

1 Samuel 2:11-36 — Eli's Wicked Sons

January 30, 2022

Good morning! If you are new, it is great to have you. Let me give you two quick reminders. Our capital fund remains at the \$456,000 we have received toward our \$650,000 goal. Our hope was to complete that around the end of January, then we will make plans to move forward according to what we have received. We trust the generosity of God's people and our good God's provision for his work.

Second, you remember that we prayed that our blueprints for the Spencer Campus to be approved by the city. They were lost in bureaucratic paperwork for a week. A few days after we prayed, those plans were approved by the city. I told you last week we would begin swinging hammers as soon as possible. We are starting regular workdays this week. They will be 6-9 p.m. Thursdays and 8-11 a.m. Saturdays. You can put those as repeating events in your calendar. I will connect with you via the Church Center app with more details. If you can respond on the app letting us know you will be there, we will make sure we have work for you to do and enough materials prepared for you to do the work when you arrive. We want to avoid people showing up and we don't have work ready to get done.

Lastly, 7 p.m. Monday we are having a church-wide prayer meeting in the new facility. We are going to pray for the facility and for the safety of the work about to take place in the facility, then we hit it Thursday night.

Let's pray, then we will dive into our study.

Prayer

Today, people are very cynical about leaders, especially political leaders. The news spends its time either idolizing or demonizing whoever is in office. The media loves to reveal the skeletons in every politician's closet. If reporters can't find stories, they make stories up just to discredit those on the opposite side of the political spectrum. When it comes to this kind of corruption, we expect it. We are actually surprised when there isn't a corrupt leader in office.

Today, as we come to 1 Samuel 2:11-36, it is like picking up the paper. These verses are an exposé of the corruption in the lives of Israel's leaders. Thankfully, these verses are more than just the juicy details of leaders that lost their way. These verses have many practical lessons for us on the topic of parenting. They talk about how parents can fail their children and the lessons children need to learn if they are going to grow up to be successful in life. So these verses have a lot in them. Let me take a moment to remind you of what we learned so far.

In 1 Samuel 1, we read the story of Samuel's birth. We learned why Hannah brought Samuel to the temple to dedicate him to the Lord so that from age 4 he was raised by priests.

Last week, we studied Hannah's song in which she celebrated the birth of her son. Her song introduced us to a number of themes we will see developed in the rest of the book. This morning, the story returns to the temple at Shiloh where young Samuel was left to be raised.

Then Elkanah went home to Ramah. And the boy was ministering to the LORD in the presence of Eli the priest. 1 Samuel 2:11 (ESV)

At this point, we typically read the text we will study, then we work our way through the text. Since we have so many verses to cover, we are not going to read this section. We are simply going to just dive into our study and let the story unfold before us.

Eli's sons were corrupt leaders.

Eli was the head of worship at Shiloh. In chapter 1, we were introduced to his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. They were serving as priests in the temple under Eli's leadership. When we met them in chapter 1, I told you they were a nasty set of brothers. Now we are going to find out what they were like. It is about to get juicy.

Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the LORD. 1 Samuel 2:12 (ESV)

That is not a great introduction, especially if you are introducing the priests who run the temple. These guys were worthless men. The word worthless in Hebrew is very harsh. It is the word *belial*. It is a word associated with death, wickedness, darkness, and rebellion. Not at this time in history, but later in Israel's history, *belial* became synonymous with the devil.

We can see Paul use it this way in the New Testament in 2 Corinthians.

What accord has Christ with Belial?... 2 Corinthians 6:15 (ESV)

In other words, what do Jesus and the devil have in common? Nothing! While the Hebrew word *belial*, does not mean the devil at this time, it was used to describe an extremely dark and wicked person. The last time the word *belial* was used in the Old Testament before 1 Samuel was in Judges 19:22, 20:13. It was

used to describe the character of the men who gang-raped then murdered a woman. Those guys were called the sons of Belial.

