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Contrasts in Character

Series: The Weeping Prophet

The Village Church at Shell Point

Evening Service

October 16, 2022

I. **Flashbacks in Jeremiah**

A. Problem with chronology in Jeremiah

1. **Chapter 34** – Nebuchadnezzar laying siege on Jerusalem
 - a. **Zedekiah** is the king
 - b. Enacts the Emancipation Covenant
2. **Chapter 35** – Days of **Jehoiakim**
 - a. At least 10 years earlier
3. **Chapter 36** – **Jehoiakim**
 - a. Episode of the scrolls
4. **Chapter 37** – back to **Zedekiah**
 - a. Lifting of siege
 - b. First imprisonment of Jeremiah
5. **Chapter 38** – **Zedekiah**
 - a. Second imprisonment – Jeremiah in cistern
6. **Chapter 39** – **Fall of Jerusalem**

B. Advantages in topical arrangement

1. Enables us to see striking contrasts
 - a. Contrasts between people
 - b. Contrasts in character

II. **Jehoiakim and Jeremiah**

A. Chapter 36

1. Jeremiah appears to be under pressure of some sort, probably from Jehoiakim; couldn't carry out public

ministry

2. God tells Jeremiah to dictate messages on scroll to Baruch
 - a. From the time of Josiah until the present
 - b. Book of Jeremiah – first edition
3. Still possibility for repentance and aversion of destruction
 - a. 605 BCE – year Babylonians defeated Egyptians at Carchemish
4. Tells Baruch to read scroll in house of Lord
5. Baruch read during fast days when people from around Judea had come to temple
6. One of the people who heard was the son of one of the officials (Micaiah, son of Gemariah)
7. Micaiah went and told his dad in the scribe's chamber, along with a bunch of other officials in the king's house
8. The officials send for the scroll; Baruch read it to them
9. Officials were fearful – demonstrating some genuine concern for the Word
 - a. Realized the sensitivity of the message; told Baruch and Jeremiah to hide themselves
10. Officials told the king about the words
11. King sent for the scroll
12. Had it read to him

B. Jeremiah 36:21–26 (ESV) —

1. 21 Then the king sent Jehudi to get the scroll, and he took it from the chamber of Elishama the secretary.
2. And Jehudi read it to the king and all the officials who stood beside the king.
3. 22 It was the ninth month, and the king was sitting in the winter house, and there was a fire burning in the fire pot before him.
4. 23 As Jehudi read three or four columns, the king would cut them off with a knife and throw them into the

fire in the fire pot, until the entire scroll was consumed in the fire that was in the fire pot.

5. 24 Yet neither the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words was afraid, nor did they tear their garments.
6. 25 Even when Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them.
7. 26 And the king commanded Jerahmeel the king's son and Seraiah the son of Azriel and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel to seize Baruch the secretary and Jeremiah the prophet, but the LORD hid them.

C. **Jehoiakim and the Word**

1. Imagine the cold-hearted rejection of the Word
2. **Symbolic disposal** of the Word by burning
 - a. Ryken: As he sat warming himself by the fire, Jehoiakim used the Word of God for fuel.
3. **Lack of emotion or fear** of God in the rejection of the Word
4. **Stupidity** of his action (warning from God)
 - a. Packer: Johoiakim burns God's Word, ignoring its warning. That's like getting out of a car to destroy a 'Bridge Out' sign: done at one's own peril.
5. **Audacity** of his action
 - a. Ryken: The shocking thing was not so much Jehoiakim's stupidity as his audacity. Jehoiakim was casual, almost non-chalant in his defiance of God's Word.... The arrogance, the contempt, the insolence of the man! He should have rent his garments in repentance. Instead he turned a deaf ear to his counselors.... Then he added injury to insult by calling for the arrest of God's prophet.
 - b. Rejection of pleading of the officials not to burn it
6. He was determined to arrest Baruch and Jeremiah, do

away with the messengers of God

7. Officials' response represented the way the Word of God should be received
 - a. Heard
 - b. Feared
 - c. Shared
 - (1) In spite of the fact that it was bad news!
8. **Family heritage** and legacy played a part
 - a. Micaiah – grandson of Shaphan
 - (1) Secretary of State under Josiah
 - (2) When Book of Law was discovered, he read it to Josiah
 - b. Shaphan – good father
 - (1) Son Ahikam – supported Jeremiah so he wouldn't be handed over to people (Jeremiah 26)
 - (2) Son Elasah – carried Jeremiah's letter to exiles (Jeremiah 29)
 - (3) Son Gemariah – took Jeremiah's scroll to Jehoiakim
 - c. Micaiah's cousin, Gedaliah (son of Ahikam) – rescued Jeremiah when Jerusalem fell (Jeremiah 39)
 - (1) Eventually became governor of Jewish remnant in Jerusalem (Jeremiah 40)

