

“REMEMBER THE RECHABITES.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Texts for the Sermon: Jeremiah 35; Joshua 24:14-18; Psalm 78:1-8; II John 4-6

Introduction

Remembering is an important part of life. In fact, life and freedom become precarious and tenuous if we forget to remember.

We American are having an especially hard time remembering important things in our past. We want to put all our investment of thought, time and energy in the future.

We are a lot like Huckleberry Finn. He was finally starting to get interested in the Bible when Aunt Polly was learning him about Moses and the bulrushes, but then she let it out that Moses was dead and that was the end of that. In the immortal words of Huck, “I don’t take no stock in dead people.”

So, it is with us. We as a nation are putting less and less stock in dead people, and as a result less and less stock in the things people died for.

I. The Test - an object lesson (lunch, a wine party). Vs. 1-5

Jehoiakim - evil king. Things are a mess in Israel. The north is long gone, and Judah is sliding fast. Two kings and 11 years from exile. (609-598 B.C.)

Recabites - a nomadic family about whom nothing is known but Jer. 35.
A small clan within Judah.

A temptation? In the temple, by Jeremiah the prophet, told by God. They stood the test.

II. The Testimony - their tradition. Vs. 6-11

They recount to Jeremiah their family history and tradition, their story, their faith commitment.

But here is what you don’t know. Jonadab lived 250 years before!
2 1/2 centuries of faithfulness [Jehu good king of Israel. (841-814 B.C.)]

250 years is a long time back. In this country it takes us back to the beginning of the drive for independence and freedom from the tyranny of England. Before there were any states.

(cf. 1768, still under British rule; or 2268)

I can trace 6 generations of faith on mother's side back to early 1800's.

Notice not the outward marks but the inner devotion and obedience. The issue is not lifestyle.

The rules are arbitrary and not universal, God doesn't command this for all of us. Jeremiah owned property and drank wine, God gave Israel fields, vineyards, houses. Notice their loyalty, their obedience, their faithfulness, their respect for their forefathers.

III. **The Contrasts.** Vs. 12-16

This is the point of the story.

Lesser to greater; if this then how much more this.

Startling contrast between faithfulness of Recabites and faithlessness of Israelites.

A. A mere mortal human vs. an infinite, eternal God.

B. A man long dead vs. a living God who sees and hears.

A man with no knowledge of what they are doing or not doing vs....

C. A man with no control over minds and hearts vs. a God who has sent prophets and written law on hearts.

D. A man who made no offer of reward vs. a God who has promised a future, a hope.

A land flowing with milk and honey.

E. A man who gave hard, burdensome commands vs. a God whose ways and command are not burdensome.

His words were fallible, didn't have the power to give life.

Doing without the comforts of life, no houses but tents; no vineyards, no vine, no roots.

F. Contrast an obedience based not on conscience or principle or Scripture but on simple obedience vs. God's commands in heart, conscience, word and promise.

A powerful image of unswerving faith and unswerving obedience to the

commands of a human founder and flagrant disobedience and disregard toward Yahweh despite all his efforts and benefits and blessings.

The essence of the message to Israel is you too have a Father who has commanded you to live in total relationship with Him. He has set you apart for a life of love. Why don't you live in response to His love? Do you think what He asks is beyond what mere ordinary mortals can do? Think again.

The Rechabites are ordinary people and they have been doing it for 250 years. The problem is not that you are incapable, but that you are lazy and undisciplined. Don't follow the crowd, don't listen to the culture. Don't be self-indulgent consumers and spiritual spectators. You have become distracted by the world and lost your way.

This is a simple plea to repent and return to following God who has done everything for you.

How much more now that God has shown His great love for us in His only Son, our Savior.

IV. **The Applications**

What do the Rechabites have to say to us living in the age of megabytes and gigabytes?

Will our children have faith?

Will our faith have children?

