

NO COMPROMISE

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Scripture: Jeremiah 35

Jeremiah 35

“35 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, ²“Go to the house of the Rechabites and speak to them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink.” ³Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah, and his brothers and all his sons and the whole house of the Rechabites, ⁴and I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, the man of God, which was near the chamber of the officials, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the doorkeeper. ⁵Then I set before the men of the house of the Rechabites pitchers full of wine and cups; and I said to them, “Drink wine!” ⁶But they said, “We will not drink wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, ‘You shall not drink wine, you or your sons, forever. ⁷You shall not build a house, and you shall not sow seed and you shall not plant a vineyard or own one; but in tents you shall dwell all your days, that you may live many days in the land where you sojourn.’ ⁸We have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he commanded us, not to drink wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons or our daughters, ⁹nor to build ourselves houses to dwell in; and we do not have vineyard or field or seed. ¹⁰We have only dwelt in tents, and have obeyed and have done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. ¹¹But when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against the land, we said, ‘Come and let us go to Jerusalem before the army of the Chaldeans and before the army of the Arameans.’ So we have dwelt in Jerusalem.”

¹²Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, ¹³“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Go and say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, “Will you not receive instruction by listening to My words?” declares the LORD. ¹⁴“The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, which he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are observed. So they do not drink *wine* to this day, for they have obeyed their father’s command. But I have spoken to you again and again; yet you have not listened to Me. ¹⁵Also I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, sending *them* again and again, saying: ‘Turn now every man from his evil way and amend your deeds, and do not go after other gods to worship them. Then you will dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your forefathers; but you have not inclined your ear or listened to Me. ¹⁶Indeed, the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have observed the command of their father which he commanded them, but this people has not listened to Me.’” ¹⁷Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Behold, I am bringing on Judah and on all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the disaster that I have pronounced against them; because I spoke to them but they did not listen, and I have called them but they did not answer.’”

¹⁸Then Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Because you have obeyed the command of Jonadab your father, kept all his commands and done according to all that he commanded you; ¹⁹therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me always.’”

I’m not sure how many of you have read the 35th chapter of Jeremiah or heard about the Rechabites. Among all the ‘ites’ that we have heard in the Bible, the Rechabites have been the least spoken about. And yet we have a whole chapter that’s dedicated to them. And a chapter that shows them in such wonderful light.

Who were the Rechabites? Well, for that we have to go all the way back to Chronicles to see a reference to them in 1 Chronicles 2:55, that they came from this body of people called the Kenites. The Kenites were actually residents of Canaan before Israel came into Canaan. In fact, Saul in 1 Samuel 15:6 commends the Kenites because when the Israelites came into Canaan, they showed kindness towards them. Then the Kenites went up and just kind of lived along with the sons of Judah. In fact, Moses' father-in-law, Zipporah's father, was a Kenite.

What did they do? They were nomads. They were not to make any buildings; they were to live in tents. And so they didn't have any solid structures. They were also blacksmiths, people who worked with metal.

What set them apart? The main thing that sets them apart in this particular chapter is that they had a very strong abstinence policy. Jonadab had imposed it generations before. He had said that "you, as a group of people, will never allow wine to touch your lips." Just like the Nazarite vow that the children of Israel had. In fact, one commentator says it was like one did not want to be under the influence of anything but God. That's who the Rechabites were.

Then we read in the 11th verse of this chapter, that when the Babylonians came and laid siege to Jerusalem for 20 years, the Rechabites felt it was too difficult to stay outside, and so they came into Jerusalem and lived with them. But then we read something that makes us raise our eyebrows. God tells Jeremiah: Go to these people, the Rechabites, bring them into the house of the Lord, to an inner chamber. Have them all sit there and then bring wine and offer it to them. And Jeremiah did that. Obviously, there were not too many of them because they all fit into one chamber. But he set before them pitchers of wine and glasses, and then he invited them to drink. And it's remarkable that they say to him, "We have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he commanded us, not to drink wine all our days – we, our wives, our sons, or our daughters." And so they refused to do so. They refused to what Jeremiah was asking them to do.

It kind of raises the question: Does God tempt us? Was He tempting the Rechabites? Any time we have questions about the character of God, we always need to go to the whole body of literature that we have in scripture. Move to another place and see whether that particular assumption that we are having gets contradicted solidly. And for this, when we ask the question; Does God tempt us? We have to move to James 1:13 where he states very categorically – *When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone.*

God wasn't setting up the Rechabites for failure by placing this test before them. He was setting them up for success. He was showing them up as a principled people to an unprincipled people that the children of Israel were. That's what He was doing.

