

5/11/25

Sermon Title: Lessons from the Rechabites

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soonbae

Scripture Passage: Jeremiah 35:1–19

(Jeremiah 35:1) This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD during the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah: ²

(Jeremiah 35:2) “Go to the Rekabite family and invite them to come to one of the side rooms of the house of the LORD and give them wine to drink.”

(Jeremiah 35:3) So I went to get Jaazaniah son of Jeremiah, the son of Habazziniah, and his brothers and all his sons—the whole family of the Rekabites. ⁴

(Jeremiah 35:4) I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the room of the sons of Hanan son of Igdliah the man of God. It was next to the room of the officials, which was over that of Maaseiah son of Shallum the doorkeeper.

(Jeremiah 35:5) Then I set bowls full of wine and some cups before the Rekabites and said to them, “Drink some wine.”

(Jeremiah 35:6) But they replied, “We do not drink wine, because our forefather Jehonadab^[a] son of Rekab gave us this command: ‘Neither you nor your descendants must ever drink wine.

(Jeremiah 35:7) Also you must never build houses, sow seed or plant vineyards; you must never have any of these things, but must always live in tents. Then you will live a long time in the land where you are nomads.’

(Jeremiah 35:8) We have obeyed everything our forefather Jehonadab son of Rekab commanded us. Neither we nor our wives nor our sons and daughters have ever drunk wine

(Jeremiah 35:9) or built houses to live in or had vineyards, fields or crops.

(Jeremiah 35:10) We have lived in tents and have fully obeyed everything our forefather Jehonadab commanded us.

(Jeremiah 35:11) But when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded this land, we said, 'Come, we must go to Jerusalem to escape the Babylonian and Aramean armies.' So we have remained in Jerusalem."

(Jeremiah 35:12) Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying: ¹

(Jeremiah 35:13) "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Go and tell the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, 'Will you not learn a lesson and obey my words?' declares the LORD.

(Jeremiah 35:14) Jehonadab son of Rekab ordered his descendants not to drink wine and this command has been kept. To this day they do not drink wine, because they obey their forefather's command. But I have spoken to you again and again, yet you have not obeyed me.

(Jeremiah 35:15) Again and again I sent all my servants the prophets to you. They said, "Each of you must turn from your wicked ways and reform your actions; do not follow other gods to serve them. Then you will live in the land I have given to you and your ancestors." But you have not paid attention or listened to me.

(Jeremiah 35:16) The descendants of Jehonadab son of Rekab have carried out the command their forefather gave them, but these people have not obeyed me.'

(Jeremiah 35:17) "Therefore this is what the LORD God Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'Listen! I am going to bring on Judah and on everyone living in Jerusalem every disaster I pronounced against them. I spoke to them, but they did not listen; I called to them, but they did not answer.'"

(Jeremiah 35:18) Then Jeremiah said to the family of the Rekabites, "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'You have obeyed the command of your forefather Jehonadab and have followed all his instructions and have done everything he ordered.'

(Jeremiah 35:19) Therefore this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'Jehonadab son of Rekab will never fail to have a descendant to serve me.'"

God contrasts the Rechabites, who faithfully uphold the commands of their ancestor, with the people of Judah, who do not faithfully keep their covenant with Him, and rebukes the disobedience and rebellion of Judah.

The Rechabites were descendants of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, and belonged to the Kenite tribe.

Because of their connection with Moses, they left Egypt with the Israelites during the Exodus and continued to live among them.

They lived as nomads in the plains of Judah, faithfully following the commands and regulations given by their forefather Jonadab.

Their obedience stands in contrast to the disobedience of the people of Judah, who ignored God's commands.

God uses the obedience of the Rechabites as an example, proclaiming blessing to the Rechabites while declaring judgment upon the people of Judah, who have been disobedient to God's word from the time of their ancestors to the present day.

This event takes place during the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah.

At the time, Judah was under pressure from both Egypt, an established power, and Babylon, a newly rising force.