So when we read that the sons of Eli were worthless men, that is way undertranslated. These guys had horrible character. They were particularly evil in nature. The problem was they were running the tabernacle. There was no other place for people to go when it comes to worship. For Eli, their father, these guys were sons from hell. They were the ultimate problem children.

The author of 1 Samuel also tells us why these guys were particularly wicked. "They did not know the Lord." That was not an admission of ignorance on their part, it was an expression of defiance. Eli, their father, taught them about God, but they rebelled and chose to live in defiance of God. The problem was they were running the tabernacle, the one place of worship for God's people.

Hearing things like this does not shock us. We are used to hearing these kinds of scandals. This should shock us. These were God's people. They were chosen to be a blessing to the world. God appeared to them. This was serious corruption.

Last week, when we studied Hannah's prayer, she introduced us to God's character. The truths of her words are woven like golden threads through the rest of this book. Last week Hannah said these words about God.

...for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. 1 Samuel 2:3 (ESV)

It may look like Eli's sons were defying God. They were worthless men and it seemed nobody could stop them. The priesthood is passed from father to son so it looked like there was no hope for the tabernacle. Remember that God

knew. He is a God of knowledge. None of this escaped his sight. He was weighing the actions of these wicked priests. He would respond to them. God loves to rescue his people from hopeless situations when they call on him. As we continue in this book, we will find out how God came to the rescue of his people.

Let's look at some specifics on Hophni and Phinehas and learn why they were worthless men.

Hophni and Phinehas dishonored the offerings of the Lord.

The custom of the priests with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant would come, while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand, and he would thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot. All that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is what they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. 1 Samuel 2:13–14 (ESV)

Priests were entitled to a certain portion of people's offerings. This was a benefit of their work. This provided them with their food. At first, it doesn't sound like Hophni and Phinehas were doing anything wrong. There were following a custom that was possibly established before them. They had their servant take a big three-pronged fork and use it to spear meat right out of people's pans, the meat the people were cooking for dinner. The meat the servant of the priest took was the meat people were cooking for the fellowship offering. This was a family meal people ate before the Lord.

The servant was using this big fork to skewer the best meat people were cooking for dinner that night and take it for Hophni and Phinehas to eat! They were stealing from people taking their dinner, not serving people.

This was not to happen. According to the Old Testament law, they were to receive a specific portion of the offering, the breast meat, and the right thigh.

The priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be for Aaron and his sons. And the right thigh you shall give to the priest as a contribution from the sacrifice of your peace offerings. Leviticus 7:31–32 (ESV)

Think of it this way, if the sacrifice was a chicken, they were given the right chicken leg and a chicken breast for their food. The offerings were much bigger than chickens. They were lambs and bulls, so God provided these guys with more than enough meat. Hophni and Phinehas were greedy, gluttonous men. Instead of contenting themselves with the generous portions of meat God provided, using that kitchen pitchfork, they stole right out of the pot the best meat people were cooking for their families. When someone steals your steak off your plate, it doesn't make people happy.

In addition, Hophni and Phinehas were lazy. They didn't do this dirty work themselves. They sat at home with their feet up and had their servant do the work of stealing food people were preparing for themselves.

Now it gets worse!

Moreover, before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give meat for the priest to roast, for he will not accept boiled meat from you but only raw." And if the man said to him, "Let them burn the fat first, and then take as much as you wish," he would say, "No, you must give it now, and if not, I will take it by force." 1 Samuel 2:15–16 (ESV)

Since they were able to successfully steal the best steaks right out of people's pots and pans while they were preparing them, they decided to take it a step further. They started taking meat from people even before it was offered to the Lord. They did this because they especially loved the fatty portions of the meat.

Why do you think they wanted the fatty portions of the meat? Why do you think they wanted to roast the meat on the grill themselves? They wanted the

meat with the fat on it because it tastes better. Fat adds flavor. If you roast meat over the fire with the fat still on it, you can cook the meat just the way you like it for the best flavor. This is much tastier than boiling the meat. These guys were living to satisfy their stomachs. Their god was their gut. They didn't care about serving the people. All they wanted was to steal meat from people and take it for themselves. These were wicked men.

