

## Will you not receive instruction by listening to My words?

Date: 10/29/23 — Jeremiah 34-35

**Big Idea:** God's unwavering commitment to His Word brings comfort in a world where people's commitments are ever-changing.

### PRAY

#### INTRODUCTION:

#### TRANSITION:

#### HERE'S WHAT THE TEXT SAYS: Jeremiah 34-35

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, his whole army, all the kingdoms of the lands under his control, and all other peoples were fighting against Jerusalem and all its surrounding cities: <sup>2</sup> "This is what the Lord, **the God of Israel, says: Go, speak to King Zedekiah of Judah, and tell him,** 'This is what the Lord says: **I am about to hand this city over to the king of Babylon, and he will burn it.** <sup>3</sup> As for you, you will not escape from him but are certain to be captured and handed over to him. **You will meet the king of Babylon eye to eye and speak face to face; you will go to Babylon.**

Judah is surrounded by kings and armies who want to destroy it, **but wait, there's more...** God is against them too!

<sup>4</sup> " **'Yet hear the Lord's word (promise),** King Zedekiah of Judah. **This is what the Lord says concerning you: You will not die by the sword; <sup>5</sup> you will die peacefully.** There will be a **burning ceremony for you (not cremation, just burning spices)** just like the burning ceremonies for your ancestors, the kings of old who came before you. "Oh (alas), master! **(a statement of woe or mourning)**" will be the lament for you, for I have spoken this word. **This is the Lord's declaration.'** " **Yet hear the Lord's word...**

'**But, yet**' (the opening word is emphatic), 'listen to the word of YHWH, Zedekiah ...' The word *promise* (niv, nlt, net) is an interpretation (and a commonly acceptable one) of the simple 'word' (*dābār*). **The flow of thought then becomes,** 'If you will listen to the word of the Lord (as Jeremiah has been telling you) and surrender the city (as he has advised), then *you will not die by the sword; you will die peacefully*'. In the event, however, Zedekiah did not listen, and so he lost the chance of a less painful personal outcome. **Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Message of Jeremiah: Grace in the End*, 357.**

*However, listen to what I, the Lord, promise you, King Zedekiah of Judah. I, the Lord, promise that you will not die in battle or be executed. Je 34:4 NET.*

**Spoiler alert:** Zedekiah was captured, had to witness the execution of his sons, had his eyes put out, and was taken to Babylon where he died after a lengthy imprisonment (**Jer 52:10–11**). **NET**

**Notes. v3—** Eye to eye and face to face.

...**a burning ceremony...** The fire in his honor is not a reference to cremation, which was not practiced by the Israelites, but to the custom of burning aromatic spices in honor of the deceased. **F. B. Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, 307.**

**It seems as if even now, there is a chance for King Z to repent and avoid the worst, but alas, Oh master.**

<sup>6</sup> So the prophet Jeremiah related all these words to King Zedekiah of Judah in Jerusalem <sup>7</sup> while the king of Babylon's army was attacking Jerusalem and all of Judah's remaining cities—that is, Lachish and Azekah, for they were the only ones left of Judah's fortified cities.

**Archeological Note:** The Lachish Letters give a vivid picture of these events. (The Lachish Letters are a collection of texts excavated at biblical Lachish in southern Israel {1935-1938} that date to the years immediately preceding the site's destruction by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II in the early sixth century BCE, as described in the Book of Jeremiah.) The twenty-one ostraca (broken, inscribed pottery) date from the time of this invasion. Letter 4 reads: "We are watching for the smoke signals of Lachish ... because we do not see Azekah." This indicates that Azekah had already fallen. Lachish capitulated soon after this. **Charles L. Feinberg, "Jeremiah," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 596.**

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/ancient-cultures/ancient-israel/the-lachish-letters/>

<sup>8</sup> **This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord after King Zedekiah made a covenant with all the people who were in Jerusalem to proclaim freedom to them.** <sup>9</sup> As a result, each was to let his male and female Hebrew slaves go free, and no one was to enslave his fellow Judean. <sup>10</sup> All the officials and people who entered into covenant to let their male and female slaves go free—in order not to enslave them any longer—obeyed and let them go free. <sup>11</sup> Afterward, however, **they changed their minds** and took back their male and female slaves they had let go free **and forced them** to become slaves again.

