

One of the dominant themes in scripture is that of obedience. Some religions call for obedience as a means to stay in the good graces of their god or to some how win special favor during times of need. In scripture, obedience is not seen as a bargaining chip but is to be a way of life that is as natural as eating, drinking and breathing. This type of obedience is what God expects from his children and has been the message that he has sent through his prophets and today through his word. There is no mistaking of the message:

1 Samuel 15:22 (NIV) – Obedience is better than ritual

Isaiah 1:19-20 (NIV) – Disobedience bring punishment

Jeremiah 7:23 (NIV) Relationship with God depends on Obedience

By the time of Jeremiah, Israel was so far from God in disobedience they were blind to the coming destruction that God was bringing on them.

Back ground:

Jeremiah

- 1:1, Was the son of a priest from Anathoth
- 1 Kings 2:26ff, Abiathar the priest was banished to Anathoth because of his part in supporting Adonijah's attempt to take over the throne from David. Thus this priestly line was not well thought of even centuries later.
- 1:6, called to the prophetic ministry over that of a priest
- Call to be a prophet is much harder than a priest. Priest's duties are regular, accepted, defined, shared by others, while a prophet's are spontaneous, often opposed by those sent to, solo, and on call 24/7.
- Called during the reign of Josiah

Josiah

- Last point of Israel's spiritual history
- After finding a copy of the book of the law, instituted national reform in worship and removed much of the idolatry (2 Kings 22; 2Chron. 34)
- Jeremiah lead the funeral lament for Josiah (2 Chron. 35:25)
- Jehoiakim (son of Josiah) moved away from the teachings of his father and Israel quickly declined materially and spiritually
- Less than ten years after this episode (chapter 35) Babylon invaded, deporting many people, destroying Jerusalem and the temple

The Picture (vs. 1-5)

The subjects – The Recabite Clan

- They were a nomadic tribe, related to the Kenites (1 Chron. 2:54-55) who were descended from Moses' father-in-law Jethro (Judges 1:16)
- Descendants from Jonadab, son of Recab – he lived almost 300 years prior during the reign of Ahab (last of the sinful/apostate Omri dynasty)
- Jonadab's history (2 Kings 10:15,23)
- Ahab's descendents were to be wiped out as punishment from God (2 Kings 9:7-8)

- Jehu anointed as new king by God to lead Israel and punish the house of Ahab
- Jehu enlists the help of Jonadab to fulfill God's command and to wipe out the prophets of Baal (2 Kings 10:15, 23)
- Jonadab commanded his family to **not** settle down, plant fields/vineyards, build houses, or drink wine.
 - The prohibition was meant to help escape the carousing that was associated with Baal worship and maintain some separation for the purpose of holy living.
 - His thinking was "If you don't want to sin, then don't surround your self with things that will lead you into sin."

The setting – Inside the temple

- Nomads entering the temple
- Side chambers were used for storage, meetings and the priest's residences
- The chamber of Igdaliah, a man of God
- Next to other officials, religious and civil
- Over the residence of Maaseiah/son of Shallum, door keeper (position singles out for judgment by Babylonians, 2 Kings 25:18-21; Jer. 52:24-27)
- Some of the most impressive real estate in Israel
- Though out of place (nomads in temple) they were in the company of the religious leaders, the power players of the day, men that the nation looked to for guidance/leadership

The test – Offered them Wine

- Wine was a common drink of the day
- Customary for the host to offer a drink to the guests
- No violation of the law

*Test or temptation?

God was setting up an example as a means to illustrate His message of needed repentance.

Purpose of the choice/conflict

Temptation – To draw away from God (sin)

Testing – To prove faithfulness to God (holiness)

James 1:13 (NIV)

13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;

God clearly tests our faith - Genesis 22:1, Deuteronomy 8:2, John 6:5-6

When presented with a conflict or choice between right and wrong, the point isn't who is behind the scene, but how we will respond.

- Resisting temptation or passing a test, both are rewarded by God.
- Failing a test or yielding to temptation, both are a failure to obey God and brings punishment, separation from god.

God was giving the Recabites an opportunity to display their obedience and use them as an object lesson to others.

Their Response (7-11)

In spite of

- The offer coming from a prophet of God
- They were among religious leaders
- Their law didn't prohibit it
- Everything was against them, making the case that it would be ok.
- As far as they knew this was not why they were asked to be there.

We will drink no wine.

- They knew what they believed, even the details (no seed to sow)
- They lived according to what they believed
- They didn't let comfort or surrounding culture dictate/erode their principles
- They used discernment in response to events beyond their control
 - Invading Babylonians were under God's control, since it is happening, God must have a purpose in it.
 - Move to Jerusalem was for safety reasons (seems to be temporary)
 - Drinking wine was not part of needed adjustment (remember Daniel)
- They were concerned with obeying the voice of their father and following his instruction
- They had been doing this for almost 300 years

The Comparison (vs. 12-19)

Jeremiah most likely spoke these words in one of the temple's courts. The tone of the message is like that of a closing argument of a trial.

	Recabites	Israel
Vs.14	They listened to and obeyed a fallible leader	They ignored the eternal, perfect god
Vs.15	Jonadab gave his commands once	God repeatedly sent messengers and his message to his people "again and again" – rising early and sending, indicating energy, patience, perseverance by God
Vs. 15	Jonadab offered no reward, just separation from sinful ways	God promised a full life, land to live in, and a heritage that He would preserve.
	Jonadab's restrictions did not deal with eternal issues	God's message had eternal and temporal implications
Vs.16	Recabites obeyed for almost 300 years	Israel constantly disobeyed
Vs.17-19	God's Reward Loyalty and faithfulness would be rewarded, they would be preserved	God's Punishment Disobedience to God would be punished; the nation would be conquered and disbursed.

Conclusion:

The first step may be to get acquainted with the God that holds your eternal future in his hands

- The first step of obedience is turning to him as the only one that can pay the penalty for your sin and make the radical change of giving control of your life to him and start living according to His word/principles, no longer following your desires and choices.

For those of us that have identified with Christ as our savior and Master:

The question is – What am I doing? How am I living?

- Our obedience is not just an option that is weighed on a scale.
- Failure to obey God brings punishment
- Following what makes sense is not enough.
- We must **know** what God's word in order to know what to do.
- We must **do** what we know is right (James 4:17)
- We must take the time to **discern** our times in light of God's word.

God places before us daily choices/opportunities to be made that we can

1. Benefit by
2. Encourage other believers with
3. Serve as witness to be used by God in others lives

God has called us to a life of obedience - 1 Peter 1:2

God has called us to actively pursue obedience - 1 Peter 1:13-15

God uses our example of obedience for His greater purposes 1 Peter 3:13-16

Is my portrait worth hang up for others to see... or is it in need of restoration and cleaning?

1. Stop the excuses and do what is right.
2. If not sure what to do, seek help in identifying how to apply God's word to your life.
3. Grow your discernment by studying God's word.
4. Keep at it.
5. Keep at it!
6. Keep at it!!