

**Jeremiah 35: 1-19; “The Rechabite’s Obedience and Ours”, Sermon # 41 in the series – “Heart Lessons Learned for a Prophet and the People of God”,  
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019,  
in the Morning Worship Service.**

The events which are related in this chapter took place in the fourth year of king Jehoiakim and are out of sequence with the previous chapter’s study of Zedekiah. However, they are not out of sequence with the theme of faithfulness which has been laid before our eyes in the past several chapters. God is totally and undeniably faithful to His covenant and His promises, but sinful Judah had dealt treacherously with Him. God was faithful to speak to His Old Covenant people in many portions and in many ways, and so at this critical juncture of their disobedience we find Him bringing shame on the sinful people of Judah by comparing their horrid disobedience with the willing obedience of the Rechabites. He was saying to Judah – If a man like Jonadab who is not in covenant with Me can command His sons, and they obey him expressly, then why can’t you, Judah, who have had so many privileges, and so much of My word revealed to you, why can’t you receive instruction to obey Me?

So God was looking for an obedience from Judah, an obedience which honored Him. And He is looking for this same kind of obedience from us also; an obedience which is like the Rechabites to their father Jonadab. So, the question which we will ask of this passage is this: How is the obedience of the Rechabites to their father Jonadab like the obedience which we should render to our God and to our Lord Jesus Christ? The similarities of an obedience that honors God, can be described in terms of what that obedience involves.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – It is an obedience which involves obeying the voice of no ordinary man.**

Jeremiah is told to go the house of the Rechabites. These men are the obedient children, or descendants, of a very unusual man named Jonadab, whose father Rechab was a noted man of godliness in the days of Jehu the king of Israel. The Rechabites appear to have been the descendants of Kenites who descended from Hobab, or Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law. Turn with me over to 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings chapter 10 and verse 15. Here we see that Jehu was in the process of killing all who remained of the house of Ahab, according to the word of the Lord, because of Ahab’s great wickedness. It says in verse 10 – “Know now that nothing shall fall to the earth of the word of the Lord which the Lord spoke concerning the house of Ahab; for the Lord has done what He spoke by His servant Elijah.” “So Jehu killed all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men and his close acquaintances and his priests, until he left him none remaining.” “And he arose and departed and went to Samaria.”

“On the way, at Beth Eked of the Shepherds, Jehu met with the brothers of Ahaziah king of Judah, and said, ‘Who are you?’ “So they answered, ‘We are the brothers of Ahaziah; we have come down to greet the sons of the king and the sons of the queen mother.’” And he said, “Take them alive!” “So they took them alive, and killed them at the well of Beth Eked, forty-two men; and he left none of them.” “Now when he departed from there, he met Jehonadab the son of Rechab, coming to meet him; and he greeted him and said to him, ‘Is your heart right, as my heart is toward your heart?’ “And Jehonadab answered, ‘It is.’” “Jehu said, ‘If it is, give me your hand.’” “So he gave him his hand, and he took him up to him into the chariot.” “Then he said, ‘Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD.’” “So they had him ride in his chariot.” “And when he came to Samaria, he killed all who remained to Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed them, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to Elijah.”

Now although we hear Jehu saying that he was zealous for the Lord, and he was indeed fulfilling the decreed will of the Lord in the destruction of Ahab’s relatives and descendants; his zeal does not at all appear to have been a zeal which was produced by the Spirit of God, coming

from a righteous heart. John Gill says – “It rather seems to savor of his wanting to get some personal glory for himself, and this zeal seems to have had in it a great deal of hypocrisy and a pharisaical spirit about it.” But you and I need to see, that the other man who is mentioned in this passage, Jonadab, was indeed a man of godly character. Although he was not a Hebrew, he was closely aligned to them; a notable man, a good man, who desired the end of idolatry and false worship. Matthew Henry says of him – “We may suppose he was very eminent for prudence and piety and generally respected for that life of self-denial and devotion which he lived.” He further says – “This is not the only time that the piety of some has been made to serve the policy of others; and that designing men have strengthened themselves by drawing good men into their interests.” (That is, a sinful man, Jehu, bringing a righteous man (Jonadab) into his plans, to make what he is doing to look like a good and righteous thing,)