King Z covenants with the people of Jerusalem— let your slaves go free!

Then they changed their minds and forced them back into slavery.

This echoes the Exodus narrative. Pharaoh agrees to let the people go and then chases after them.

<sup>12</sup> **Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord:** <sup>13</sup> "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: **I made a covenant with your ancestors** when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery (**Deut 15:15**), saying, <sup>14</sup> 'At the end of seven years, each of you must let his fellow Hebrew who sold himself to you go. He may serve you six years, but then you must let him go free from your service (**Ex 21:2ff**).' **But your ancestors did not obey me or pay any attention.** <sup>15</sup> **Today you repented and did what pleased me**, each of you proclaiming freedom for his neighbor. You made a covenant before me **at the house that bears my name (the temple).** <sup>16</sup> **But you have changed your minds and profaned my name.** Each has taken back his male and female slaves who had been let go free to go wherever they wanted, and you have again forced them to be your slaves.

**God reminds King Z about his history, about the original covenant.**

<sup>15</sup> **Remember that you were a slave** in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you; that is why I am giving you this command today. **Dt 15:15.**

When you buy a Hebrew slave, he is to serve for six years; then in the seventh he is to leave as a free man without paying anything. **Ex 21:2.**

I was proud of you FOR A SECOND, and then you blew it!

God notices when people repent (or don't).

You should know better, but now— *you have profaned my name*.

You made their covenant in the temple that bares my name YHWH, and you swore an oath in my name YHWH.

**Lev 19:12**— *Do not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God... See also:* Lev 22:32; Pr 30:9; Ezk 20:9,14,22; 36:20–23; 39:7; Am 2:7; Mal 1:11–12.

So when they went back on their commitment, they not only broke their oath and broke the law of slave release (Ex 21:2), but they also broke the third commandment. Christopher J. H. Wright, [\*The Message of Jeremiah: Grace in the End\*](#), footnote.

**Commandment 3**— Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God, because the Lord will not leave anyone unpunished who misuses his name. **Ex 20:7**.

Three issues:

1- their word (was no good).

Chris Wright says: **Commercial self-interest trumped covenant obligation. It usually does.** It's the economy, you see. It's the market. And it's wartime. You can't go indulging in this humanitarian sentimentality just to please a desperate king or even a God whose antique instructions are unworkable in contemporary economic conditions. A token gesture, that's all, then back to the way things were. Christopher J. H. Wright, [\*The Message of Jeremiah: Grace in the End\*](#), 360.

**How often do you do this?** Give something up only to take it back. Here you go, Lord, wait a minute, that doesn't work for me, I'm gonna take it back again.

2- they exploited their neighbor. They were unjust.

The slave-owners' despicable abuse of their slaves was a slap in the face to God. To break faith with the poorest in society was to break the whole covenant with YHWH. **'Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.'** **'Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.** (Prov. 14:31; Matt. 25:45)' Christopher J. H. Wright, [\*The Message of Jeremiah: Grace in the End\*](#), 362–363.

3- By breaking the first two, they dishonored God and profaned His name.

Kat Von D — The Christians were the worst.

Liberty U — covering up scandals.

Brennan Manning — The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians: who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, walk out the door and deny Him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable.

<sup>17</sup> **"Therefore, this is what the Lord says: You have not obeyed (lit. listened to me) me by proclaiming freedom, each for his fellow Hebrew and for his neighbor (brothers and neighbors).**

**You haven't listened to me. You didn't free your brothers (fellow Hebrews) and neighbors.**

**You have acted unjustly.**

## Who is my neighbor?

Lev 19:18— 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

I hereby proclaim freedom (release) for you—to the sword, to plague, and to famine! I will make you a horror to all the earth's kingdoms.—**this is the Lord's declaration.** <sup>18</sup> As for those who disobeyed my covenant, not keeping the terms of the covenant they made before me, **I will treat them like the calf they cut in two** in order to pass between its pieces. <sup>19</sup> The officials of Judah and Jerusalem, the court officials, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the pieces of the calf—<sup>20</sup> all these **I will hand over to their enemies, to those who intend to take their life.** Their corpses will become food for the birds of the sky and for the wild animals of the land. <sup>21</sup> I will hand King Zedekiah of Judah and his officials over to their enemies, to those who intend to take their lives, to the king of Babylon's army that is withdrawing. <sup>22</sup> I am about to give the command—and I will bring them back to this city. They will fight against it, capture it, and burn it. I will make Judah's cities a desolation, without inhabitant." —**this is the Lord's declaration.**

**You didn't free your brothers and neighbors, so I am freeing you from my protection.**

**I will loose sword, plague, and famine on you.**

Turnabout is fair play...

