

GLENLOCK BIBLE CAMP - 2002

## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JEREMIAH

Speaker: Bro. Ron Cowie

Study #6: The Rechabites - The Value of Upholding Family Principles

Reading: Jeremiah 35

Thanks Steve and good morning everybody. It's a beautiful day to once again come together around the life of Jeremiah.

The story of the Rechabites is a very straightforward story, but it has a very powerful lesson to teach, the lesson of keeping good family values. It's a very important one today because we live in a world in which old fashioned values are challenged and our children are taught very subtly to challenge values and standards that their parents might have kept. As a result of that world, the strength of families have been very largely eroded. It was no different in the days in which Jeremiah had to speak, and to make an example of the Rechabites, because family values were very much being ignored right from the throne, right through the nation.

It's interesting when you look at the chapters of Jeremiah, we notice that the whole book seems to be totally jumbled up historically speaking. But these three chapters, 34, 35 and 36, are 3 chapters that have actually been put together for a very deliberate reason. You see, chapter 34 is the life of Zedekiah and it actually occurs some 10 years after chapter 35, but chapter 34 is all about Zedekiah's covenant breaking, and the fact that he broke his covenant to free the slaves. What had happened was, when the Babylonians came up and besieged the city, they said, 'ah we must be doing something wrong, we better release all the slaves that we didn't release in the year of jubilee and the year of release. So they made a covenant to release their slaves and they did that and the Babylonians retreated; so, they said, 'it's good, the pressure is off and we can go and take our slaves back again'. They broke then their covenant with their slaves. So, chapter 34 is **condemning Zedekiah for his breaking of covenants**. That was not like his father. His father did judgment and justice and cared for the poor. So, chapter 34 is about Zedekiah!

Chapter 36 is about Jehoiakim burning the scroll. Now, chapter 36 actually occurs in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiakim, whereas chapter 35 occurs in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiakim. So historically speaking, the chapters are not in the correct order, but thematically you have a chapter that shows how different were the sons of Josiah, to Josiah their father, and in between you have a chapter about sons who honoured their fathers' principles. So you have a contrast between what happened to the sons of Josiah against the sons of Jonadab, the son of Rechab. I think that's why those three chapters are put together.

The timing of this chapter is fairly easy to pick out, because we read in verse 1, 'it's in the days of Jehoiakim', but from verse 11 you see there that when the Rechabites are explaining what they're doing inside Jerusalem (because they normally dwelt in tents); they say that in verse 7, 'they normally dwell in tents', but for some reason they were actually inside the walls of Jerusalem on this particular occasion. The reason was that the army of the Chaldeans and the army of the Syrians were roaming around the land. Now the marginal reference is quite correct, 2 Kings 24 verse 2, the third invasion that came against Judah was mercenary bands of Moabites and Syrians who went around denuding the land of anything they could steal, and as a result the Rechabites had left their tents and had come inside the security of the walls just for a very brief time. It was very obvious that they were quite embarrassed about the fact that they were living inside the city - they did not normally do that. So we can easily date it, it's the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiakim when the Moabites and the Syrians were stripping the land of all the crops and any good things they could take. So that's the timing - in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiakim.

Well, what's the major lesson of this chapter? Well, there are two lessons: (1) the sons of Josiah were so different to their father and did not follow his ways; and, (2) the other lesson is that Israel had been so forgetful of their heavenly Father. God had been insulted by the people! If you've got a coloured pencil there, even something to underline, one of the themes of this chapter is **hearkening**: verse 13, 'Will you not receive instruction and hearken to My words?', saith Yahweh; verse 14, the end of it, 'but ye hearkened not unto Me'; verse 15, the end of it, 'ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto Me'; verse 16, 'this people hath not hearkened unto Me'; the end of verse 17, 'they have not answered'. So you see, that's what God's on about - that unlike the Rechabites who hearkened and obeyed their father, Jonadab, Israel had not hearkened unto their God. That was the great challenge with this incident of the Rechabites, they're following their father, you don't follow your heavenly Father!