So, as we examine this man Jonadab, we see that he was not a prophet or priest or Levite or ruler, but he was a man who feared the Lord. He was a man who was zealous for his God in a right way. He would support Jehu although Jehu was rash and proud of his zeal. And whereas Jehu was bold and designing, Jonadab was a man of godly sincerity. “Is your heart right?”, Jehu asks him. “If it is, take my hand.” And together they destroyed all the Baal worshipers in Israel. Jonadab and his ancestors and descendants were proselytes; they were converts to the Jewish faith, but they remained a distinct people. Those Rechabites whom Jeremiah was sent to, were a nomadic people; they were herdsmen and shepherds who lived in tents, not houses. And this was because Jonadab had instructed them not to build houses, or to sow seed, or to cultivate the ground, or to plant vineyards, or to drink wine, all their days.” And they listened to him, and did what he said, through the many generations that followed.

Jonadab’s philosophy was this: If you could avoid living in society, in luxury, in laziness, you would not become corrupted by the outward sins of others and thereby you would be a safer and a more holy people. If you could live your life in simplicity and sobriety, with an eye to set up and continue in, the worship of the true God, you would be blessed. He wanted what was best for his family and his descendants. So he commanded them and their children after them to observe his rules. This man and His family, it appears, knew the Lord, and they were pleasing to God in the way that they lived. Separation, they believed, from cultural evil was a moral good; and they intended to preserve it! What is really quite amazing, is that this man made such a vivid and lasting impression upon his family and his descendants, that they all carefully observed his commands for many subsequent generations. This man Jonadab was no ordinary man, and in many ways, he was wise. He is commended by God for the way that he lived a separated life. God looked at this obedience of the Rechabites to Jonadab, and He would use it as an illustration to His people, through Jeremiah’s preached word, to show just how disobedient His own people were.

God had never said that the Jews could not drink wine. He had warned them time and again against drunkenness. In Proverbs 23: 31 Solomon writes – “Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper, your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things.” “Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: ‘they have struck me, but I was not hurt; they have beaten me, but I did not feel it.’ “When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?” No, God had stated it plainly enough through Solomon to the people in Proverbs 20, verse 1, that – “Wine is a mocker, and strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.”

But God had never forbidden them to drink it; neither had He forbidden them to live in houses after the time of David. He had not said that His people should not have vineyards or fields or plant crops. He did not command them to the kind of radical separation that Jonadab commanded his sons to observe, and yet God’s people would not obey God like Jonadab’s sons

obeyed him! By way of application we need to ask ourselves this question – How is my obedience to Jesus Christ similar to that of the Rechabites? Well, it is similar to it, in that it involves obeying the voice of no ordinary man. Jonadab was a man who was not only separating himself from the outward cultural manifestations of sin, but was also He consciously separating himself from that internal corruption of sin that was in his heart, as much as he could. Indwelling remaining corruption is still in every Christian's heart. It is called the flesh, and we must learn to do battle with it every day, and put its motions to death in our hearts. It seems apparent that this is exactly what Jonadab did. He denied himself, and he did battle to overcome his own fleshly desires. And he promoted the same thing in his family's obedience. And they all followed him to a man, because he was so successful in it, and so obviously blessed by God for it.

Let us understand that, for us, our Lord Jesus Christ is no ordinary man either. Indeed, He is unique among all mankind in that He was tempted in all points, even as we are, and yet He had no sin. He is our perfect great High Priest and that is why we trust in Him. Let me read to you from the book of Hebrews chapter 7, verse 11-28. "Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?" "For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law." "For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar." "For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood." "And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life."

"For He testifies: "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK." "For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God." "And inasmuch as He was not made priest without an oath (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: "THE LORD HAS SWORN AND WILL NOT RELENT, 'YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK'), by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant." "Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing." "But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood."

"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." "For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself." "For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever."

