

THE OBEDIENCE OF THE RECHABITES

In the days of Jeremiah the prophet, God Almighty used the faithfulness of the children of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, to their father's commandments to impart beneficial lessons to all men of goodwill, especially in this age of the last days.

In Jeremiah chapter 35, is recorded a lucid account of how God commanded Jeremiah the prophet to offer the Rechabites wine. But they refused – in keeping with the commandment given them by their father Jonadab. The account reads: “And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons forever: Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters;” – Jeremiah 35:1-8

God commended the Rechabites for refusing to be swayed from their course, and contrasted their unquestioning obedience with the refusal of the Jews of old to keep His commandments as it is written : “The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me...And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me forever. “ – Jeremiah 35: 14-19.

Jonadab (or Jehonadab, meaning, *Jehovah is bounteous*), the son of Rechab, was a man of great faith in Jehovah. When Jehu was executing the righteous judgement of God on the house of Ahab, he joined him (Jehu) in the fight. (2 Kings 10:15-28) He (Jonadab) followed the course of honesty and meekness and taught his children to live a simple life of self-denial, which they obeyed and were blessed by God. Rechab the father of Jonadab was a descendant of Hobab, the son of Reuel (alternate names Raguel or Jethro, Moses' father-in-law) who belonged to the Kenites, a Midianitish tribe who came into Canaan with the Israelites. (1 Chronicles 2:55; Judges 1:16; 4:11) Moses the servant of God had pleaded with Hobab to accompany them and be their “eyes” in their journey to Canaan. – Numbers 10:29-32; See also 1 Samuel 15:6

Object Lessons

The principal virtue which the Rechabites displayed was obedience, which was what God demanded of the Jews when they came out of the land of Egypt, as He stated: “For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.” (Jeremiah 7:22,23) And the prophet Samuel declared “...To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” – 1 Samuel 15:22.

Peace and prosperity would not have been eluding the world if men had been obedient to the

laws of God. Job, a prophet of God was inspired to say: "He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity. If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures. But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge." – Job 36:10-12; See also Romans 6:16

It should be noted that the Rechabites obeyed the law made by man (their father Jonadab) whereas the Jews had continually disobeyed a succession of prophets sent to them by God. Righteous laws made by men, particularly by leaders in God's organisation, should also be obeyed. St Peter enjoins Christians thus: "SUBMIT YOURSELVES TO EVERY ORDINANCE OF MAN FOR THE LORD'S SAKE: whether it be to the King, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well..." – 1 Peter 2:13-15; See also Hebrews 13: 7,17,18.

The story also highlights the duty (or prerogative) of parents and guardians to train their children and wards to live up to God's dictates. Parents should make and enforce rules that will ensure the moral and spiritual well being of their children. (Proverbs 22:6,15) Children owe it a duty to God to obey their parents in the Lord. It is the godless children of this generation that God said will not obey their parents, not children of righteous disposition. (2 Timothy 3:1-2; Proverbs 10:1; 17:25) St. Paul gave this godly advice to children: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. "- Ephesians 6:1-3

"STRANGERS"

The Israelites alone were God's covenant people. (Amos 3:2; Exodus 19:4-6) People of other nations who lived among them were called "strangers". God loves strangers who dwell among His people and requires from them the same degree of unalloyed loyalty and obedience. (Exodus 12:48; 20:10;) God commanded the Jews: "Love ye therefore the stranger for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Deuteronomy 10:18,19) Furthermore in Leviticus 19:33,34 God charged the people concerning strangers to wit: "And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD Being Kenites, the Rechabites were strangers among the Israelites. Nevertheless, they always stood for what is right in the sight of God and refused to compromise. They did nothing that associated them with the religious ways of their heathen ancestors, which were repugnant to God.

As the Rechabites were strangers among the Jews, so today true Christians are strangers in this present evil world looking for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11: 10,11). True Christians are therefore required to lead godly lives of obedience, contentment, faith and sacrifice in order to please God Who has called them to His way of salvation. "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, Who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." (1 Peter 1:14-17) St Paul in his letter to the Ephesians declared: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made

nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace" (Ephesians 2:11-15) This calls for strong faith, self-denial, patience. -Matthew 16:24; Titus 2:11-14; Romans 12:1-2; etc.

The obedience of the Rechabites also teaches the need for discipline or self-control in the life of a Christian. The service of God calls for self-denial. This is the point St. Paul was making when he wrote: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (1 Corinthians 9:24-27) And St. Peter admonished; "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lust, which war against the soul." – 1 Peter 2:11.

The life-style of the Rechabites in leaving the religious ways of their forbears and accepting the God of the Jews is a beautiful lesson in spiritual mindedness. Scripture says: "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." – Romans 8:5-9

Christians must live a life of moderation. The unbridled helter-skelter, sky-is-the-limit struggle for wealth has thrown many into untold stress and misery. The Bible says: "Let your moderation be known to all men." (Philippians 4:5) Rather we should be contented with what we have as St Paul exhorted in 1 Timothy 6: 6-10: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." He added: "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." -1 Timothy 6:11-12

In all, the obedience of the Rechabites holds out several lessons for the spiritual growth of Christians in these last days. How reassuring it is to know that our works of faith in obedience to God will redound to great blessings for us!! As the prophet Samuel told King Saul "...To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" – 1 Samuel 15:22.