D. **Jeremiah's faithfulness to Word**

1. **Jeremiah 1:7–10** (ESV) —
 - a. 7 But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.
 - b. 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD."
 - c. 9 Then the LORD put out his hand and touched

my mouth. And the LORD said to me, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.

- d. 10 See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”

2. **Jeremiah 1:17–19** (ESV) —

- a. 17 But you, dress yourself for work; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them.
- b. 18 And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land.
- c. 19 They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the LORD, to deliver you.”

3. Decades of faithfulness to that message

- a. Covenant lawsuit – Israel and Judah have broken marriage covenant with Yahweh
- b. Called people to repentance
 - (1) King
 - (2) Officials
 - (3) Priests
 - (4) People
- c. Accused them of religious hypocrisy in temple sermon
- d. Accused them of listening to false prophets
- e. Accused them of idolatry
- f. Would do anything – object lessons
 - (1) Linen girdle
 - (2) Wooden yoke
 - (3) Smashed pottery
- g. Likened Judah to Israel; should have profited from object lesson from the north

4. Jeremiah wept over the implications of his prophecy
 - a. **Jeremiah 8:18–22** (ESV) —
 - (1) 18 My joy is gone; grief is upon me; my heart is sick within me.
 - (2) 19 Behold, the cry of the daughter of my people from the length and breadth of the land: “Is the LORD not in Zion? Is her King not in her?”
 - (3) “Why have they provoked me to anger with their carved images and with their foreign idols?”
 - (4) 20 “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”
 - (5) 21 For the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded; I mourn, and dismay has taken hold on me.
 - (6) 22 Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored?
5. Jeremiah withstood persecution, mockery, beatings, imprisonment
6. Struggled with depression on account of the Word
 - a. **Jeremiah 15:10** (ESV) — 10 Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land! I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me.
 - b. **Jeremiah 20:14–18** (ESV) —
 - (1) 14 Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed!
 - (2) 15 Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, “A son is born to you,” making him very glad.

- (3) 16 Let that man be like the cities that the LORD overthrew without pity; let him hear a cry in the morning and an alarm at noon,
- (4) 17 because he did not kill me in the womb; so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb forever great.
- (5) 18 Why did I come out from the womb to see toil and sorrow, and spend my days in shame?

7. Even got to the point of quitting

a. **Jeremiah 20:7–8** (ESV) —

- (1) 7 O LORD, you have deceived me, and I was deceived; you are stronger than I, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me.
- (2) 8 For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, “Violence and destruction!” For the word of the LORD has become for me a reproach and derision all day long.

b. **Jeremiah 20:9** (ESV) —

- (1) 9 If I say, “I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,” there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.

E. **Irony**

1. **Jeremiah 36:27–32** (ESV) —

- a. 27 Now after the king had burned the scroll with the words that Baruch wrote at Jeremiah’s dictation, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:
- b. 28 “Take another scroll and write on it all the former words that were in the first scroll, which

- Jehoiakim the king of Judah has burned.
- c. 29 And concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah you shall say, ‘Thus says the LORD, You have burned this scroll, saying, “Why have you written in it that the king of Babylon will certainly come and destroy this land, and will cut off from it man and beast?”’
 - d. 30 Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah: He shall have none to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat by day and the frost by night.
 - e. 31 And I will punish him and his offspring and his servants for their iniquity. I will bring upon them and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem and upon the people of Judah all the disaster that I have pronounced against them, but they would not hear.’ ”
 - f. 32 Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote on it at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the scroll that Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire. And many similar words were added to them.
2. Word of God cannot be thwarted
 - a. Ryken: The words in Jeremiah’s book are not words about God – they are words *from* God, which is why they will never lose their power.
 3. First edition of Jeremiah was destroyed
 4. Second edition had additions
 - a. Many other messages were included
 - b. Including the condemnation of Jehoiakim that were not in first version
 5. Ryken: Sometime in the twenty-first century the Gospels of Jesus Christ will be available in every one of

the more than 6,000 known languages in the world. Some time after that the prophecies of Jeremiah – the very words Jehoiakim cut from the scroll and burned in his firepot – will be read around the globe by every tribe and people and nation.