Okay, let's just follow the incident very briefly and particular we need to do a little bit of work on Jonadab, because he's the key feature of this chapter. We find in verse 2 that Jeremiah was told to go to the house of the Rechabites and to invite them to the chambers of the temple and he was to set wine in front of them. Now the Rechabites were an interesting group of people! let's just have a look at their origins. You see, the Rechabites were descendants of Jethro the father-in-law of Moses. You can trace the Rechabites right back to the days when Israel came out of Egypt because Zipporah married Moses. Zipporah's brother Hobab, in Numbers 10, is invited by Moses to go with the children of Israel through the wilderness; Moses said to Hobab, 'with your experience in the wilderness, you will be eyes for us in the wilderness'. Moses wanted Hobab to go with him through the wilderness! When they get to the Land, we find the descendants of Hobab are entrenched in the Land, so obviously he accepted the invitation and his children were found in Judges 1. Jael, the wife of Heber, who slew Sisera was a Kenite and she was of that same family of the Kenites which we're told came from down the south near Sinai. Deborah commended the faith of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite; in 1 Samuel 15 verse 6, we find that when Saul was going out to get

rid of the Amalekites, that he was told by God to give the Kenites an opportunity to separate themselves from the Amalekites, and if they left the Amalekites alone, if they got away from the Amalekites, they would be spared. So again, God respected the Kenites as a separate group living in Israel.

Then we come to Jonadab! Let's turn to 2 Kings 9 and pick up the story of this Jonadab, who was the great father of the house of the Rechabites. As a key verse which we don't have time to look at now, but if you ever want to make this connection between the Kenites who came from the family of Jethro and Jonadab, 1 Chronicles 2 verse 55 actually says that 'these are the Kenites that came from Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab'. So the Kenites and the Rechabites are actually linked by that first in 1 Chronicles 2. But let's come to 2 Kings 9 and pick up the story of Jonadab! and we need to know this is in the time of **Jehu**. Now, do you remember who Jehu was? he was the man appointed by God through Elijah to go out and destroy all the traces of the family of Ahab and Jezebel and to wipe out the Baal worship in the northern kingdom. 2 Kings 9 verse 20 we find Jehu driving furiously through the Land, he's going in his chariot and he's slaughtering everyone he comes across. He's got a companion with him, verse 25, called Bidkar, and the name 'Bidkar' means 'the assassin' (920) which is exactly what he was! and the two of them are going around slaughtering everyone they can find connected to Ahab and Jezebel. When we get to verse 30 of chapter 9, Jezebel is thrown out the window and he runs his chariot over the top of her, leaves her for the dogs to eat.

We come to chapter 10 verse 1, seventy sons in Samaria, Jehu demands their heads and those who had brought them up in Samaria, pile up the heads in verse 8, two heaps by the gate, so all the 70 sons of Ahab that had been brought up by other people, were all piled up. Their heads were chopped off and piled up, so this is a very blood-thirsty campaign here that's under way. In verse 11 of chapter 10, 'Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Ahab and Jezebel and his great men and his kinsfolk and his priests and left him none remaining'. So Jehu was absolutely detailed in going around and finding every relative and associate of Ahab and Jezebel and wiping them out. Verse 13, Jehu met with the brethren of Ahaziah and said, 'who are you?' and they answered and said, 'we're the brethren of Ahaziah and we go down to salute the children of the king and the children of the queen'; and, these were relatives, because the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel had married into Judah. There were connections even in Judah, so another 42 guys get their heads cut off - verse 14, 'he left none of them alive'. So this is a massive slaughter campaign going on under the hands of Jehu!

