of Judah in verse 26 here is missing in that generation.

And that's the problem. That is the root. That's the one thing that has to be present for the grace of God to manifest itself.

And that's what was missing in that generation. And so the ultimate deception, if you will, and the ultimate reversal in all of these other elements that we've seen, Jesus is disguised but he's not disguised. He comes in the form of a servant.

He took upon himself the form of a servant. Why did he do that? That's the first and foremost. That's the primary thing.

And to recognize him, one has to acknowledge his need. You think about that conversation with Nicodemus. Where Jesus says, Are you a teacher in Israel and you don't understand this need for new birth, for regeneration, for solving the sin problem? God so loved the world.

And that whole chapter of John, chapter 3, is Nicodemus coming to grips with the fact that Jesus is the Savior first. The fact that this takes place in a family, between brethren, this is Jesus' own brethren who should recognize him and do not. The idea that there's a personal goal involved.

What does Paul say about Israel? Not recognizing the righteousness of God and seeking to establish their own. They missed it. They had a personal goal.

They had an objective that they wanted to accomplish. And you have that same element there. The reversal of the firstborn.

What is the result when Israel, as that attitude of heart is exposed, they're unwilling to acknowledge their need for a Savior, they're unwilling to acknowledge their sin, what happens? They, Israel, as the firstborn son, who are in line for the covenant promises, are set aside. And Johnny come lately, the Gentiles, the church, winds up inheriting Jesus Christ, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren in Romans 8, 29 there. We rule and reign with Christ.

We enjoy all of the sonship and heirship and priesthood and election and all of the things that belong to Christ. We share in that. We are united with Christ.

We are his body and his bride. And this is a position that Israel would have longed to be in. But as the firstborn, without that seed of faith, without that willingness to acknowledge and claim the grace of God, just like Esau, just like Ishmael, just like many of these others, they are set aside.

God says, I don't care if you came first circumstantially. It's that attitude of heart that I'm looking for. How can we be delivered? How can we be rescued from our own sinful nature, from the slings and arrows of the natures of others, from this evil generation in which we live? The first place to start, and we've been taught this by faithful pastors in the past, and it is a true biblical principle, and you see it here.

We have to acknowledge that we have a need for God's power in our lives. That has to come first. We can't be looking at others and seeing their failings and their wrongs.

We can't be scheming and figuring, well, if I can just tilt the table and get the stuff to roll in this direction, it will all come out right. You can see Judah doing that. He's making up his mind about what's best.

He's picking his wife. He's picking his son's wife. He's deciding how this is all going to fall together.

I'm going to reserve the third son and not have him follow the right principle here, because look how this turned out. He's taking charge of things, and God is not a part of his life at that point. When he acknowledges there's a turnaround for Judah, and we're going to see Judah really come out quite well in the next succeeding chapters in Genesis in his dealings with Joseph and his willingness to put himself on the line on behalf of his brother, where before he's operating in a completely different manner.

This is such a turning point in verse 26 here when Judah acknowledges, and God right then begins to turn the tables, and Judah, even though it's a weird way it comes about, Judah has his two sons replaced, and one of these sons, the youngest, is going to be the root branch from which the greatest king in Israel will come, and ultimately the Messiah and the deliverer of the human race is going to come. And it's a wonderful encouragement to us to remember the grace of God if we're willing to claim it, if we know how to claim it, and to realize that we have a hope, no matter how bad things have gotten, no matter how badly we or others have failed, if we just follow those steps, acknowledge where we have gone wrong, seek and cultivate our relationship with God, and claim his grace, and think about how great it is, the great things that God has done, just what we've seen thus far in Genesis, he can certainly take care of the situations in our lives. Well, let's close here in prayer.

Father, we thank you for the privilege of being called by your name, of being saved by your grace, and having the privilege of claiming the resources, claiming the grace that comes that you've demonstrated in such mighty ways. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will make these things real to us, show us the application of them in our own lives, in our own circumstances, so that as we live each day, as it comes to us in this life, we will be aware and alive and alert to the opportunities that you bring to us to grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We pray these things in his name.

Amen.