As we look at this particular chapter, we are immediately struck by the faithfulness of this group of people to Jonadab, one of their forefathers, and the unfaithfulness of the Israelites to God Almighty; how at the end of it the Rechabites were commended and a blessing was given to them, but the Israelites were promised punishment.

We can, and we must, leave this chapter the way it is. We've taken it for what it's worth in terms of the narrative. But the greater question for us, whenever we look at scripture, is: How does it apply to me. What does this 35th chapter of Jeremiah mean for me today in my situation and in my circumstance. That's always the point at which we must reach a Bible study – how does it affect me? That's where the rubber meets the road.

How does it affect me?

I want to give you three scenarios this morning where there could possibly be an engagement between you and the Word from this chapter.

Scenario 1:

Maybe today you're going through a difficult time. you're really finding it extremely difficult to hold on to your values, your morals, your principles, whatever it is that you have held dear to. Somehow there seems to be a weight coming your way to compromise you, and you're staying the course. But maybe you're tired; maybe it's draining you. Maybe you're finding it difficult. Maybe today you're saying, "Lord, how long is this going to last? If this is a test Lord, and you want to showcase me as being successful, how do I stay the course?"

This was the kind of test that Abraham was given. God never intended for that knife to come down. Never! He knew Abraham. He knew that Abraham would go there and He knew what Abraham would do. But God uses tests like this to make us be of greater resolve, to prepare us for even greater trials and issues and circumstances.

In Jeremiah 19, God says about the children of Israel – "They have built the high places of Baal to burn their children in the fire as offerings to Baal, something I did not command or mention, nor did it ever enter my mind." God never intended for Isaac to die by the knife. God only wanted to show Abraham that he was able to withstand, that his love for God was stronger than the love that he had for a son that had been promised for so many years.

I wonder whether today, there is something that is going on in your life that is really testing you. You're saying, "Lord, I need fresh wind from you. I'm not going to compromise but it's beginning to take it's toll. Lord, I need fresh energy, fresh wind of Your Spirit, fresh strength, more grace for me to move forward." Maybe today, God is saying, "I'll be with you. You don't have to worry about that. I've allowed this into your life and you can trust that I will see you through. 100%. I will give you every resource to go through this." Maybe He's saying, "Through this, others will look at you and they will experience the fragrance of what it means to be true to God, in spite of the situations and circumstances that you face."

And who knows beloved, like the Rechabites who were promised that "the son of Rechab will not lack a man to stand before Me always." Maybe, that's the heritage that God is giving to you that generations down will stand before Him because of your faithfulness, because of your steadfastness in this area of trouble.

Scenario 2:

Maybe you're being confronted with a situation that is asking you to compromise, and you're ready to throw in the towel. You're giving up, you're saying, "Lord, I can't this this anymore. It's too difficult. I'm going against the grain of public opinion of what people will think of me, what people are saying about me. Lord, for me to be successful, I need to do this thing; it's a worldly thing. Till now I've been able to stay the course. But for me to get ahead, for me to get out of this situation, I need to compromise, Lord."

I wonder whether today, God would say to you: "Don't give in. My grace will always be sufficient. How does it work? In that weakness that you are speaking these words, I will let strength arise." In those very words that say "I cannot do this," God is saying, "Those are the words that give Me access into your life. Those are the words that will help me instill power that comes from the throne room for you to stay the course. Don't give up; hang in there. stay the course because I have said to you: I will never leave you; I will never forsake you."

Scenario 3:

Maybe some of you listening to this passage of scripture find yourselves not with the Rechabites but with the Israelites. You find that you've already compromised, that you've already gone far from home where you ought to be. And maybe you've forsaken the Lord. you stopped listening to His voice. You still bear His name, as the children of Israel did. They were still known as the ones who followed Yahweh. But it's been a long time since you said 'Yes' to anything that the Lord is saying to you. Maybe you're in a far-off country today.

I was looking at the Rechabites and the Israelites and I thought it looks like a 'Compare and Contrast' situation. And I made a chart, and I just want to read it to you – the Rechabites on one side, the Rechabites on the other.

- The Rechabites kept their vows to a fallible human leader; the Israelites broke their covenant with their infallible divine leader.
- Jonadab told his family one time not to drink, and they obeyed; God commanded Israel constantly to turn from sin, but they refused.
- The Rechabites obeyed laws that dealt with temporal issues; Israel refused to obey God's laws that dealt with eternal issues.
- The Rechabites had obeyed for hundreds of years; the Israelites had disobeyed for hundreds of years.
- The Rechabites would be rewarded; the Israelites were going to be punished.