In 605 BC, during the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated Egypt at the Battle of Carchemish and began to dominate the Near East.

Nebuchadnezzar then started pressuring Judah.

In response, King Jehoiakim changed his foreign policy, abandoning Pharaoh Necho of Egypt—whom he had previously served and paid tribute to—and began to pay tribute to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

Egypt, of course, would not take this lightly.

During this turbulent time, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, instructing him to invite the Rechabites to a room in the temple and offer them wine.

(Jeremiah 35:1) This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD during the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah: ²

(Jeremiah 35:2) “Go to the Rekabite family and invite them to come to one of the side rooms of the house of the LORD and give them wine to drink.”

Jeremiah then led all the Rechabites into the room of the sons of Hanan, son of Igdaliah, in the temple and offered them wine.

(Jeremiah 35:3) So I went to get Jaazaniah son of Jeremiah, the son of Habazziniah, and his brothers and all his sons—the whole family of the Rekabites. ⁴

(Jeremiah 35:4) I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the room of the sons of Hanan son of Igdaliah the man of God. It was next to the room of the officials, which was over that of Maaseiah son of Shallum the doorkeeper.

(Jeremiah 35:5) Then I set bowls full of wine and some cups before the Rekabites and said to them, “Drink some wine.”

However, the Rechabites firmly refused Jeremiah’s offer.

(Jeremiah 35:6) But they replied, “We do not drink wine, because our forefather Jehonadab son of Rekab gave us this command: ‘Neither you nor your descendants must ever drink wine.

(Jeremiah 35:7) Also you must never build houses, sow seed or plant vineyards; you must never have any of these things, but must always live in tents. Then you will live a long time in the land where you are nomads.’

(Jeremiah 35:8) We have obeyed everything our forefather Jehonadab son of Rekab commanded us. Neither we nor our wives nor our sons and daughters have ever drunk wine

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(Jeremiah 35:11) But when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded this land, we said, 'Come, we must go to Jerusalem to escape the Babylonian and Aramean armies.' So we have remained in Jerusalem."

The reason they firmly refused Jeremiah's offer was because of the command given by their ancestor Jonadab son of Rechab.

Jonadab had commanded his descendants never to drink wine, build houses, sow seeds, own vineyards, or settle down—but to live in tents for all their lives.

Jonadab lived around 830 B.C., and this family rule had been established more than 200 years before Jeremiah's time.

He set this rule to preserve a devout faith in the midst of a corrupt society marked by injustice and moral decay.

The spiritual meaning of Jonadab's family rule is as follows:

1. The command to abstain from wine was because wine is often the root of many evils.
2. The instruction not to build houses, sow seed, or own vineyards was to prevent attachment to worldly settlement.
3. Living in tents symbolized detachment from materialism and a longing for the heavenly homeland.

The descendants of Rechab boldly stated that they had faithfully obeyed all of Jonadab's commands up to that day.

Not only themselves, but their wives, children, and entire households had refrained from drinking wine, building homes, owning vineyards or fields, or even possessing seed.

They explained that their current residence inside Jerusalem was not out of disobedience to their ancestor's will, but a temporary measure due to military threat.

They had lived as pilgrims, faithfully adhering to the life of sojourners.

This stands in stark contrast to the Israelites—who, despite claiming to be descendants of Abraham, constantly rebelled against the word of God.

God set the Rechabites as an example and rebuked the people of Judah for their disobedience to His commands.

(Jeremiah 35:12) Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying: ¹

(Jeremiah 35:13) “This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Go and tell the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, ‘Will you not learn a lesson and obey my words?’ declares the LORD.

(Jeremiah 35:14) Jehonadab son of Rekab ordered his descendants not to drink wine and this command has been kept. To this day they do not drink wine, because they obey their forefather’s command. But I have spoken to you again and again, yet you have not obeyed me.