It gets worse. Does anyone know what would be wrong with them taking the fat for themselves? Look what Leviticus says about the fat of the offering.

All fat is the LORD's. Leviticus 3:16 (ESV)

They weren't just stealing fat for flavor but they were stealing what was to be offered to God! They were stealing the portion of the offering that was exclusively dedicated to God. Stealing from God will get you in serious trouble!

Now it gets worse. Let's jump a few verses forward and see what else these guys were doing.

...how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting. 1 Samuel 2:22 (ESV)

Who were these women? They were most likely young women who clean the tabernacle area. These priests were sleeping with them. These guys were married. They were sexually using these women like girlfriends on the side. Today, they would be the kind of pastors that embezzle money from the church then use their position of authority to have affairs with women in the church. As the author of 1 Samuel says, "These guys are worthless men."

The worst part of it is that it looked like Hophni and Phinehas were going to get away with this forever. The priesthood is passed from father to son. There is no provision to get rid of the priest's family from temple service.

All hope was not lost. As Hannah said in her prayer last week, God was watching. He knew what they were doing. He was patiently giving them a chance to repent before he stepped into action and took them out of leadership. The writer of 1 Samuel summed things up this way:

Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the LORD, for the men treated the offering of the LORD with contempt. 1 Samuel 2:17 (ESV)

God hadn't done anything to stop Hophni and Phinehas, but that didn't mean he didn't know what was happening. God was still silent but God was hot. They treated God's offerings like their own personal butcher shop, taking whatever they wanted from whomever they wanted because these gluttonous boys had their stomachs as their god.

Next, we see how God was working on a solution to this leadership problem right under their nose.

Samuel was a little priest-in-training.

Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy clothed with a linen ephod. 1 Samuel 2:18 (ESV)

There was another son working at the tabernacle in Shiloh. It was little Samuel. Remember, he began at age 4 or 5. He was just a little boy clothed in a linen ephod, that is a white robe. He was a tiny, cute, 5-year-old priest! He was a little priest-in-training. Samuel's character, even though he was young, was a complete contrast to the abusive, gluttonous adult sons of Eli. Little Samuel was

young, but he was doing what a priest was meant to do, love God and serve people.

There is a little bit of application here for us. If we are in a tough work environment, many times the first thing we think we should do is get away from it and find a better place of work. That may be the right thing to do, especially if you are a follower, not a leader. That is not always the right thing to do. Young Samuel had a tough work environment. The tabernacle with Hophni and Phinehas as his bosses was a tough place to work. That is where God wanted this little boy to work. The godly character of little Samuel stood out like a candle in the darkness when Samuel was seen by the people in comparison to Hophni and Phinehas. Sometimes God places his people in really dark, hard places of work so their character will stand out against the dark world around them.

So today, if you have a tough work environment with wicked people, maybe you need a different job. Maybe not. God may have you there because the light of Christ in your life will shine brightest in a dark place.

Let's get back to the text.

And his mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. 1 Samuel 2:19 (ESV)

When Hannah went to Shiloh before, she dreaded the trip. It was a time when Penninah humiliated her for her lack of children. Now she couldn't wait for the trip. It was the time for her to see her son. Each year, she made a new priestly robe for him; every year she made one that was a little bigger!

Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "May the Lord give you children by this woman for the petition she asked of the Lord." So then they would return to their home. Indeed the Lord visited Hannah, and she conceived

and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew in the presence of the Lord. 1 Samuel 2:20–21 (ESV)

As we read between the lines, we get a sense of what was happening. Eli was eager to bless Elkanah and Hannah when they showed up. That is because Eli was thrilled with young Samuel. He wasn't thrilled with his own sons, but he was thrilled to have their son. It was a happy reunion every time Samuel's parents showed up with Eli telling them of all the good things happening in their son's life. This is why Eli was eager to bless Hannah. God did indeed bless Hannah. She conceived five more children.

