

Keeping the Lord's Charge

Deut. 6:1-9

Intro:

- A. How many know the story of the Rechabites? (*Jeremiah 35*)
 - a. The Rechabites were descended from Jonadab, the son of Rechab who was of the Kennites. These in turn were the decedents of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law who were allowed to dwell with the Israelites in the land of Canaan:
 - b. They had been given a very specific set of charges to keep by their ancestral father
 - i. They were not to drink of any wine: *Jer. 35:6*
 - ii. They were to not do anything that might encourage the drinking of wine
 - 1. They were not to build a house, they were instead to dwell in tents as a nomadic people (*Jer. 35:7*)
 - 2. This was apparently to discourage the owning of land where they had also been commanded to never own a vineyard—or even to plant the seeds for own.
 - 3. In Jeremiah, the Rechabites are used by God to rebuke the Israelites by means of comparison:
- B. In *Jer. 35:2* God instructs Jeremiah to put the Rechabites to the test:
 - a. What might at first seem like a case of God tempting man to Sin, is actually part of what makes this example so powerful: In order to be tempted by something, it has to be a temptation in the first place
 - b. The Rechabites were so diligent in carrying out the charge of their forefather that God knew they would pass the test
 - c. Jeremiah set out the wine, the glasses, and bid them drink: Their response was one of faithfulness: *Jer. 35:6-11*
- C. The point of their trial comes when God laments the fact that His own people are unwilling to show Him such devotion for a single generation, let alone hundreds of years as these men and women had done!
 - a. Will you not receive instruction by listening to my Words? *v 13*
 - b. They've observed their fathers command to this day, but you've not listened to me *v 14-16*

- c. While Israel would be visited with calamity, the Rechabites would always stand before the Lord! *V 17-18*
- D. If only God's people had shown Him a portion of that same devotion in keeping the charges that He had given them
 - a. Sadly this description doesn't apply or end with Israel alone: Faithfully carrying out the various tasks God has given us is something that God's people continually seem to struggle with.
 - b. In fact, God's people today are in danger of failing God on just as many fronts as His people of old did: *1 Corinthians 10*, comes to mind: Paul warned that God's people were to take care not to fall into the exact same steps towards perdition that Israel did: *1 Cor. 10:6,11*
- E. While there are many charges that God's people have failed to keep, we will begin by looking at one found in *Deuteronomy 6:1-9*
 - a. There can be no greater mission than teaching others how to serve God faithfully: If God's commands are not taught, made available, and passed down, then they do no good.
 - b. God has always been adamant about this charge: and His words in *Deut. 6* make it clear that it is not a casual or half hearted pursuit. It is not something that we do on the side or when we have time: It is our mission!
 - i. Failure to faithfully keep this charge always brings spiritual disaster: for the one who should be being taught, and the one who charged with the teaching
 - c. The importance of this task is further made evident by the fact that God has always made it a point to set up a system of responsibility for passing on His teachings:
 - i. From parents to children in *Deut. 6*
 - ii. From those who handled His Word to the people at large, the Levites were charged in *Lev. 8-9*
 - iii. Evangelists charged to teach the lost, teachers and preachers to edify the church, older to younger, men to boys, women to girls, again parents to children, etc
 - 1. The fact that God holds those who know responsible is seen throughout scripture

2. In spite of the staggering amount of emphasis that God has placed on this charge, the failure to keep it is seen throughout the Bible narrative, continues today.
3. In the time we have left, will look at some examples of this failure, the consequences involved, and what we can do as God's people today.

1) **Eli Fails His Sons: 1Samuel 2**

- a. As a Priest and a Father, Eli was responsible for passing on the Law to the people and his family:
 - i. The spiritual climate of the nation at the time made it all the more crucial! (*Judges 21:25*)
 1. Perhaps the task of righting the nation as a whole might be a little much for one man, but surely as a priest and Judge he would see to the ways of his house! Surely he would at least make sure that he didn't worsen the situation!
 2. And yet how are his men, also priests, described? *1 Sam. 2:12-13a*
 - a. What frightening language to be used of these men!
 - i. What a sad commentary that the same language used to describe the pagan Pharaoh of Egypt in Ex. 5 is used to speak of priests in God's service
 - b. Not only did they not know God, but they didn't know their mission: Brings to mind a son being put in a position at a father's company with no instruction or qualification; just spoiled!
 3. Read on as to the sins of these two men: *1 Sam 2:13b-17,22*
 - a. If the question is raised as to how they became so wicked, read the response of Eli: 2:23-25
 - b. Why didn't they listen? 2:27-30
 - i. What may at first seem like a heartfelt plea to his children is quickly undone by the revelation that Eli's heart was not in those words: he honored his sons above God, and grew fat from their sins!