All of a sudden, in verse 15, he comes across Jonadab; 'when he was departed hence (that is, Jehu) he came across Jonadab the son of Rechab **coming to meet him**'. Now I want you to notice that phrase, the bible doesn't waste words! Jonadab was looking for Jehu! It wasn't that Jehu stumbled across Jonadab; Jonadab was looking for Jehu, he wanted to get on this campaign of destruction. He was coming to meet him, you see, when Jezebel died, all those who had been hiding in the dens and caves of the earth,

came out of the caves to help wipe out the apostasy and to get rid of all the traces of Baal worship. Now Jehu seems to know something about Jonadab: he says, 'is your heart with my heart? are we one on this?' Jonadab said, 'yes, I am!' and Jehu said, 'well, get up in the chariot!'

Now it's interesting, the name 'Rechab' means 'to ride' (7394) and it says in verse 16, 'He made him ride in his chariot', he made him to 'rechab' in the chariot; and so 'Jonadab', which means 'willing of Yahweh' (3082 + 5068), is your heart with my heart? yes it is, I am willing of Yahweh! Well then, get up and ride if you're a son of Rechab. So he did! he got into the chariot and off they went. Well, didn't they have some fun? Verse 17, he came to Samaria and he slew all that remained to Ahab in Samaria, so he destroyed them. Then in verse 18, this glorious occasion when Jehu and Jonadab called this great solemn assembly at the house of Baal, in verse 20, 'proclaim a solemn assembly for Baal. And they proclaimed it'. The whole house of Baal was absolutely jammed packed with people, and they all had to have their vestments on, so verse 22, they brought all the garments of their Baal priesthood out; everyone was decked in their regalia. Then in verse 23, Jehu went, and Jonadab the son of Rechab went, into the house of Baal and said this, 'Search and look if there are any followers of Yahweh here, then I want them!' Is anybody here a servant of Yahweh? no one is going to dare speak when the house of Baal is full of people in their vestments; you're not going to say you're a servant of Yahweh, are you? No servants of Yahweh, then lock the doors! Then he said to the men who were standing around outside, if any one of these people get away, then your life for his life; then they went in and hacked the whole assembly inside the house of Baal to death and then they made it a dung house. You see, that was the zeal of Jehu and Jonadab.

Verse 28, 'Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel', and his bosom companion was Jonadab the son of Rechab. Now we might say, well, wasn't that fantastic? isn't it great that they wiped out that shocking idolatry from Israel? But notice verse 30, 'Yahweh said to Jehu, because you've done well in executing that which was right in Mine eyes, and hast done it unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in My heart, (their heart was with God's heart - corruption, idolatry and apostasy and wickedness has to be wiped out); and God says, 'that's My heart, and you two have a heart like Me'. He also said to Jehu, 'you're going to have children on the throne to the 4<sup>th</sup> generation, Jehu!' and so he did! You know, the northern kingdom lasted 220 years, 100 years of the northern kingdom was ruled by the descendants of Jehu, and he was nothing to do with the royal family. He was just a soldier who was plucked out of the army and God said, 'I'll give him that - 4 generations on the throne, because of his zeal in his heart to destroy wickedness which is like Mine. That's interesting, isn't it? you see, because both verse 29 and verse 31 tell us, that Jehu personally did not cleanse his own heart: verse 29, 'From the sins of Jeroboam, Jehu departed not from them, even from the golden calves; verse 31, 'Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart'.

You might say to me, 'Well, why would God reward a man who wasn't personally converted? Well, it just shows you, doesn't it? the value God puts upon the destruction of evil, the fighting of evil. God did not leave that unnoticed nor unrewarded, He couldn't reward Jehu eternally, because Jehu didn't have very much faith of his own, but God said I will not forget what he did in wiping out corruption, for his zeal! God said I'll give him four generations to the throne in reward! But what a lesson, b&s, from Jehu that we can learn. You know, one of the best little signs that I've ever come across is this, **It is much easier to fight for our principles, than to live up to them!** and when you think about that, it's very true of human nature; when we have to fight for our principles we're very courageous but when we have to live by our principles it's not so easy, is it? It's much easier to fight for our principles than to live up to them; that's Jehu to a 'T', he was great at fighting, he was great at wielding the sword, cutting out corruption, carving people up, but he didn't take any diligence to his own heart. He took no heed to walk in the law of Yahweh the God of Israel.