Here is more practical application. We can't outgive God. When we give generously and sacrificially to God, he loves to give back to us more than we ever gave to him. That is not just a principle we see in Hannah's life, but Jesus also talked about this in the Gospel of Luke.

...give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you. Luke 6:38 (ESV)

Eli was a dysfunctional father.

Now that we know the direction Eli's sons and Samuel were heading, we turn to Eli. So far, our impressions of him have been a little mixed. In the first chapter, he mistook Hannah for a drunk women but quickly recovered from that misunderstanding. While his sons were a complete basket case, Samuel seems to have prospered and done well under Eli's parental and priestly leadership. Let's see where he went wrong.

Now Eli was very old, and he kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting. 1 Samuel 2:22 (ESV)

The key thing to remember about Eli is he was very old. Because of his age, he was not directly in touch with what was happening in Shiloh under his nose. While he was personally out of touch with Hophni and Phinehas' actions, people kept reporting to him the things they were doing. As a good father would be, he was clearly outraged at his sons' behavior. He was a well-meaning and personally godly man but was ineffective as a spiritual leader and was failing to control his sons.

Eli knew what his sons were doing. He talked to his sons about what they were doing. The key question is, "What did he do to stop them?"

And he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all these people. No, my sons; it is no good report that I hear the people of the LORD spreading abroad. If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?" But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the LORD to put them to death. 1 Samuel 2:23–25 (ESV)

Like a good father, Eli approached his sons and asked them, "Why are you doing these things?" He started out the right way. He had the courage to talk to them. The problem is that is as far as it went with Eli. He told them they were doing wicked things but he used nothing more than words. He took no action to stop them. He was afraid to punish his children. This pattern probably characterized Eli's parenting all the way through his sons' upbringing. He would talk to them about what they did wrong but neglected to punish them for their sin.

The Bible says that when parents fail to discipline their children and let them run wild, that is one of the best ways to ruin their children's souls.

Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him. Proverbs 13:24 (ESV)

Eli wasn't the only godly parent that would go no further than talk when it came to disciplining children, and as a result, the children went haywire. Later in 1 Kings 1:6, it tells us David would also talk with his children but failed to discipline them. The lives of his children revealed the lack of discipline for their sin that they experienced at home. That is why there was treachery, rape, murder, and treason committed by David's sons. That bore testimony to David's parental failures.

In dealing with his sons, Eli should have at least removed them from office and installed qualified priests. Eli should have remembered his ancestor Aaron's first two sons, Nadab and Abihu. They were struck dead by God when they offered unauthorized fire in the tabernacle. Fire from the Lord came out and burned them to a crisp. It looked like the movie *Backdraft*. Hophni and Phinehas were heading in the same direction. They also showed contempt for God's offerings, plus, they were sexually immoral. God's judgment was overdue in their lives.

Even though Eli only talked with his sons, to his credit, at least in that talk he explained to them the seriousness of what they were doing. They were not just mistreating God's people. In those situations, God provided a way to deal with sin. The problem was these guys showed contempt and disregard for the very way God provided for dealing with sin, that is the sacrificial system itself. The sacrificial system was there to provide a way for dealing with sin, but if you sinned by disregarding the sacrificial system itself, there no longer remained a way to deal with your sin.

We see something very similar in the New Testament in the book of Hebrews when it comes to how people handle Jesus.

How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? Hebrews 10:29 (ESV)

In other words, when we sin, thank goodness we have Jesus. He died for our sin to forgive our sin. When we sin, we run to Jesus and he forgives our sin. But if our sin is that we don't care about Jesus, if our sin is that we mock and refuse to trust Jesus, what hope is left for us when the very means God provided for sin is what we despise? That is true for us today just as it was true for Hophni and Phinehas in their day.

Here is how the author of 1 Samuel summed up Eli and his sons.