6. Jehoiakim’s legacy was one of cold-hearted, spiritual deadness; a ruthless, self-interested ruler

F. **Jeremiah’s Frailties**

1. Jeremiah was not perfect
2. **Jeremiah 38:14–16** (ESV) —
 - a. 14 King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah the prophet and received him at the third entrance of the temple of the LORD. The king said to Jeremiah, “I will ask you a question; hide nothing from me.”
 - b. 15 Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, “If I tell you, will you not surely put me to death? And if I give you counsel, you will not listen to me.”
 - c. 16 Then King Zedekiah swore secretly to Jeremiah, “As the LORD lives, who made our souls, I will not put you to death or deliver you into the hand of these men who seek your life.”
3. Jeremiah then prophesies destruction, urges repentance, stipulates consequences
4. **Jeremiah 38:24–27** (ESV) —
 - a. 24 Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “Let no one know of these words, and you shall not die.
 - b. 25 If the officials hear that I have spoken with you and come to you and say to you, ‘Tell us what you said to the king and what the king said to you; hide nothing from us and we will not put you to death,’
 - c. 26 then you shall say to them, ‘I made a humble plea to the king that he would not send me back to

the house of Jonathan to die there.’ ”

- d. 27 Then all the officials came to Jeremiah and asked him, and he answered them as the king had instructed him. So they stopped speaking with him, for the conversation had not been overheard.
 5. Jeremiah lied
 - G. Jeremiah has been likened to Jesus
 1. **Matthew 16:13–14** (ESV) —
 - a. 13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”
 - b. 14 And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”
 2. Commitment to Word
 3. Faithfulness in preaching
 4. Grief and sorrow over sin, spiritual condition of Judah
 5. Suffering
 - H. But Jeremiah was not Jesus
 1. Jesus was unique – without sin
 2. Perfection is not the issue; fundamental commitment was to Word
 3. Something inside Jeremiah which drove him to faithfulness
 - a. Lacking in Jehoiakim
- III. **Zedekiah and the Rechabites**
- A. **The Emancipation Covenant**
 1. During siege
 - a. Things looked bleak
 2. **Jeremiah 34:8–11** (ESV) —
 - a. 8 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people in Jerusalem to make a proclamation of liberty to them,

- b. 9 that everyone should set free his Hebrew slaves, male and female, so that no one should enslave a Jew, his brother.
 - c. 10 And they obeyed, all the officials and all the people who had entered into the covenant that everyone would set free his slave, male or female, so that they would not be enslaved again. They obeyed and set them free.
 - d. 11 But afterward they turned around and took back the male and female slaves they had set free, and brought them into subjection as slaves.
3. Likely reason – needed freed slaves to help with defense when things looked really bad
 - a. When pressure was off and the siege lifted, they reneged on the covenant, took slaves back
 4. Zedekiah’s view of covenant
 - a. Fulfill it when it’s convenient to do so

B. **Vacillation**

1. **Jeremiah 37:1–3** (ESV) —
 - a. 1 Zedekiah the son of Josiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah, reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim.
 - b. 2 But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land listened to the words of the LORD that he spoke through Jeremiah the prophet.
 - c. 3 King Zedekiah sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the priest, the son of Maaseiah, to Jeremiah the prophet, saying, “Please pray for us to the LORD our God.”
2. Even though he didn’t follow Jeremiah’s words, still asked Jeremiah to pray for him
3. Jeremiah left Jerusalem to go home when siege lifted
 - a. Officials misunderstood his action; viewed as