Now I'm going to read between the lines a little bit here, as to what I think happened to Jehu. As I said, he was just an ordinary soldier from the ranks, selected by God because he had the diligence to do what was required. He had the vicious nature that would go around and slaughter everybody, even children, because it had to be done in this generation. Well, the problem was that when he destroyed all the family of Ahab, he inherited ivory palaces, glorious furnishings, all the possessions and the wealth that Ahab and Jezebel had accumulated was now his, he was now the king of Israel, and this ordinary soldier inherited all that trappings of the kingly office; and he had no kingly upbringing, he didn't know how to rule well! The fact that he followed in the sins of the calves would also indicate that he may well have had a problem with drunkenness. The reason was that Baal worship and the worship of those calves was usually always associated with drunkenness. I think what happened to Jehu was, that the glamour of the good palace life was something he couldn't handle; and the man that rode in the chariot with him, stood back and said, 'that's not going to happen to my family; we're making for my family two rules; **we don't touch wine and we don't live in palaces**, in fact, we're going to live in tents! because we don't want to happen to us what happened to Jehu. Now I'm reading between the lines, but for some reason, b&s, Jonadab the son of Rechab decided to make laws for his family.

You come to Jeremiah 35, and see what those laws were. Jeremiah 35 verses 6 and 7, his descendants recited his laws, '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 for ever: Neither shall ye build houses, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have anything: but ye shall live in tents: that ye may live many days in the Land where ye be strangers'. You see, the Rechabites, or the Kenites, even after hundreds of years, still regarded themselves as strangers and pilgrims in somebody else's land. Jonadab's two laws were **'no wine' and 'we're going to live in tents'**, and I believe it was a direct reflection upon what happened to Jehu. A pilgrim life style! Let's just think about those two laws.

An abstinence from wine: When you go back through the bible, wine doesn't come up too well! It was the cause of Noah's disgrace straight after the flood; it was the cause of Lot's shame with his own daughters; it was the cause of the death of Nadab and Abihu. When you read Leviticus 10 and these two fools come in and bring in strange fire to the middle of the consecration of the priests, the very first law that's made once their bodies had been dragged outside the camp is, 'the sons of Aaron shall drink no wine'! You see, they were drunk and that's why they did what they did, and when people are drunk they make fools of themselves and they disgrace themselves. They lose self control! That's exactly why wine and false doctrine are equated in the scriptures; wrong doctrine always leads to wrong practice! and drunkenness always leads to disgrace and sorrow. So that was one law that Jonadab made!

The other was the pilgrim lifestyle: You see, Jonadab realized that if they were going to survive in the northern kingdom then they had to live apart from what the general run of the nation was. They would not expose themselves to the temptations in the cities of the world. They would live as nomads just passing through this life, 'that they might live long in the Land'. Do you see that phrase there, who can tell me the bible echoes of 'that you may live many days in the Land'? Where's the bible echo, where does it come from and where is it quoted in the New Testament? From the commandment, 'honour thy mother and father, that ye may live long in the Land': it's in the Ten commandments, isn't it? that's when it's quoted in Ephesians 6 verses 2 and 3, Paul says it's the first commandment with promise: Honour thy father and mother that thou mayest live long in the Land; and, when it's quoted in Ephesians 6 it says, 'that thou mayest live long on the earth'. So, you see, it's going outside the land of Israel and outside of inheritance; children who obey their parents will live long on the earth promises God. So you see, it was honouring father and mother that would have you to live long in the Land where they be strangers.