...But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the LORD to put them to death. 1 Samuel 2:25b (ESV)

In some ways, it was no surprise they wouldn't listen to their father. They hadn't listened to him for a long time. Why would they start listening to him now? There is another reason why they refused to listen to their father. That is because it was the Lord's will to put them to death.

This is not a truth we like to hear. This is unsettling. Some people cringe at these words and find fault with God on this. How dare God not allow them to listen to their father's pleading for repentance. How dare God keep them from having a soft, repentant heart.

Let me explain the way this works. The hardness of these men's hearts was their own choice, and it was God's judgment on them for their choice.

First, realize this was not the first time their father called them to repent. I am sure Eli had called them to repent many times. They chose to harden their hearts against their father's words. It was only after many pleadings from their father that God began to harden their hearts so they could not repent.

Paul described how this works in the opening chapters of Romans. We also see this in the book of Genesis when it comes to Pharaoh and the children of Israel when they were in Egypt. Some passages say Pharaoh chose to harden his heart against God.

But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. Exodus 8:15 (ESV)

Later, after Pharaoh continually hardened his heart, the Bible says God then hardened Pharaoh's heart against repentance so he couldn't repent.

But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had spoken to Moses. Exodus 9:12 (ESV)

What is going on? Repentance of our sin, anytime we experience it, is a gift from God. It is a gift from God when we see our sin and call out to God for forgiveness. That repentance is a gift God gives. If God is calling us to repentance and we harden our hearts against him, eventually in judgment God will harden our hearts so we never want to repent. As judgment, we pursue and experience the consequences of our sin. That is still the way God works today. This is why when God calls us to repent of our sin and we can see and sense our sin, we do not harden our hearts and avoid repentance. That window of repentance will not always be open. Look what it says in the book of Hebrews.

As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." Hebrews 3:15 (ESV)

Samuel kept growing in stature and favor with God and man.

Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and also with man. 1 Samuel 2:26 (ESV)

For the fourth time in these verses, the writer of 1 Samuel flipped back to young Samuel to tell of the good progress he was making. He was very young, but he was growing. His reputation was improving. Just as the wickedness of Eli's sons was well known to the people, the godly character of young Samuel was also becoming well-known among the people.

As we read these words about Samuel's character, they may sound familiar to some of you. When the writer of Luke's Gospel was looking for a way to describe the growth of Jesus as a young man, he reached back to 1 Samuel 2 to borrow this description of how Samuel grew as a young man to describe Jesus.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. Luke 2:52 (ESV)

The message is that just as God was at work to rescue his people from corrupt, godless leaders in 1050 B.C. by raising up Samuel, God was at work in the first century to raise up his own son to rescue us from the corrupt and wicked prince of this world called Satan. Just as at first people barely noticed Samuel growing up in God's house, people barely noticed Jesus growing up, but God was working a great reversal. Let's see what happened.

God pronounced judgment on Eli and his family for their sin.

And there came a man of God to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the LORD..." 1 Samuel 2:27 (ESV)

When it tells us there came a man of God to Eli, who was this? The Bible doesn't tell us his name. His name isn't what was important. His title is what was important. In the Bible, a man of God is a prophet. Prophets speak God's words to God's people. This is confirmed when the message begins with the words, "Thus saith the Lord." Let's see what God said about this.

...Did I indeed reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt subject to the house of Pharaoh? Did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? I gave to the house of your father all my offerings by fire from the people of Israel. 1 Samuel 2:27–28 (ESV)

There is clear logic to the message. The Lord spoke about what he did in the past for the house of Eli, what the house of Eli had done, and what the Lord would now do.

God graciously honored Eli's family in the past.

This was designed to stir Eli's conscience. The reason Eli and his family held the honored position as priests in Shiloh was because God revealed himself to their father's house back in Egypt. This was a reference to Aaron and his sons in the days of Moses. At that time, God chose Aaron and his descendants to serve in the tabernacle. This privilege was to stay in Aaron's family forever. The evidence we have indicates Eli was a descendent of Aaron's fourth son, a man named Ithamar. We don't know how Eli came to be the leader of the tabernacle at that time. We just know he was part of Aaron's family tree. Aaron's first two sons, Nadab and Abihu, were killed by fire from the Lord because they offered unauthorized fire. Eleazar was Aaron's third oldest son; Ithamar was his fourth son.