(Jeremiah 35:15) Again and again I sent all my servants the prophets to you. They said, “Each of you must turn from your wicked ways and reform your actions; do not follow other gods to serve them. Then you will live in the land I have given to you and your ancestors.” But you have not paid attention or listened to me.

(Jeremiah 35:16) The descendants of Jehonadab son of Rekab have carried out the command their forefather gave them, but these people have not obeyed me.’

The Israelites were expected to obey God’s commands even more faithfully than the descendants of Rechab obeyed the command of their ancestor—but instead, they disobeyed.

God sent prophets to them over the course of many centuries to warn them, but it was to no avail.

How did the descendants of Jacob—Israel—become the people of God?

They were originally slaves in Egypt.

Yet they were redeemed by the blood of the Passover lamb and became God’s

people.

Though they were lowly and insignificant, by God's grace they were made His chosen people.

Shouldn't they then have recognized that grace and responded with even greater faithfulness to God's commands?

God declares judgment on the disobedient people of Judah.

He laments that "though I spoke to them, they did not listen; though I called to them, they did not answer,"

and He declares that He will bring upon them all the punishments and disasters He has spoken.

(Jeremiah 35:17) "Therefore this is what the LORD God Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'Listen! I am going to bring on Judah and on everyone living in Jerusalem every disaster I pronounced against them. I spoke to them, but they did not listen; I called to them, but they did not answer.'"

Now, despite the repeated appeals of the prophets and the warnings of the Lord, irreversible judgment will be brought upon Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who have refused to listen and have disregarded and disobeyed the law of the Lord.

In contrast, to the descendants of the Rechabites, who have faithfully kept the commands of their forefather, God promises a blessing.

He declares that there will always be a descendant of the Rechabites standing before Him.

(Jeremiah 35:18) Then Jeremiah said to the family of the Rechabites, "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'You have obeyed the command of your forefather Jehonadab and have followed all his instructions and have done everything he ordered.'

(Jeremiah 35:19) Therefore this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'Jehonadab son of Rekab will never fail to have a descendant to serve me.'"

'The one who stands before the Lord' refers to someone who serves in a priestly role in the temple, worshiping the Lord.

Although it is not entirely clear what specific duties were entrusted to the descendants of the Rechabites, later traditions suggest that they were included among those who served in the temple.

According to the record in Nehemiah, Malchiah son of Rechab is mentioned as a ruler over the district of Beth-haccherem.

(Nehemiah 3:13) The Valley Gate was repaired by Hanun and the residents of Zanoah. They rebuilt it and put its doors with their bolts and bars in place. They also repaired a thousand cubits^[c] of the wall as far as the Dung Gate.

(Nehemiah 3:14) The Dung Gate was repaired by Malkijah son of Rekab, ruler of the district of Beth Hakkerem. He rebuilt it and put its doors with their bolts and bars in place.

God blesses those who obey His word.

Beloved members of Church of God's Dream,

The people of Israel were originally slaves in Egypt.

They suffered greatly under harsh labor for over 400 years and cried out to God in their distress.

God, hearing their cries, showed them grace and delivered them.

He brought them out of Egypt and made them His own people.

However, the Israelites did not hold on to that grace in their hearts.

Whenever they found themselves in hardship, they would seek God and pretend to follow His commands.

But as soon as their circumstances improved, they turned their backs on God and repeatedly disobeyed His word.

God watched the people of Judah and contrasted their unfaithfulness with the Rechabites, who faithfully upheld the command of their ancestor.

He rebuked the people of Judah for their disobedience and declared judgment and disaster upon them.

In contrast, God proclaimed a blessing upon the descendants of Rechab, who steadfastly obeyed the instructions of their forefather.

We too were once slaves to Satan, doomed to die.

But God had mercy on us, and through the blood of His only Son, Jesus Christ, He saved us and made us His people.

We are recipients of immeasurable grace.

Let us hold that grace deep in our hearts and live in faithful obedience to God as those who have been redeemed.

To the obedient, God gives blessing—but to the disobedient, He brings judgment.