Here they were in Jeremiah 35, 230 years after the death of Jonadab! and they're still keeping his laws. We know, b&s, it's very hard to preserve values and standards within one or two generations; we are constantly battling to keep people to try and uphold the decent standards of behaviour that ought to be those of Christadelphians between generations, and this lot were still keeping the laws of Jonadab **after 230 years!** The northern kingdom by this time had gone into captivity, but the Rechabites are still here living long in the Land. You see, that promise had already come to pass for them, now they're attaching themselves to Judah, but they're still here! All the rest of the northern kingdom is gone!

Then they get a summons in verse 2 from the great prophet Jeremiah. I want to just paint the scene of what happened: the test they were put under was quite amazing. Now if you read verses 2 to 5, the record is almost tedious in detail of where they were to go. Look at verse 3, 'I took Jaazaniah and all his brethren and the whole house of the Rechabites', so all the men of the house of the Rechabites were called together, 'I

brought them to the house of Yahweh, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which is above the chamber of Maaseiah, the keeper of the door'. Now that would be like me saying, 'look, I'd like you to come with me and we're going to go down the corridor, pass the headmaster's office, into the staff room, then into the lunchroom, and then we're going to be above something else'. Now that's getting to be very fine detail, isn't it? There's quite a story in the names: we won't go into that now but what I want to impress you with was, for the Rechabites this was totally foreign ground. You see, they had spent all their lives in tents, they weren't used to cities, they were only here because of the current invasion of the Syrian and Moabite bands. For them to be taken into a magnificent temple building, to go right in to the chambers of the scribes, right next door to the Sanhedrin and above the chambers of the governor of the city, it would be like taking people, who've only ever lived in the outback of Australia, and bringing them down and putting them in parliament house in one of the senate chambers. Would they feel comfortable? would they feel at home? **certainly not!** you see, they were totally out of their comfort zone, and that was the point of all that detail.

They have before them a man who they enormously respected, Jeremiah the prophet of Yahweh, and his words have been coming true for 3 years. The first 22 years - nothing! but for the last 3 years his words have been coming true with great accuracy. You can imagine how they felt! you imagine them standing looking around at the columns and pillars; you know, some of these men have seen nothing but tents all their lives. Here they are in this building, all magnificent, all the important men walking past outside, and they were on show. When they get into the room that Jeremiah has prepared, and there's a table there with all these pots of wine and glasses of wine poured out; and Jeremiah says, 'welcome friends, have a drink!' How would you feel if you were them? Feel pressurized? They didn't want to offend Jeremiah, did they? so what are they going to do?

Human nature being what it is, it would only have needed one or two of them to weaken and the rest would probably have been embarrassed into following; they would look at each other and one of the spokesmen says, 'Sorry, Jeremiah, we can't do it! and they stand right up front, why? Jonadab the son of Rechab **commanded us**, ye shall drink no wine, and they give the whole family policy - the wine and the tents. Notice what they say in verse 8, 'Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he charged - to drink no wine, to build no houses; Verse 10, we've dwelt in tents and we have obeyed. Our father has commanded us and we're only here in the city, verse 11, because of these marauding bands that are making life just impossible outside the walls.

So, they passed the test: incredible strength under fire. B&s, how do we get on sometimes when we might be at a work function or a live-in training conference which seem to be the fashion these days in the workplace. Team building exercises where the pressure's on to drink with the others; do we have any principles? or if we do have

principles do we tend to get pressurized to break them? You see, they all knew the policy, they all stuck by it and supported each other! and they were not ashamed to show their loyalty to family principles and God really loves the fact that people will honour family principles!