- defection
 - b. Arrested
 - c. Beaten
 - d. Jailed in house of Jonathan the scribe in dungeon
4. **Jeremiah 37:17–21** (ESV) —
- a. 17 King Zedekiah sent for him and received him. The king questioned him secretly in his house and said, “Is there any word from the LORD?” Jeremiah said, “There is.” Then he said, “You shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.”
 - b. 18 Jeremiah also said to King Zedekiah, “What wrong have I done to you or your servants or this people, that you have put me in prison?”
 - c. 19 Where are your prophets who prophesied to you, saying, ‘The king of Babylon will not come against you and against this land’?
 - d. 20 Now hear, please, O my lord the king: let my humble plea come before you and do not send me back to the house of Jonathan the secretary, lest I die there.”
 - e. 21 So King Zedekiah gave orders, and they committed Jeremiah to the court of the guard. And a loaf of bread was given him daily from the bakers’ street, until all the bread of the city was gone. So Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.
5. Zedekiah still wanted to hear from Jeremiah
- a. At Jeremiah’s pleading, he removed him from the dungeon, put him in courthouse of guard and gave rations
6. **Jeremiah 38:1–6** (ESV) —
- a. 1 Now Shephatiah the son of Mattan, Gedaliah the son of Pashhur, Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and

Pashhur the son of Malchiah heard the words that Jeremiah was saying to all the people:

- b. 2 “Thus says the LORD: He who stays in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, but he who goes out to the Chaldeans shall live. He shall have his life as a prize of war, and live.
 - c. 3 Thus says the LORD: This city shall surely be given into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon and be taken.”
 - d. 4 Then the officials said to the king, “Let this man be put to death, for he is weakening the hands of the soldiers who are left in this city, and the hands of all the people, by speaking such words to them. For this man is not seeking the welfare of this people, but their harm.”
 - e. 5 King Zedekiah said, “Behold, he is in your hands, for the king can do nothing against you.”
 - f. 6 So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the cistern of Malchiah, the king’s son, which was in the court of the guard, letting Jeremiah down by ropes. And there was no water in the cistern, but only mud, and Jeremiah sank in the mud.
7. Angered officials convince Zedekiah that Jeremiah needs to be removed
- a. Zedekiah responds haplessly; allows them to do what they want
 - b. Put in cistern to die
8. **Jeremiah 38:7–13** (ESV) —
- a. 7 When Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, a eunuch who was in the king’s house, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern—the king was sitting in the Benjamin Gate—
 - b. 8 Ebed-melech went from the king’s house and

- said to the king,
- c. 9 “My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they did to Jeremiah the prophet by casting him into the cistern, and he will die there of hunger, for there is no bread left in the city.”
 - d. 10 Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, “Take thirty men with you from here, and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies.”
 - e. 11 So Ebed-melech took the men with him and went to the house of the king, to a wardrobe in the storehouse, and took from there old rags and worn-out clothes, which he let down to Jeremiah in the cistern by ropes.
 - f. 12 Then Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah, “Put the rags and clothes between your armpits and the ropes.” Jeremiah did so.
 - g. 13 Then they drew Jeremiah up with ropes and lifted him out of the cistern. And Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.
9. Ebed-melech convinces Zedekiah that Jeremiah has been wrongly imprisoned, left to die
- a. Zedekiah orders to allow Ebed-melech to rescue Jeremiah
10. **Jeremiah 38:14–16** (ESV) —
- a. 14 King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah the prophet and received him at the third entrance of the temple of the LORD.
 - b. The king said to Jeremiah, “I will ask you a question; hide nothing from me.”
 - c. 15 Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, “If I tell you, will you not surely put me to death? And if I give you counsel, you will not listen to me.”
 - d. 16 Then King Zedekiah swore secretly to

Jeremiah, “As the LORD lives, who made our souls, I will not put you to death or deliver you into the hand of these men who seek your life.”

11. Still Zedekiah wants word from Jeremiah
 - a. Jeremiah doesn't trust Zedekiah
 - b. Gets assurance that he won't turn Jeremiah over to his enemies
12. **Jeremiah 38:17–23** (ESV) —
 - a. 17 Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, “Thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: If you will surrender to the officials of the king of Babylon, then your life shall be spared, and this city shall not be burned with fire, and you and your house shall live.
 - b. 18 But if you do not surrender to the officials of the king of Babylon, then this city shall be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and you shall not escape from their hand.”
 - c. 19 King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “I am afraid of the Judeans who have deserted to the Chaldeans, lest I be handed over to them and they deal cruelly with me.”
 - d. 20 Jeremiah said, “You shall not be given to them. Obey now the voice of the LORD in what I say to you, and it shall be well with you, and your life shall be spared.
 - e. 21 But if you refuse to surrender, this is the vision which the LORD has shown to me:
 - f. 22 Behold, all the women left in the house of the king of Judah were being led out to the officials of the king of Babylon and were saying, “ ‘Your trusted friends have deceived you and prevailed against you; now that your feet are sunk in the