The priests were given three jobs to do: 1. Offer the offerings on the altar to cleanse the people's sins; 2. Burn incense on the altar of incense twice a day; 3. Wear the ephod before God. This was special clothing that separated priests from others. This was a relatively easy job but it carried extraordinary responsibility.

God graciously honored Eli's family in the present.

As compensation, the priests were given a portion of all the meat from the offerings of the people. They had a free meal plan.

Eli and his sons dishonored their history and their privileged position.

Why then do you scorn my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded for my dwelling, and honor your sons above me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel? 1 Samuel 2:29 (ESV)

Instead of honoring God and the great privilege their family held, Eli honored his sons more than God. Eli and his sons fattened themselves by taking choice portions of meat for themselves. It was not just Hophni and Phinehas who were involved in this, Eli was also participating by eating this meat.

There is some fun Hebrew humor in this verse. My wife told me not to share it, but I am going to take a risk and tell you the Hebrew joke. The text says, "you honor your sons above me by fattening yourselves." The word honor in Hebrew is the word for heavy. Eli and his sons were very big boys. They fattened themselves. God says, "You think your boys are big and heavy? You are treating them like they are heavier than me." This is God reminding these very overweight men that they needed a Jenny Craig plan. No matter how big they got, and they were really big, they were not bigger than God.

God honors those who honor him and diminishes those who despise him.

"Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel, declares: 'I promised that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before me forever,' but now the Lord declares: 'Far be it from me, for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed.'" 1 Samuel 2:30 (ESV)

In Exodus 29:9, God had promised that Aaron's line would hold the priesthood forever. The priesthood would pass from father to son. Now God told Eli that he and his family forfeited that promise. This was not God breaking the promise he made to Aaron. This was God saying that this portion of Aaron's family tree, that was Eli and his sons, would be destroyed. A different portion of Aaron's family tree would take over the temple and serve as priests.

The reason for this is given. "Those who honor me, I will honor, and those who despise me will be lightly esteemed." That truth still applies in life today. God honors those who honor him. God despises and fights against those who dishonor him. Now we get the details of what will happen to Aaron's family line in the future.

Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house. Then in distress you will look with envious eye on all the prosperity that shall be bestowed on Israel, and there shall not be an old man in your house forever. The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep his eyes out to grieve his heart, and all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword of men. 1 Samuel 2:31–33 (ESV)

How did this unfold?

In 1 Samuel 22, there would be a horrific massacre of Eli's descendants by Doeg the Edomite when 85 descendants are killed. The one priest who was left was named Abiathar. He was Eli's great-great-grandson. Abiathar served as a priest during the time of King David until he supported a treasonous rebellion

against King David by a man named Adonijah. When Solomon, David's son, became king, he expelled Abiathar from the priesthood replacing him with Zadok. He was from a different part of Aaron's family tree. At that time, all of Eli's descendants were removed from the priesthood forever. Those were the consequences of his sin.

Eli wouldn't see any of that judgment for his sin happen, but he would see the next part of God's judgment happen.

And this that shall come upon your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall be the sign to you: both of them shall die on the same day. 1 Samuel 2:34 (ESV)

This he would see. His own sons would die on the same day. When we get to 1 Samuel 4, we will see that is exactly what happened. Eli also died immediately afterward. The one who was left standing was Samuel. Overnight the corrupt priesthood is gone.

Samuel was raised up to be a faithful priest.

And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever. 1 Samuel 2:35 (ESV)

The good news is God did not forget his people. He was in the process of raising up for himself and for God's people a faithful high priest who would do what was in God's heart and on God's mind.