So we see here, that the Lord Jesus is spoken of in these verses, not as an Old Covenant priest of Aaron's order, but as a priest of the order of Melchizedek. He does not minister according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless indestructible life. Jonadab could command his sons, and they obeyed him in keeping a fleshly or carnal commandment. The Lord Jesus commands us, and He is addressing us not only in regard to outward and fleshly things, but He is addressing our hearts. And, because He is our perfect Lord; the Author and Finisher of our faith, He has every right to do so. For He is no ordinary Man. He is the God-Man and He is our great High Priest who commands us to believe

in Him, as the only One who is truly holy; as the only One who is harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

If we believe in Jesus, and love the Lord Jesus, and have respect to Him, He is able to save us to the uttermost from all of our sins, and He is also able to help us to be separate from the culture of sin in the right sense. We are not monks or nuns. We are not isolationists. And yet we are not “of” this world. Our obedience is to our Christ, our unique Savior and Lord, who we see as our spiritual Jonadab. He is our Eternal Father. In Isaiah 8, verse 18, He says – “Here am I and children whom You have given Me!” Our obedience involves obeying His voice, the voice of this extraordinary Man. Jonadab commanded his sons to hear his voice and to become strangers and nomads on the earth. Jesus Christ commands His sons to follow Him, the Good Shepherd, and be His sheep, the sheep of His flock, and to live in His fold, the Church. John 10: 27 – “My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow Me and I give them eternal life and they shall never perish and no one shall snatch them out of hand.”

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> area of similarity in obedience between Jonadab sons and ourselves is that we both perform the commandments of our father.** (verses 14-16)

“The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, which he commanded his son, not to drink wine, are performed; for to this day they drink none, and obey their father’s commandment.” But although I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, you did not obey Me.” “I have also sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, “Turn now everyone from his evil way, amend your doings, and do not go after other gods to serve them; then you will dwell in the land which I have given you and your fathers.” “But you have not inclined your ear, nor obeyed Me.” “Surely the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them, but this people has not obeyed Me.”

You can see the plain contrast between Jonadab and his sons, and God and the children of Israel. Jonadab wanted to see his sons be separate from this corrupting world and its sinful practices. And his commandment to them involved their being willing to deny themselves and to remain aloof from the influences of the world around them. He told them to drink no wine or to live in houses. In our day, God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, would have us to be separate from the sinful practices of this world, even as these men in Old Testament times did. We are to strive to be holy, even as He is holy. God does not forbid drinking wine or living in houses. What He does forbid is drunkenness. What Christ says say through the apostle John is pertinent to this issue – Do not love the world or the things of the world. We have been given all things richly to enjoy, but we must come to terms with the idea that even though all things are lawful, not all things are either profitable, in an earthly sense, or an eternal sense.

Jesus once turned water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana. And the way that I believe that He would have us to understand that miracle is in this way: He now turns our water into wine in the things that He commands us to do. And He makes true spiritual self-denial and obedience a joy. It is indeed true that we must not live for this world’s joys and pleasures, but for God, and to God. True obedience to Jonadab’s command meant no wine at any time. In their case, faithful obedience meant the willingness to face the temptation to drink wine and to refuse it, even when it was presented to them by a prophet. That was self-denial. Of this there is no doubt. But it was more than that; it was honoring their father.

Let me ask you now, whether you are able to refuse to drink alcoholic beverages, even when a pastor or someone who you look up to spiritually, is offering it to you at a social event where it is perfectly acceptable to most of the people there? Will you be able to rise above that temptation, or will you cave in to the pressure that you will feel, to have to fall in line with them, and have a drink; just because they told you that you have the Christian liberty to do so? They want to show forth their liberty to have a drink. But is this what you need to do, too? You

remind yourself that these are people who you spiritually respect. And if you are ever going to relax, and let your hair down, this would be the time. You know that it is not essentially wrong or sinful to drink alcoholic beverages. But I am asking this morning whether you can deny yourself and without at all being judgmental of them, and set a higher standard for what you will do in that social situation? When everyone else is drinking, and not drunk, can you find something of a more spiritual nature to be preoccupied with, and share it with them, or portray it to them in your behavior? Whether you do or don't leave the get-together that you have been invited to, that is the issue that you need to think over. Because for you, that may be the best way that you can honor God, and turn the attention of others, to more spiritual things.

You say – But do I have to be spiritual at all times? Can't I let my hair down sometimes and just drink to the glory of God? Well, Listen to Ephesians 5: 15-19, and you be the judge. "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Ah, that is where the real action is, isn't it; and not in thinking that you need to get a buzz on wine? I believe that Christians should be people of convictions; don't you? I believe that they ought to be people of personal convictions; that is, as well as being an orthodox Christian. We are told not to be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation (a wasting of your life and your time), but to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We are to be filled with the Spirit. It is true that "pure and undefiled religion" before God is keeping yourself unspotted from the world.