- b. The consequences of Eli's shortcomings made a bad situation worse by affecting other people:
 - i. His sons forcefully caused others to violate God's laws by altering the nature of their sacrifice 2:16-17
 - ii. He is charged with bringing physical affliction to his entire household 2:31-34
 - iii. His leadership perpetuated the climate of spiritual ignorance: Consider the anecdotal evidence of 4:1-4
 - 1. The consensus of the people was that victory would be secured by employing the Ark of God as an idol and instrument of war!
 - iv. His pattern for raising children was passed on to others:
 - 1. Samuel is the polar opposite of Hophni and Phinehas: 2:18, 26; 3:19-20
 - 2. While it may appear that Samuel was the new and improved Eli, Samuel's efforts in child rearing brought forth the same results: 8:1-3

2) **The Prophets Condemnation of the Captivity Era Spiritual Leaders:**

- a. The Priests and Scribes had allowed the people to wallow in a state of ignorance:
 - i. Their leadership had brought about a people who would perish for their lack of knowledge: *Hosea 4:6, Isa 5:13*
 - ii. Their example had created an attitude of contempt for God's word: *Isa. 5:24*
 - iii. Their teaching had confused the people as to what was good and evil: *Isa. 5:20*
 - iv. God describes the people under their leadership as unwilling to hear: *Isa. 6:9-10*
- b. These heart wrenching descriptions of God's people were brought about by:
 - i. Leaders who are constantly described by the prophets as perverting justice, leaving the people without a Godly example to follow
 - ii. Leaders who filled the land with false, easy message *Jer. 14:13*
 - iii. Kings who brought in other Gods with regularity: *II Kings 16*
 - iv. Kings who lost the law of God: *II Kings 22*

3) **Jesus Rebukes the Leaders of His Day:**

- a. The Lord's sermon on the mount is filled with "you have heard it said" comments:

- i. Jesus implication was that the teaching of many religious leaders of the day (Pharisees, Saducees, etc.) fell short of imparting the fullness of God's law:
The degree to which this spread is shocking: *Matt 5*
 - 1. Anger v 21
 - 2. Lust v 27
 - 3. Marriage v 31
 - 4. Oaths v 33
 - 5. Vengeance v 38
 - 6. Love v 43
- ii. This teaching is paired with a denunciation of the example the hypocritical spiritual leaders had left the people with:
 - 1. Praying: 6:5
 - 2. Fasting 6:16
 - a. Further in on Matthew's gospel as well:
 - i. The Pharisee's hypocrisy is condemned: 23:3
 - ii. They are charged with keeping souls from God: 23:13
 - iii. Even described as murderers! 23:34
- iii. As a result, their teaching did not bring about salvation, or a people who hungered for it:
 - 1. In 23:15 their converts are described as being "twice as much a son of Hell" as them!
 - 2. When Jesus came He was greeted by a wicked and adulterous generation more interested in His signs than His teaching! 16:1-4

4) **The Urgency of Carrying This Charge Continues in the Epistles:**

- a. Paul urged for continued growth in God's law: *Col. 1:9-10, 23*
 - i. Filled with all knowledge is a continual increase
 - ii. v 10 describes this increase as being needed for our walk to be worthy
 - iii. This necessitates that someone is carrying out the charge to teach, v 23
 - 1. This means that each of us is answering the call of being a spiritual priest!
- b. The Hebrew writer pleads for leadership as well: *He. 5:11-14*

- i. He laments not only their inability to hear, but that fact that they are not able to fill their role as teachers!
- ii. Pray that we take up the charge to teach and lead, lest we be doomed to be described in the same way!

Application:

- Do we still have Eli's among God's people today?
 - o Are there parents who not only have failed to teach their children, but join with them in their excess?
 - o Are there parents who honor their children above God?
 - o Are their leaders and teachers in the church who don't know how to carry out their responsibilities?
 - Sadly yes! The church is filled parents and teachers like Eli
- Do we still have groups of God's people who are ignorant to their own destruction?
 - o How many Christians do you know who have embraced the denominational world and left the church because they've become enlightened?
- Do people still suffer from diets of milk, milk, milk?
 - o These problems still flourish among God's people today; but it is needless!
- How can You and I fix it?
 - o Make the decision to show the same resolve of the Rechabites in carrying out God's charge to pass on His law
 - o Decide that we will embrace the responsibility of passing on the knowledge that we've been blessed with:
 - o The consequences of failure are too drastic to do otherwise: *Jer. 5:30-31*