- mud, they turn away from you.’
- g. 23 All your wives and your sons shall be led out to the Chaldeans, and you yourself shall not escape from their hand, but shall be seized by the king of Babylon, and this city shall be burned with fire.”
13. Zedekiah is afraid of Jews if he surrenders
- Always afraid of people
 - Jeremiah has to reassure him
14. **Jeremiah 38:24–26** (ESV) —
- 24 Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “Let no one know of these words, and you shall not die.
 - 25 If the officials hear that I have spoken with you and come to you and say to you, ‘Tell us what you said to the king and what the king said to you; hide nothing from us and we will not put you to death,’
 - 26 then you shall say to them, ‘I made a humble plea to the king that he would not send me back to the house of Jonathan to die there.’ ”
15. Zedekiah is afraid of the men who are Jeremiah’s enemies
- Seems to have no authority left to do anything
16. **Jeremiah 38:27–28** (ESV) —
- 27 Then all the officials came to Jeremiah and asked him, and he answered them as the king had instructed him.
 - So they stopped speaking with him, for the conversation had not been overheard.
 - 28 And Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard until the day that Jerusalem was taken.
17. Jeremiah did as he was told
- C. What kind of man was Zedekiah?
- Covenant breaker**

- a. Interpretive question – why does chapter 35 follow 34?
 - (1) Not a numeric question
 - (2) Why do you have the story of Chapter 35, which takes place during the time of Jehoiakim, following Chapter 34 which is a story of the time Zedekiah enacted an emancipation covenant and then reneged?
 - (3) Chapter 35 predates Chapter 34
- b. **Jeremiah 35:1–5** (ESV) —
 - (1) 1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah:
 - (2) 2 “Go to the house of the Rechabites and speak with them and bring them to the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers; then offer them wine to drink.”
 - (3) 3 So I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah and his brothers and all his sons and the whole house of the Rechabites.
 - (4) 4 I brought them to the house of the LORD into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, the man of God, which was near the chamber of the officials, above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, keeper of the threshold.
 - (5) 5 Then I set before the Rechabites pitchers full of wine, and cups, and I said to them, “Drink wine.”
- c. Rechabites
 - (1) Grubby nomads
 - (a) Refugees due to the encroachment of Babylon; sought refuge in Jerusalem

- (b) Country bumpkins coming to the city
- (2) Jeremiah threw a party for them
 - (a) Only one commodity – wine
 - (b) That was a commodity that the Rechabites had vowed never to partake
 - (c) Out of place to begin with (cocktail party!); the most awkward of cocktail parties
- (3) R.E.O. White: The Rechabites were a family guild who worshiped God strictly after the manner of the pilgrim patriarchs, living as nearly as possible in the nomadic fashion of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Crops, vineyards, houses, towns, and cities all tied men to one place, they said, and so bred luxury, strife of possession, materialism, worship of fertility gods, and all manner of soft, lazy, extravagance, very different from the hard, disciplined life of herdsmen under the desert stars.
- (4) Ryken: The Rechabites were reactionaries; they were the counterculture movement of the Divided Kingdom. Perhaps they were something like a cross between the hippies of the 1960's and the old order Amish of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Imagine straw hats and tie-dyed robes. Think horse-drawn buggies decorated with giant pastel flowers. Like some hippies, they were a tight-knit community constantly on the move. Like the Amish, they separated themselves from the pleasures of popular culture.

d. **Jeremiah 35:6–11** (ESV) —

- (1) 6 But they answered, “We will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, ‘You shall not drink wine, neither you nor your sons forever.
 - (2) 7 You shall not build a house; you shall not sow seed; you shall not plant or have a vineyard; but you shall live in tents all your days, that you may live many days in the land where you sojourn.’
 - (3) 8 We have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he commanded us, to drink no wine all our days, ourselves, our wives, our sons, or our daughters,
 - (4) 9 and not to build houses to dwell in. We have no vineyard or field or seed,
 - (5) 10 but we have lived in tents and have obeyed and done all that Jonadab our father commanded us.
 - (6) 11 But when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against the land, we said, ‘Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans and the army of the Syrians.’ So we are living in Jerusalem.”
- e. Despite the awkwardness, the Rechabites remained true to their tradition; explained its origin
- (1) Remarkable – Jonadab, the son of Rechab, was one of the 7,000 in Israel who did not bow the knee to Baal during Elijah; mighty man who rode in the chariot when Jehu killed Ahab’s family
 - (2) Jonadab had been dead for 250 years when the Rechabites showed up for happy hour

