

"The Recabites"

Jeremiah 35 is a fascinating story about God using the Prophet in a unique way to teach Judah a lesson about obedience. Jeremiah was told to go to the descendants of Recab and invite them to a meeting in the Temple. The Recabites were a family known for two things. First, they continued to live as nomads even after God gave everyone appointed cities in which to live. They were "tent-dwellers." At that time, they were seeking safety in the city of Jerusalem only because the Babylonians had conquered every town in Judah except Jerusalem and two others that were holding out as well. Secondly, they abstained totally from the use of wine. Their family patriarch had advised them to avoid city life and never partake in alcohol. We don't know why they were advised that way. Maybe Recab knew the dangers of temptation in cities as well as the potential dangers of wine.

The strange thing is what God asked Jeremiah to do.

When the family representatives came to an inner room of The Temple, they found the Prophet had prepared a table for them. "I set cups and jugs of wine before them and invited them to have a drink, but they refused. "No," they said, "we don't drink wine, because our ancestor Jehonadab son of Recab gave us this command: 'You and your descendants must never drink wine. And do not build houses or plant crops or vineyards, but always live in tents. If you follow these commands, you will live long, good lives in the land.' So we have obeyed him in all these things. We have never had a drink of wine to this day, nor have our wives, our sons, or our daughters. We haven't built houses or owned vineyards or farms or planted crops. We have lived in tents and have fully obeyed all the commands of Jehonadab, our ancestor.

But when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacked this country, we were afraid of the Babylonian and Syrian armies. So we decided to move to Jerusalem. That is why we are here."

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Then the Lord gave this message to Jeremiah: "This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says: Go and say to the people in Judah and Jerusalem, 'Come and learn a lesson about how to obey me. The Recabites do not drink wine to this day because their ancestor Jehonadab told them not to. But I have spoken to you again and again, and you refuse to obey me. Time after time I sent you prophets, who told you, "Turn from your wicked ways, and start doing things right. Stop worshiping other gods so that you might live in peace here in the land I have given to you and your ancestors." But you would not listen to me or obey me. The descendants of Jehonadab son of Recab have obeyed their ancestor completely, but you have refused to listen to me.'

"Therefore, this is what the Lord God of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says: 'Because you refuse to listen or answer when I call, I will send upon Judah and Jerusalem all the disasters I have threatened.'"

Then Jeremiah turned to the Recabites and said, "This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says: 'You have obeyed your ancestor Jehonadab in every respect, following all his instructions.' Therefore, this is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says: 'Jehonadab son of Recab will always have descendants who serve me.'"

Jeremiah 35:5-19

This chapter is not about urban living or drinking wine. It is about taking God's Word seriously and obeying it. God blessed the family of Recab because they were obedient to the commands of their father. God pointed out that Israel not only disregard their fathers, but were guilty of ignoring God's commands as well. Judah was guilty of disregard and indifference for the very words of God.

When you think of the family of Recab, ask yourself this question: "Do I give God's commands the honor of obedience they deserve?"

Obedience is not an option. Jesus said "The one who obeys God's Word will abide forever."

In these difficult days, remember the advice Mary gave the servants during the wedding in Cana: "Whatever he tells you to do - do it."

I love you,
Pastor Stephen
Pastor Emeritus