

# Jeremiah 34:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This is the word that came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people which were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them;

## Analysis

**This is the word that came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people which were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them;** This introduces one of Scripture's most tragic episodes of covenant-breaking. Zedekiah proclaimed emancipation of Hebrew slaves, likely motivated by military desperation (needing freed men as soldiers) and hoping this covenant obedience might induce God's deliverance. The verb "proclaim liberty" (liqro' deror) uses the Jubilee year terminology (Leviticus 25:10), suggesting awareness of covenant requirements for debt release and slave liberation.

However, verses 10-11 reveal this as false repentance: when Egyptian intervention temporarily lifted Babylon's siege (37:5), slave owners recaptured the freed servants. The superficial reform—done from desperation, not genuine repentance—exposed hearts unchanged by God's grace. This illustrates Jesus' parable of the rocky soil (Matthew 13:20-21): temporary enthusiasm without deep roots fails under pressure.

Theologically, this verse teaches:

1. External religious actions without heart transformation don't satisfy God
2. desperation-driven reforms differ from genuine repentance

3. covenant obedience done for pragmatic benefit rather than love for God proves hollow
4. true liberty comes through internal transformation, not merely legal decree.

Christ's promise of liberty (John 8:32, 36) requires spiritual regeneration, not just external reform.

## Historical Context

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The Sabbath year law (Deuteronomy 15:1-18) required releasing Hebrew servants every seventh year—systematically violated in pre-exilic Judah. Zedekiah's decree suggests desperate attempt to fulfill neglected obligations, perhaps influenced by recognition that covenant violations brought judgment. The temporary Egyptian intervention (37:5) gave false hope that deliverance was working, leading to covenant revocation.

Archaeological evidence from ancient Near Eastern slave release edicts shows this practice occurred during crises. However, the biblical account uniquely emphasizes the moral dimension: revoking freedom after granting it demonstrates profound covenant treachery, warranting severe judgment (verses 17-22). The historical episode illustrates that God sees hearts, not merely actions—superficial compliance motivated by fear rather than love insults His holiness.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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1. How does the contrast between external reform and internal transformation challenge superficial religious observance?
2. In what areas might you be tempted toward desperation-driven religiosity rather than genuine heart change?

3. How does this passage deepen understanding of the liberty Christ brings—freedom from sin's bondage, not merely external circumstances?

## Interlinear Text

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הַדָּבָר	אֲשֶׁר	הָיָה	אֵל	יְרֵמְיָהוּ	מָאָת
<b>This is the word</b>	H834	H1961	H413	<b>that came unto Jeremiah</b>	H853
H1697				H3414	
יְהוָה	אַחֲרָי	כָּרַת	הַמֶּלֶךְ	צִדְקִיָּהוּ	בְּרִית
<b>from the LORD</b>	<b>after</b>	<b>had made</b>	<b>that the king</b>	<b>Zedekiah</b>	<b>a covenant</b>
H3068	H310	H3772	H4428	H6667	H1285
כָּל	הָעָם	אֲשֶׁר	בִּירוּשָׁלַם	לְקַרְא	לָהֶם
H3605	<b>with all the people</b>	H834	<b>which were at Jerusalem</b>	<b>to proclaim</b>	H1992
	H5971		H3389	H7121	
דְּרוֹר:					
<b>liberty</b>					
H1865					

## Additional Cross-References

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**Leviticus 25:10** (Parallel theme): And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.

**Jeremiah 34:17** (Kingdom): Therefore thus saith the LORD; Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the LORD, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.

**2 Kings 11:17** (Covenant): And Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people, that they should be the LORD'S people; between the king also and the people.

**Isaiah 61:1** (References Lord): The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

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