

Contend for Your Promise

Do you ever feel as if you are in a season of perpetual winter, when everything in your life seems cold and dreary and there is no sign of spring in view? Perhaps you are experiencing health, relational or financial problems, and the promises of God appear to be lying dormant rather than coming to fruition as you had thought they would.

If you are going through difficult circumstances that appear to threaten the fulfillment of your destiny, you can relate to the biblical character Tamar, who was the wife of Judah's oldest son, Er (see Gen. 38:6-30). Tamar was truly a victim of negative circumstances. Not long after she was married, God judged her husband to be wicked and put him to death.

According to Jewish custom, Tamar was then given as a wife to Onan, her husband's brother, so that he could produce offspring for Er. But because Onan refused to fulfill his duty, God put him to death also.

When Judah saw that he had already lost two sons, he was reluctant to give Tamar his remaining son, Shelah, in marriage, so he sent her to live as a widow in her father's house until Shelah grew up. But time went by and Judah never fulfilled his commitment.

In frustration Tamar, determined to produce an heir, posed as a prostitute and slept with Judah himself. She became pregnant, and when her condition was revealed to Judah, he planned to have her burned to death—until she proved that he was the father. Then he admitted that Tamar was more righteous than he because he wouldn't give her to his third son (see Gen. 38:26).

It seems odd to use someone who played the role of a prostitute as a godly example, but we can learn from Tamar.

Though her hopes for a child appeared to be dashed by the death of two husbands, she didn't give up on what she believed God had for her.

It is important to know who God has called you to be and what He has promised. The devil will try to discourage you through life's circumstances and cause you to stop pursuing your destiny. But God says that if you will commit your way to Him and trust Him, He will do it (see Ps. 37:5).

Tamar didn't respond negatively to her situation but acted with wisdom and in the right timing. As a result, she was blessed with twins and became a part of the lineage of Christ (see Matt. 1:3). Even though she was mistreated, God had her in the center of His plans, and her place in history was more significant than she could have imagined.

God does not initiate the bad things that happen to us, but He does promise to work all things together for our good (see Rom. 8:28). And He gives us strength to stand in hard times, as Judy Jacobs points out in her article "Stand Strong in Jesus" (p. 26).

Decide today to move to your next season, with God's help. Forgive those who have hurt you. Dwell on God's promises for you rather than on the past. Stop nursing old wounds and allow the Holy Spirit to heal you.

Don't lose sight of your promise or give up on the things God has put in your heart. Remember Tamar, who risked everything to contend for what was hers.

Because we live in a fallen world, painful things happen to us that we don't deserve. But God is faithful and has our destinies clearly in mind. He will bring you out of the old season and into the new.

"See! The winter is past," the Bible says, "the season of singing has come" (Songs 2:11-12. NIV).