A. Remember to honor the memory of the good that is past.

Tell the old, old story

Our nation is losing its memory - erasing religious heritage which will erase future hope.

Confessions, creeds essential tenets, this is why we use the creeds and confessions. Our spiritual grandparents still have something to say to us.

Grandparents

Christian biographies (Google this), church history

B. Remember to strive for more simplicity in life

Rechabites - strangers in land, just passing through

Abstinence - in sex and in accumulation of things

Contentment - Is God's protection against greed and lust and envy and materialism
(contentment is wanting what we have).

Nothing is more fatal to religion in a family than pride and luxury and comfort built on an abundance of things.

The comforts of life are spiritually dangerous because it kills a willingness to serve and suffer and sacrifice.

The more dead we are to the delights of the flesh and material things, the more disposed we are toward service to God.

Fathers, do not have as your goal in life to provide your children with all the comforts of this life.

C. Remember to guard conviction from the constant call to compromise.

Jonadab saw dangers of a settled, agricultural civilization and tendency toward assimilation.

His arbitrary rules had a spiritual purpose, to guard their hearts.

They were not survivalists, a carry over from something past, they were reactionary movement.

Maintain integrity amid surrounding temptations.

Rejected everything Canaanite

Israel settled down, became secure and slowly lost purity and became defiled.

Rechabites were resisted this, [puritans, fundamentalists, fanatics].

The unconscious 21st century American lifestyle and culture is not conducive to Christian faith.

What would a good father do today to protect children from common corruptions?

It can be done Rechabites, Amish. They are example, it can be done; not impossible just lazy.

T.V., cable, internet, toys, activities; tithing, prayer, care for poor, moral conduct.

We had certain rules in our house, things we would or would not do.

When he made Sabbath rules, I was careful to point out that other families may have different kinds of rules and that was fine, each family could have their own.

We were better, self-righteous, just our way of honoring and keeping the Sabbath.

Spiritual integrity takes intentionality.

Yes, we are in a crowd, the key is to not become crowd-conditioned.

Guard your own heart and teach your family about the nature of temptations.

Possible to live according to convictions

Possible to live distinctly different lifestyle

Consider this. It took a great deal of courage to build our nation and to defend it against aggression. Our freedoms were achieved with blood, sweat and tears, with the sacrifice of life.

How much more now than won't it take courage of heroic proportions to fight against the moral and spiritual attacks we face today?

Where is the passion and conviction today? Where are the spiritual patriots?

We need much more courage to act morally and virtuously today when all those around us are not. Our whole society seeks to frustrate our morality and virtue at every turn. It is a daily struggle to resist the temptations and not despair.

How hard must it have been to be a Recabites adolescent even among the Israelites who had caved in to the Canaanite culture?

D. Remember we are called to teach obedience and faithfulness.

I must model it and I must teach it.

Obedience toward parents leads to obedience toward God (lesser to greater).

*Home is path to heaven.

"A boy never gets over the fact that he had a good father."

This is the key to raising covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers.

It is never mentioned in this text, but this is a love story. This is the story of a family's great love for their parents and great-grandparents back 2 ½ centuries.

Our love is evident in our obedience.

The example of the Recabites is remembered in Scripture so that our generation could have this witness. God has given us His presence and His promises to be our hope and strength to love Him and obey Him like this.

Ask Him for this kind of heroic courage and faithfulness.

Look back and remember those who have gone before. What else can we do to a God whose faithfulness is never ending, and who's kindness toward us is without measure?

V. **Results and Rewards.** Vs. 17-19

VI. **Conclusion**
Jeremiah 35:19b

"...Jonadab the son of Rechab shall never lack a man to stand before me."

History identifies Rechabites serving God until the time of the destruction of the temple.

Remember the Rechabites as God did and know that God remembers our faithfulness.

III John 4

"No greater joy can I have than this, to hear that my children follow the truth."

Ps 78:1-8

"Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders which he has wrought.

He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children; that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God."