...*I will treat them like the calf they cut in two.* **Yikes!**

**In a twist of divine irony,** Babylon's army was withdrawing (v21), but now they will return and burn Jerusalem down.

**35** This is **the word that came** to Jeremiah from the Lord **in the days of Jehoiakim son of Josiah**, king of Judah: <sup>2</sup> "Go to the house of the Rechabites, speak to them, and bring them to one of the chambers of the temple of the Lord to offer them a drink of wine."

<sup>3</sup> So I took Jaazaniah (**Ya-Oz-On-Ya**) son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah (**Ha-Bat-Zin-Ya**), and his brothers and all his sons—the entire house of the Rechabites (**Rec-Ha-Beam**)—<sup>4</sup> and I brought them into the temple of the Lord to a chamber occupied by the sons of Hanan son of Igdaliah (**Yig-Dal-Ya-Who**), a **man of God**, who had a chamber near the officials' chamber, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah (**Ma-Say-Ya-Who**) son of Shallum (**Shal-Um**) the doorkeeper. <sup>5</sup> I set jars filled with wine and some cups before the sons of the house of the Rechabites (**Rec-Ha-Beam**) and said to them, "**Drink wine!**"

This is a test.

<sup>6</sup> **But they replied, "We do not drink wine,** for Jonadab, son of our ancestor Rechab, commanded, 'You and your descendants must never drink wine. <sup>7</sup> You must not build a house or sow seed or plant a vineyard. Those things are not for you. Rather, you must live in tents your whole life, so you may live a long time on the soil where you stay as a resident alien.' <sup>8</sup> We have obeyed Jonadab, son of our ancestor Rechab, in all he commanded us. So **we haven't drunk wine our whole life**—we, our wives, our sons, and our daughters. <sup>9</sup> **We also have not built houses to live in** and do not have vineyard, field, or seed. <sup>10</sup> But we have lived in tents and have obeyed and done everything our ancestor Jonadab commanded us. <sup>11</sup> However, when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon marched into the land, we said, 'Come, let's go into Jerusalem to get away from the Chaldean and Aramean armies.' So we have been living in Jerusalem."

The (**Rec-Ha-Beams**) passed the test. They obeyed the word of their ancestor. Scholars tell us they were probably nomadic people who were eventually driven south as the invading armies moved south toward Jerusalem.

12 Then the word of the Lord came to **Jeremiah**: 13 **"This is what the Lord of Armies, the God of Israel, says: Go, say to the men of Judah and the residents of Jerusalem, 'Will you not accept discipline (take instruction) by listening to my words?—** this is the Lord's declaration.

Jerry. Go tell the people of **Judah and Jerusalem**— will you accept discipline?

*Will you not receive instruction by listening to My words? Je 35:13 NASB.*

**Will y'all listen to and learn a lesson from this group of nomads?**

14 The words of Jonadab, son of Rechab, have been carried out. He commanded his descendants not to drink wine, and they have not drunk to this day because **they have obeyed their ancestor's command. But** I have spoken to you time and time again, **and you have not obeyed me!** 15 **Time and time again (Hebrew idiom= lit. rising early and speaking)** I have sent you all my servants the prophets, proclaiming, "Turn, each one from his evil way, and correct (**reform-make good**) your actions. Stop following other gods to serve them. Live in the land that I gave you and your ancestors." **But you did not pay attention (inclined your ear) or obey me.** 16 Yes, **the sons of Jonadab son of Rechab carried out their ancestor's command he gave them, but these people have not obeyed me.** 17 **Therefore,** this is what the Lord, the God of Armies, the God of Israel, says: **I will certainly bring on Judah and on all the residents of Jerusalem all the disaster** I have pronounced against them because I have spoken to them, but they have not obeyed, and I have called to them, but they did not answer.' "

**They listened and obeyed their ancestor, but you have not obeyed me, the God Over Everything. (X2)**

v14-17 God repeats himself. **Why?**

Sometimes secular loyalties to some cause or person put to shame the loyalty of God's people to him and his commands. F. B. Huey, [Jeremiah, Lamentations](#), 316.