At first, it sounds like Samuel would be the new faithful high priest. In some ways, it was Samuel. He was left in Eli's place after God brought judgment on Eli and his family. Looking further ahead, we can see that Zadok, who replaced Abiathar as priest, was also a fulfillment of this. He brought back to the priestly line truth instead of corruption. Looking even further ahead, we can see

an even greater priest God raised up who was faithful forever in God's house.

His name is Jesus.

And everyone who is left in your house shall come to implore him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and shall say, "Please put me in one of the priests' places, that I may eat a morsel of bread." 1 Samuel 2:36 (ESV)

You hear the punishment should fit the crime. That is exactly what happened. So Eli and his family, who were the fat, gluttonous bullies, had their descendants turned into nothing more than hungry beggars. It is just like Hannah said in her prayer last week --- God can reverse anything when he comes to the rescue of his people.

Applications

These verses have many lessons we can learn.

1. **When people in positions of power do not see themselves as accountable to God, they become selfish, greedy, and lazy. They end up using people instead of serving them.** This was not just true for Hophni and Phinehas or our political leaders, but it is also true for us. Any time we do not see ourselves as under God and accountable to God, we will begin to use people instead of caring for them.
2. **Parents dishonor God when they close their eyes to their children's sin and fail to discipline them.** Many parents who do not like conflict fail to do the hard work of correcting their children. While ignoring a child's rebellion may bring peace to the home for a brief moment, it will lead to a disastrous future for the children we love.

...a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. Proverbs 29:15 (ESV)

- 3. Sometimes parents need more than words for correction. Sometimes children need to face the painful consequences of sin.**

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him. Proverbs 22:15 (ESV)

Sometimes more than words are needed to get children's attention and to turn them from the path of death. This is not because we hate our children but because we love them and want to turn them from disaster.

- 4. Adult children should seek the godly wisdom of their parents. Parents should not be afraid to carry out consequences for adult children who rebel.**

A remarkable feature of these verses is that Eli's failure as a father happened when his children were adults. To the degree his adult children were still under his authority, he refused to use that authority to correct them. As we continue reading, we will see that both David and Samuel will experience similar failures in the lives of their adult children. Parents sometimes have a responsibility to correct their adult children to the degree they still have authority over their children. If your adult children are still living under your roof and you still pay their phone bills and car insurance but they are living a lazy, sexually immoral life, parents have the responsibility to step into the lives of their adult children and use whatever leverage they still hold to get their children's attention and to turn them from sin.

- 5. Children are responsible for their choices. Eli's sons refused to listen to their father's godly wisdom and it ruined their lives. Samuel listened to Eli's godly wisdom and was mightily used by God.** We know Eli was not the perfect parent, but his sons were still responsible for their choices. Eli's

sons rejected the instructions they received about the Lord from their father, and their lives and legacy ended in disaster. Samuel was raised by the same Eli. He embraced the spiritual instruction he received from Eli, and God made him into the spiritual leader of a nation. Kids, you are responsible for your choices. Your home may not be a perfect one but you are responsible for how you respond to Jesus.

6. **God honors those who honor him, but those who despise him will be lightly esteemed.** In the 1924 Olympics, Eric Liddel was set to run the 100-meter dash in the Olympic Games. He was favored to win the gold. When he found out the race would be run on a Sunday, out of his conviction to put the Lord first in his life, he declined to participate in the event. Eventually, a compromise was reached and he was allowed to run in the 400-meter, which was one of the few events that did not have a Sunday race. He had never trained for the 400-meter race. As he was warming up on the morning of the event, a member of the British training staff who knew about his decision to not run on Sunday, passed him a note. On the piece of paper was written the words of 1 Samuel 2:30. "God honors those who honor him." Eric balled up the paper in his hand. He ran the race with the paper clenched in his hand. That day, he not only won the gold medal, but he set a new world record in the event.

Remember the outcome of Hophni and Phinehas' lives and the outcome of Samuel's life. God honors those who honor him, but those who despise him will be lightly esteemed.



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