The children of Israel were willing to give up the permanent, the eternal for something that was transient and temporal. Not the Rechabites – they wouldn't compromise. Beloved, maybe today, God is speaking to some of you here, and He's saying, "It's time to come home. you're a long way gone. I'm still pleading for you. I'm still calling out to you. Would you come home?"

I was working with this sermon and then looked at various other passages of scripture that would feed into this. Revelation 3 came to mind, the words of Jesus about the church at Laodicea. And He said, "You're neither hot nor cold." I hope you understand when we talk about the church, we're talking about you and me. We make up the church. It's not talking of a body of people here; each one of us constitutes the church. Jesus is saying, "You're neither hot nor cold; you're lukewarm and I'll spit you out of My mouth." What harsh, hard words to hear, that Jesus who gave His life for us, went to Calvary, suffered on the Cross and through that, you and I bear His name, but we're not doing anything that He wants us to do.

I wonder whether some of sitting here are saying: That's me. I go through the motions but it's a long, long time since I had a conversation with God, or even listen to Him. The beauty of that passage to the church at Laodicea is that, at the end of it, Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Think about it, church! Jesus, who should be leading the church from within, is standing outside the church and saying, "Let Me in." Can you believe that, that the One who should be leading me and you, is actually standing outside of our lives and saying: I'm knocking. Would you let Me in? You who bear My name, would you let Me in? "Behold," He says, "I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice, anyone, and opens the door, I'll come in and sup with Him and he/she with Me."

Sometimes we cannot wrap our minds around what a supper with Jesus would look like. It's so intangible. And yet, when we look at scripture, a supper on the shores of Galilee led to the reinstatement of Peter. They had fish. I don't know if it was fish fry or fish curry, but they had that on the shores of Galilee, and it led to reconciliation and then the commissioning of Peter. "Feed My sheep. Feed My lambs. Tend to My flock."

Another supper with two people on the road to Emmaus, disciples who were dejected, who had lost their way, who thought their world had crumbled. They had supper with Jesus, and what happened? They turned around and went back to Jerusalem, excited about what they had seen because, through the conversation that they had with Him, they found something worth going on. Jesus says, "I'm knocking on your heart's door. Let's have supper together." I wonder whether for some here, it's time to come home, that you're a long time gone and the One whose name you bear is saying: I'm still knocking. Seek ye the Lord while He may be found. There will come a day when He will not be found.

So, three scenarios. I want us to just let it percolate into our minds.

1. Going through a difficult time just needing more strength to persevere.
2. Ready to throw in the towel, ready to just give in. maybe what you need to hear is: I'm with you.
3. Come home. Jesus is tenderly calling us home.

I'd like for us to pray this morning, and I would also like to pray for us. I feel the Lord just laying that on my heart to pray for these three issues.

1. If you're going through a difficult time, holding on to something that the Lord has placed upon your heart, and you need fresh wind, fresh fire, fresh grace.
2. You're ready to give in to a compromise which will mar the life you've been leading till now, and you're crying out and saying: Lord, help me.
3. You're saying: Lord, I'm coming home.

If you fit into any of these categories, I want to pray for you. Would you just stand where you are, all eyes closed. Or just come and kneel at the altar. I'd like to close our time this morning with prayer.

Master, thank You for you precious Your Word always is, and I pray for each one of these precious ones who stand. Lord, you know their situations; You know their hearts and You know why they stand. I pray for the ones who are having a heavy load. The things that they have in their lives are heavy; they're not giving in Lord, but they need a second wind. They need Your hand. I pray the powerful anointing of Your Spirit. Would You come in great power, great authority and undergird them. Let them know that You will hold them to the very end and that You will give them all that they need to be triumphant till the end.

Then, Lord, for those who stand saying that they walked in here, ready to give up and to compromise on principles that they have held dear. O Master, come alongside of them. Give them strength, give them more grace for this situation. Let them know Lord, that You will hold them and take them through this uncertain period. Lord, strengthen them, help them to stand firm, to know that they stand on solid ground and You will not leave them. I pray that they would even feel the warmth of Your hand holding them, the firmness of You hand holding them.

Then Lord, I pray for those who are coming back. In their mind's eye, help them to see You running to them, embracing them, hugging them, letting them know how much You love and care for them. I pray, Master, that You would let Your forgiveness come upon them as they ask for Your forgiveness. Let Your cleansing come upon them. Give them fresh inspiration to walk the life with You. And above all, Lord, for each one I pray that Your peace would descend upon them. Regardless of the situations and circumstances they find themselves in, may Your peace that passes their understanding rest upon them. I pray that You would bring joy, joy that will well up from within them, will consume

them, that they will go out from here in song, because the Eternal God has touched them irrevocably. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.