- (3) Ryken: The Rechabite way of life had been out of fashion in Israel since the day Joshua crossed the Jordan River
2. Chapters 34 and 35 are a study in contrast
 - a. Covenant breaker v. covenant keepers
 - b. Nothing that required the Rechabites to refrain from owning land, planting vineyards, drinking wine
 - c. But their families had vowed to adopt that lifestyle, and in spite of its difficulties, and in spite of the awkwardness of the cocktail party, they would continue to fulfill their vows
 - d. Jeremiah makes that point and uses the Rechabites as an object lesson
 - e. **Jeremiah 35:12–19** (ESV) —
 - (1) 12 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:
 - (2) 13 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Go and say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will you not receive instruction and listen to my words? declares the LORD.
 - (3) 14 The command that Jonadab the son of Rechab gave to his sons, to drink no wine, has been kept, and they drink none to this day, for they have obeyed their father’s command. I have spoken to you persistently, but you have not listened to me.
 - (4) 15 I have sent to you all my servants the prophets, sending them persistently, saying, ‘Turn now every one of you from his evil way, and amend your deeds, and do not go after other gods to serve them, and then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to you and

your fathers.’ But you did not incline your ear or listen to me.

- (5) 16 The sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have kept the command that their father gave them, but this people has not obeyed me.
- (6) 17 Therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing upon Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the disaster that I have pronounced against them, because I have spoken to them and they have not listened, I have called to them and they have not answered.”
- (7) 18 But to the house of the Rechabites Jeremiah said, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Because you have obeyed the command of Jonadab your father and kept all his precepts and done all that he commanded you,
- (8) 19 therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Jonadab the son of Rechab shall never lack a man to stand before me.”

3. **Zedekiah – Marshmallow Man**

- a. Eugene Peterson: Nothing lasted long with Zedekiah. The man was a marshmallow. He received impressions from anyone who pushed hard enough. When the pressure was off, he gradually resumed his earlier state ready for the next impression. In contrast to Jeremiah, who was formed within by obedience to God and faith in God (an iron pillar!), Zedekiah took on whatever shape the circumstances required.
- b. Ryken: Zedekiah was vulnerable to peer pressure.

Whoever had the ear of the king steered the ship of state. When Nebuchanezzar first came to capture Jerusalem in 597 B.C., Zedekiah was all for the Babylonians. In fact, he became their puppet king over the city. But once they went back home, he started listening to the advisers who wanted to rebel. So Zedekiah reversed his foreign policy. He also vacillated in his domestic policy. First the abolitionists persuaded him to make an emancipation proclamation, but then the slaveholders talked him into revoking it.

- c. Ryken: The king had equal difficulty making up his mind about Jeremiah. He sent him to the dungeon, but then he took him out and placed him under house arrest. He refused to listen to him, but he also wanted to hear what he had to say.
- d. He allowed others to put Jeremiah in the cistern to die, but then empowered a Gentile eunuch named Ebed-melech to convince him that was wrong, to rescue him, and to place him more favorable circumstances

- 4. Ryken: Zedekiah's sin was living by his fears rather than by faith. His sin was not trusting God when he was afraid. His sin was keeping his fears to himself rather than taking them to the Lord. Once he admitted, "I am afraid," he found himself unable to do anything else. He was paralyzed with fear.

D. Contrasts are obvious

- 1. Jeremiah
- 2. Rechabites
- 3. Ebed-melech
 - a. Likely under great scrutiny and danger in trying to save Jeremiah

E. Doing what's right is always better in the long run

1. **Jeremiah 38:16–18** (ESV) —
 - a. 16 Then King Zedekiah swore secretly to Jeremiah, “As the LORD lives, who made our souls, I will not put you to death or deliver you into the hand of these men who seek your life.”
 - b. 17 Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, “Thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel:
 - c. If you will surrender to the officials of the king of Babylon, then your life shall be spared, and this city shall not be burned with fire, and you and your house shall live.
 - d. 18 But if you do not surrender to the officials of the king of Babylon, then this city shall be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and you shall not escape from their hand.”

IV. Who would like to be?

- A. Jehoiakim
- B. Zedekiah
- C. Jeremiah
- D. Rechabites
- E. Ebed-melech