Just look what God makes of it between verse 12 and verse 17! Now this is the power of the way God was using this incident. It's a very simple lesson: verse 13, 'Thus saith Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel'. Now that's an unusual expression, **the God of Israel**, you don't find it in Jeremiah except in this particular chapter and it's there in verse 13, it's there again in verse 17, 18 and 19. So a very particular phrase, because God was speaking to people who regarded themselves as strangers in Israel. So God says, 'the God of Israel is saying to you Rechabites, you are included with Me, you are My people; and you are an example to the men of Judah and Jerusalem because they don't listen to Me, but you're listening to your father!' Now just take the contrast here, b&s, you think about this! the Rechabites for 230 years had kept manmade laws with great diligence and passed it on to the next generation so that the next generation kept the same manmade laws, and Jonadab wasn't around to see them. Jonadab couldn't come back and haunt them because they weren't keeping his laws. But they had kept the laws because the laws had wisdom in themselves and because it had worked for their families. Then you think about Israel: God was their heavenly Father, a perfect heavenly Father, God gave them easier laws than Jonadab; God never said to Israel, you can't drink any wine. He never said to Israel that you've got to live in tents, God's laws were easier than Jonadab's to keep. He was a greater Father than Jonadab, He was a Father that lived for ever! He was a Father who was alive to see them; He was a Father who constantly reminded them to obey His laws; He was a Father who was a greater Benefactor, who could give more than what Jonadab could give them; and He was a Father who could punish disobedience, and yet for all of that, they ignored their heavenly Father. They broke His laws, they refused to heed His commandments they ignored His principles and the sons of Josiah did it in one generation.

You see, that's the tragedy of this chapter! **The Rechabites kept manmade laws for 230 years, the Jews forsook their heavenly Father.**

So, what was the rewards to th Rechabites? We'll just come down to verses 18 and 19; you see, God rewarded the Rechabites for their faithfulness to their father's laws. Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, 'Thus saith Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, 'because you have obeyed the commandments of Jonadab your father'. Just stop there b&s, and see the value that God puts upon people who uphold family principles? You know, God said, 'because you honoured manmade laws, because you've seen the wisdom of past generations, in trying to determine how to live a godly life, God says, 'because you've been faithful to family principles, therefore says God, the God of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before Me forever'. Now that, b&s, applies on 2 levels; certainly in the kingdom there will be sons of Jonadab, there will be Rechabites who will be part of the immortal hosts of king-priests, because the idea of standing before God is the work of a priest. They stand



before God to serve! you can check that from Genesis 18 verse 22, Deuteronomy 4 verse 10, etc. **So standing is the work of a servant waiting on God** - the Rechabites will be there eternally to do that! But God said 'forever' and it's fascinating when you trace through history and if you want to trace this, you can go to the writings of brother CC. Walker and you'll see that he actually lists down evidence for the continued existence of the Rechabites, from the time of Jonadab right down to our day.

We'll quote you just a few examples: Psalm 71 as per the Septuagint has a heading, 'A song sung by the sons of Jonadab when they were taken captive'. When Jerusalem fell, the Rechabites went over to Babylon with the 'good figs'. You can check in the book of Nehemiah chapter 3 verse 14, that after the 70 years were over and the captives came back to rebuild the walls, that the Kenites (or, 'the Rechabites') built the Dung Gate: you know, they went to Nehemiah and they said, 'look, because we're strangers, give us the most humble part of the wall; we'll build the gate where the rubbish goes out!' But they were there when they came back from captivity. In the first century, a record by Eusebius mentions the priests, the sons of Rechab, who protested against the death of James, as recorded in Acts 12. So the Rechabites protested to Herod about the slaughter of James. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century a Jewish traveller called Benjamin of Trudelah?, says that when he goes to the land, he found a body of Jews called Rechabites, still keeping the laws of Jonadab - the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD! In 1829, Dr. Wolfe, a noted traveller and archeologist found near Mecca, a body of people called the Rechabites claiming to be the sons of Jonadab. Those are just a few examples, just to show you the continuity of the Rechabites. God had said, 'He won't want a man to stand before Me forever', so it has an application both in history and in eternity! They will be among those born in Zion who will live long in the Land, who will be kings and priest unto God because God loves those who honour family principles. They obeyed a man who was dead, they obeyed his laws!