But our obedience to God and to Christ is more than abstaining from things which would defile and corrupt us. It is performing the commandment of our Lord to show forth our love for and to, our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, we will turn from our wicked ways, and amend our lives and repent of our sins, but we will go further – we will render an obedience to our God which honors him, and shows that we love and respect Him, by our denying ourselves when the occasion requires it. In 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2: 17 Peter says – "Honor all people, love the brotherhood." "Fear God, honor the king." When we fear God we will know how to rightly honor other people as well. Our convictions of separation are not such as keep us from bringing the gospel to the world. The Rechabites came into Jerusalem, and they lived there, when Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the city. They were afraid that they would be wiped out if they stayed in isolation. Mature Christians are afraid that they will not bear much fruit for God if they live in isolation. Mature Christians believe that they should maintain close contact with the local church. But it is also true that mature Christians should be able to face challenges to their strong personal convictions head on. If some of us in the local church have strong convictions on abstinence from wine, we must not look at those who occasionally drink a glass of wine, as sinners.

Those who occasionally drink should not cause others who have a tender conscience to stumble. Romans 14: 19 – "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another." "Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food." "All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense." (that is – a feeling of having given offense) "It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak." "Do you have faith?" "Have it to yourself before God." "Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves." "But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin." Let us see to it brethren, that we live by these principles and honor God in doing so.

**3<sup>rd</sup> – The obedience which honors God is an obedience which involves answering the Father's call.** (verses 17-19)

“Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I will bring on Judah and on all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the doom that I have pronounced against them; because I have spoken to them but they have not heard, and I have called to them but they have not answered.’ “And Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and keep all his precepts and done according to all that he commanded you, therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me forever.’” What an amazing set of verses these are. God had called to Judah, time and time again through His prophets, rising early and speaking, but they did not obey Him. Jonadab had sons that obeyed their father, and God commends them, and gives the Rechabites a sworn blessing: “Because you have obeyed your father Jonadab and kept all his commandments and precepts – therefore, Jonadab shall not lack a man to stand before Me, God says, forever.

It is no doubt true that God has perfectly fulfilled this verse in a literal sense, in all the generations down through time, to this present hour, and He will perfectly fulfill it in both a literal and spiritual sense until Christ returns and will usher in the eternal state. W.H. Lewis in the Biblical Illustrator says this: “Modern travelers, moreover, state that the Rechabites are still in existence. Mr. Wolf, the famous Jewish missionary, asserts this as his belief. “And another traveler who visited a tract to the south of Judea, which has been unexplored for centuries, met there a native who claimed to be a Rechabite, and when an Arabic Bible was shown to him, turned to this chapter and read from it the description of his People, and said that it was still true of them, and that they still kept the precepts of Jonadab, their father.”

“Over three thousand years have passed away since that family of the Kenites came with Israel into Canaan, and for two thousand years no traces of them were preserved; but now, after so long a lapse of time, recent discoveries have brought them to light, retaining their name, and glorying in their independence. Though surrounded by Mohammedan Arabs, they conform to the law of Moses yet maintaining that they are not Israelites; and are much hated by the Mussulman.” This account was given by a traveler so late as 1832, and is confirmed by English residents at Mocha, and from other sources. No doubt every promise of God’s Word is as abundantly fulfilled. We may not always be able to trace out the literal accomplishment of every one as strikingly as in this case, but we never could prove one promise in all the Bible false; and the more light we have the more abundantly do we see that all have been yea and amen.”

We can also apply this verse spiritually to ourselves in this way: If Jesus Christ obeyed His father perfectly, which He did, keeping all His precepts and commandments perfectly, He shall not lack the ability to bring any sinner to His Father, so that they might find favor with Him forever; for them to be able to stand before God forever. Dear listeners here today, this is what Jesus Christ does for you. He brings you to God, and you will stand before Him forever. Your sins taken away and pardoned, a righteousness better than your own imputed to you, and all the blessings of salvation imparted to you over the course of your life. So we stand complete in Christ, if we believe in Christ. We are saved from sin and condemnation if we will hold fast the word which is preached to us. Christ is raised from the dead, and He has the power to make your obedience to the Father an honorable obedience. Knowing this, I pray that you will rise up to become all that your Eternal Father has commanded you to be, because you have the word of Christ ringing in your ears. Obey the gospel, and deny yourself, and pick up your cross and follow Him.