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Issue 17

THE EXAMPLE OF THE RECHABITES

Ian McPherson

In Jeremiah 35 God asks Jeremiah to invite the Rechabites into the house of the Lord and offer them wine (grape juice). The Rechabites were descendants of a man named Rechab, who had an eccentric son named Jonadab, who lived during the reign of Jehu (2 Kings 10:5). Jonadab had formed a pact with his children to never drink wine, sow seed, plant vineyards, build houses, or accumulate possessions, and they were to live in tents as stranger in the land (Jeremiah 35:5-8). The Rechabites had faithfully followed this tradition for over 300 years. They refused Jeremiah's offer of wine as God knew they would. Even after 300 years, all of Jonadab's descendants still knew the source of their peculiar tradition, and respected their father so much that they did not change.

God then pointed out that the Rechabites had faithfully followed their earthly father's commands, but Judah had not followed their spiritual Father's commandments, but had gone astray by following the traditions and practices of the world, (Jeremiah 35:16). The Rechabites therefore stand as a divinely chosen illustration of how the Lord wants to be followed.

Paul said to the Thessalonians, *"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."* 2 Thessalonians 2:15. "The traditions" here are those binding commands of the New

Testament, left to us by His apostles and prophets, who wrote them down for us to follow. (Ephesians 3:1-5, Jude 3).

The pattern of the church therefore can never change. It was built by Christ (Matthew 16:18), and purchased by His Blood (Acts 20:28). It is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ as its cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). The only way it can be identified is by the commandments left by its founder Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Like the Rechabites, Christians are peculiar people (Titus 2:14). Time, culture and custom cannot change the Pattern of the New Testament Church. Musical instruments for example can never replace the human voice as the instrument of praise (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16, Hebrews 13:15), women can never replace men as church leaders (Ephesians 4:9-15, 1 Timothy 2:8-15), earthly heads and headquarters will never remove the Lord from His position in heaven as Head of the Church (Eph 1:19-23, Col 1:18, Hebrews 1:3) and the "Sinners Prayer" cannot ever provide remission of sins in place of baptism (Acts 2:38, 22:16).

Many today, like Israel of old, are not satisfied with the traditions and commandments of the New Testament, but are continually calling for change. They ridicule conservative brethren who want to faithfully keep the apostles doctrine, and seek to follow practices of their own devising. They are like the Athenian philosophers who spend their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing" (Acts 17:21). Solomon warned his son to beware of such people. He said, *My son, fear thou the Lord and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change* (Prov 24:2).

Like the Rechabites, we must continue to keep the commandments of our Founder unchanged from generation to generation until the end of time. The New Testament remains the only Rule of faith (Philippians 3:16, Galatians 1:8-9, 2 John 9, Jude 3). The Lord said *"...be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life"* (Revelation 2: 10).

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is a publication of the
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COUNT IT ALL JOY

Brett Rutherford

2014 promised to be one of my fullest and most fulfilling years of my work here in Devonport, Australia. I had planned to speak in gospel meetings, teach a course on Church History for the Four Seas Bible College in Singapore, and serve the needs of the students enrolled in the Tasmania Bible School.

In addition to the aforementioned, I was also looking forward to a full schedule of local work. This included Bible studies with members, letterboxing, doorknocking, and, of course, preaching and teaching.

By the end of February everything was going according to plan. At the beginning of January we had a wonderful Christian Family Camp. I was greatly blessed when two of my children, and two of my nephews, obeyed the gospel on the last night of the camp. This was really shaping up to be one of the best years of my local work. Things just got better when we had a record number of non-Christian visitors at our annual Seniors' Dinner at the end of February.

I was confident that the Lord approved of everything I had planned. I was certainly going to be busy promoting His cause throughout the year. Though I believed the Lord would bless me in my planned endeavours, the Lord allowed me to experience a blessing of an unusual nature.

At the end of February, I was feeling over tired. I was dealing with some memory loss, and I became unsteady on my feet. I believed these were symptoms of an inner ear infection. I thought that I needed just a bit of rest and relaxation. Unfortunately, my condition worsened. On Saturday, March the first, I drove to the emergency room of the Mersey Community Hospital. I thought they would give me antibiotics and send me home.

As a matter of routine, the doctors ordered a CT scan for me. I didn't expect the scan to show anything. As I waited for the scan results to come back I became rather impatient. I thought, "What a waste of time that scan had been." Finally, the intern came into my bay and grabbed me by the hand. He said, "We found something on the scan." I didn't really believe him. I said, "So this is serious?" He replied, "Yes."

I spent the next three weeks in the hospital undergoing tests, scans and surgery. I never expected to spend the month of March in three different hospitals around the state. As I write this I am still awaiting a diagnosis for the four lesions on my brain.

Surprisingly, in many ways I have felt the whole experience has been a wonderful blessing from God. I have learned to be more patient. I have gained a personal insight into the emotional roller coaster that comes with an experience like this one. I have become more sympathetic to the needs of others. It has made me realize how profoundly true Paul's statement is in Romans 8:28. Truly, "...we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose."

My experience has also made me realize the importance of having a strong faith in God (James 1:2-4). While I was on the oncology ward at Launceston General Hospital I saw many patients who were put into the hands of the palliative staff. Many of these patients would soon enter eternity with no hope of enjoying the paradise God offers the righteous. It occurred to me how terrible it would be to face death with no hope of eternal rest. It reminded me of the wonderful prospect that every faithful child of God faces. Paul expressed this glorious dilemma that faces every Christian when he wrote, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ: which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Philippians 1:23-24).

Finally, my experience has also made me realize the value of prayer and God's providence. It is a wonderful thing to be able to express our needs to One Who can truly help us when no one else can (Romans 8:27-28; James 5:13-15).

12th Annual Mersey Bluff Church of Christ

Far Above Rubies

Ladies' Retreat

August 22 – 23, 2014

Speaker:

Mabel McPherson (Devonport)

Theme: "Recognising Responsibilities"

**Held at Camp Banksia, Port Sorell
(approximatey 15 minutes from Devonport)**

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