**Have you ever seen that?** People go to great lengths to show their loyalty to \_\_\_\_\_.

Tattoos, jerseys, season tickets, etc.

**Now (therefore), because you didn't pay attention or listen: Disaster for Judah and Jerusalem!**

18 But to the house of the Rechabites Jeremiah said, "This is what the Lord of Armies, the God of Israel, says: **'Because you have obeyed** the command of your ancestor Jonadab and have kept all his commands and have done everything he commanded you, 19 this is what the Lord of Armies, the God of Israel, says: Jonadab son of Rechab will never fail to have a man to stand before me always.' "

**Because you obeyed:** *Rechab will never fail to have a man to stand before me!*

*never fail to have a man to stand before me... will not be cut off to stand before God all the days — here its a promise that they would not be destroyed as a family.* F. B. Huey, [Jeremiah, Lamentations](#), 316.

Malchijah, son of Rechab, is mentioned as rebuilding Jerusalem with Nehemiah 150 years later.

**So what do we do with this?**

These two chapters are meant to show us the difference between foolishness and wisdom (blessing and curses) and what happens when you trust God versus when you do your own thing.

You see, God has moral and ethical standards for His people. 10 Commandments.

**In these chapters:**

their word was no good.

they exploited their neighbor. They were unjust.

By breaking the first two, they dishonored God and profaned His name.

**Freedom is a big deal to God, and when we exploit people and profane God's name, when we don't, *shema*, listen to God we miss out on the freedom he offers.**

**You are never more free than when you obey (listen to) God.**

**J. Gresham Machen, Freedom from the blessed will of God always involves bondage to some worse taskmaster.**

In this case, bondage to self. King Z did only what he wanted or thought benefitted him.

**The truth is that every one of us has become enslaved to something. Can you see that?**

**We think the Rolling Stones song is true: I'm free to do what I want any old time...**

**Luke 15**, the younger brother was in bondage to himself, and the older brother was in bondage to his anger.

**What do I do if I realize I'm in bondage?**

**Listen to the word of God: One Sabbath morning, Jesus went to the synagogue and read these words the God inspired Isaiah to write about the coming Messiah:**

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to **proclaim** release (**freedom**) to the captives (**slaves**) and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, <sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

*<sup>20</sup> He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. And the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup> He began by saying to them, "Today as you **listen**, this Scripture has been fulfilled." Lk 4:18-21.*

**Jesus took everything back to the covenant with Moses. In essence, he said you are all captives to something, blind to the truth about God, and oppressed by your foolish choices. Today that all changes.**

**The year of the Lord's favor equals freedom and restored relationships.**

**Jesus said the covenant was fulfilled by himself. A short time later as the calf was cut in two (killed), Jesus went to the cross.**

**Let that transform your heart.**

**Hold fast to His word, and let that renew your mind and transform your life.**

**Will you obey (listen so as to do)?**

**Obeying, listening = wise**

**Jesus said, Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock... Mt 7:24.**

**Not listening = foolishness**

*A fool is someone who says in his heart there is no God. Ps 14:1*

King Z was a fool. He didn't listen or keep his word

The Rechabites were wise. They listened believed and were saved.

**PRAY**

**Recognize and pray for Ron Melton. 32 years of service**

**BLESSING**

**May you and I, may we together, be people who hear God's words**

**Gandalf says to Frodo,** *"That is a chapter of ancient history which it might be good to recall; for there was sorrow then too, and gathering dark, but great valor, and **great deeds that were not wholly vain.**"* JRR Tolkien— *The Fellowship of the Ring.*

Gandalf was right (on this and most other things). Yes, this is a time of darkness. Yes, there is sorrow all around us. But there's valor too. And there are deeds done—small, almost always unnoticed—that will turn out to be not wholly in vain. So don't be afraid. And don't give up. Onward— **Russell Moore**