Now let me just make a couple of comments, b&s, about the application of this to us. God never anywhere commented on the validity of Jonadab's policies, and I guess we would say we couldn't live by these; we might be able to keep away from wine but we're not expected to live in tents, and neither are we! God never made any comment on the validity of Jonadab's laws. What He did say, He greatly honoured the constancy of generations **who aimed high spiritually**. Generation after generation of the Rechabites were always saying, 'what's the best way for us to live and honour God? How can we preserve the faith for our children? well, we've got some good old family principles here in this family that we're going to keep upholding because they work for us!' We ought, b&s, to hang on very grimly to well proven standards of behaviour and morality and dress and things that have served us well over the generations. You know as well as I do, that we're constantly having to defend these things from those who just want to let people do what they want to do; from people who say, 'well, if people's hearts are okay, we don't need laws!' Perfectly right, but the bible says the human heart is desperately sick and particularly, those who are young need to be given **principles, lines to walk in**, until they grow to maturity. The things that have served us well then, ought to be

treasured, not because they might be entirely the words of God, but because they help us towards spiritual thinking, and that is what the Rechabites had upheld.

The second thing that we take is, there are values, there is great benefit in having principles and values that promote godliness. Ecclesial life can't work, inter-ecclesial life can't work, if every man does that which is right in his own eyes - we'll end up divided and splintered from each other. There's a lot of good wisdom in maintaining useful customs and scriptural standards. The last few years, b&s, I've been able to travel around the world, one of the overriding things that you learn when you travel around Christadelphia, is the bitter regret of many senior brethren who didn't uphold the standards and principles of previous generations. In many parts of the world there are whole generations of Christadelphians almost missing from the ecclesial structure. There are lots of brethren today who say to you, 'I wish we had not let things go, I wish we had hung on to the firm principles, to the strong guidelines for moral and family life in our ecclesias'. But they know it's too late to try and recover those things. Any custom or policy that aims at holiness is useful, because it's better to aim high than to allow the human heart to deceive itself.

We need to be conscious, don't we? of the example to other people. Now the Rechabites stood together and as a result they were able to support each other under pressure. These are some words from brother Robert Roberts about the value of setting an example for other people: You know people often say to me, there's no reason why I can't go out and drink and why can't I have a drink? There is no bible reason why you can't have a drink, the bible condemns drunkenness but the bible also says, whatever you do, whatever you exercise your conscience in, you think of what it might do to somebody else! Brother Roberts said, 'If a brother be grieved with thy meat, then you don't walk in love. Destroy him not with thy meat because for him Christ died. It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine or anything by which thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak'. You see, the really strong brother is the one who can say, I have rights to do a lot of things, but I will not exercise my rights because I do not want to hurt anybody else, or offend anybody else'. Now the word there 'offended' means to 'scandalize'. If your exercise of liberty scandalizes somebody else then you're not walking in love, says Paul. It is manifested by the law of Christ, we're under an obligation to consider the bearing of our actions on others. If we're indifferent on this head, we may find ourselves unexpectedly confronted with unknown responsibilities in the day of account.

There are many examples of people who exercised their liberty in the matter of drinking, and found out later on, they were the cause of tremendous stumbling to someone else. It is not wise, it is far safer, b&s, to set a positive example of goodness, of holiness, of purity, of virtue, than to be always exercising our liberty and always running on the edge of temptation. So, brethren and sisters, respect the wisdom of past generations! To our young people we say, 'have a good look at the standards and values that have worked for Chrisiadelphians over the years'; the sons of Jonadab respected their father,

and God saw that and He promised that they would have sons of Jonadab in every generation! You think when they get to the kingdom, the sons of Jonadab might come from the time of Jeremiah right down even perhaps down to today, and they will say to Jonadab with grateful thanks, 'thank you for setting some good family principles to live by!' They will thank him, b&s, and they will thank their God, who loves those that uphold family principles!