

Fact Sheet for **“Remember the Rechabites”**
Jeremiah 35

Pastor Bob Singer
02/10/2019

Becoming a Christian is a matter of faith. Living for Christ is a matter of commitment. Hopefully as we age our level of commitment will also increase. But for some their level of commitment to Christ actually goes down. God's illustration of the Rechabites in Jeremiah 35 is one that can spur us on if we start to drift.

God has used several illustrations in this prophetic book to make His points. Here are several: (1) An almond branch (chapter 1), (2) A boiling pot (chapter 1), (3) A ruined loincloth (chapter 13), (4) The potter and the clay (chapter 18), (5) The broken flask (chapter 19), (6) Good and bad figs (chapter 24), (7) A purchased field (chapter 32). In chapter 34 God will use the Rechabites as an illustration.

ESV 35:1 ¶ **The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah:**

The events of this chapter took place during the reign of Jehoiakim, at least 11 years and possibly up to 20 years before chapter 34.

² **"Go to the house of the Rechabites and speak with them and bring them to the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers; then offer them wine to drink."**

God had a purpose in giving Jeremiah these instructions. God would contrast the faithfulness of the Rechabites with the unfaithfulness of the people of Judah. *Read Jeremiah 35:3-5.* Jeremiah had invited the Rechabites into one of the side rooms that surrounded the temple court in Jerusalem. These were rooms that were used for storage, the living quarters of the priests, and for meetings of various kinds. There Jeremiah set before them wine and invited them to drink.

⁶ **But they answered, "We will drink no wine, for Jo-na-dab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, 'You shall not drink wine, neither you nor your sons forever.'"**

The Rechabites were descended from "Jonadab" (or "Jehonadab") son of Rechab. Jonadab assisted Jehu about roughly 235 years earlier in exterminating Baal worship from Israel (2 Kings 10:15ff.). The Rechabites were related to the Kenites (1 Chronicles 2:55) who themselves descended from Moses' father-in-law (Judges 1:16) Jethro. They refused to drink the wine because Jonadab, their forefather, prohibited it. Why? There could be several reasons, but none is cited in the Bible. The Rechabites went on to tell more that Jonadab had commanded them. *Read Jeremiah 35:7.* The Hebrew word translated as "not" expresses permanent prohibition. We will see later this word in the last verse of this chapter.

Read Jeremiah 35:8-10.

Jonadab had also commanded them to be nomadic, and so they were. This nomadic lifestyle made people rough. Now here they were sitting in one of the side rooms of the temple. They had obeyed everything that Jonadab had commanded. They had only come to Jerusalem because Nebuchadnezzar had invaded the land. *Read Jeremiah 35:11.*

The Rechabites had consistently obeyed their forefather's command. This stood in sharp contrast with Judah, who had consistently not obeyed God. *Read Jeremiah 35:12-16.*

God wasn't commending the Rechabites because they didn't drink wine or because they were nomads. He commended them because they were faithful to their forefather's command. In contrast the unfaithfulness of the people of Judah to the repeated commands of their heavenly Father would have dire consequences for them. *Read Jeremiah 35:17.*

In contrast, the obedience of the Rechabites would result in God's permanent blessing. *Read Jeremiah 35:18-19.*

The Hebrew word translated "never" is the same word that expressed permanent prohibition in verse 7. The Septuagint translates the sense of verse 19 as follows:

NETS (LXX) **Jeremiah 42:19** Ionadab son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before me for all the days of the earth.

Here are two later references to the Rechabites, one from the Bible, one from early church history.

Nehemiah 3:14 mentions a descendant of Rechab approximately 150 years later who was faithfully serving the LORD.

Here are some early church father's on the death of James, the half-brother of Jesus: According to Josephus James was stoned to death. Clement of Alexandria relates that "James was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple, and was beaten to death with a club". Hegesippus cites that "the Scribes and Pharisees placed James upon the pinnacle of the temple, and threw down the just man, and they began to stone him, for he was not killed by the fall. And one of them, who was a fuller, took the club with which he beat out clothes and struck the just man on the head". Eusebius wrote "And, while they were there, stoning him to death, one of the priests, the sons of Rechab, the son of Rechabim, to whom testimony is borne by Jeremiah the prophet, began to cry aloud, saying: "Cease, what do ye? The just man is praying for us." But one among them, one of the fullers, took the staff with which he was accustomed to wring out the garments he dyed, and hurled it at the head of the just man."

Where are the Rechabites today? Only God knows for certain, but they are living today.

The lack of obedience to the LORD's commands is not a problem unique to the Hebrews. It was remarkable that the Rechabites would keep a command given by their forefather centuries earlier. But it is also remarkable that anyone who is a Christian today would be inclined to live a life of disobedience to God and His Word. Think about opportunities that all of us have to harbor a bitterness.

This chapter in Jeremiah reminds me of the 2nd of the 10 commandments (Exodus 20:4-6; Deuteronomy 5:8-10).

Are you looking for the LORD's blessing in your life? Take the advice of the Psalmist (Psalm 119:11). And if you do mess up be quick to take the advice of 1 John 1:9. Remember the Rechabites and the outcome of their commitments! Aim for God's blessing in your life.