

## **Family Troubles – 1 Samuel 2:12-36**

### **Introduction:**

Last week we focused on Hannah, the mother of Samuel. She was a godly woman who showed great faith in God. So great was her trust and confidence in God, and so deep was her devotion to Him, that she was willing to give her son to be raised in the temple by the priests of God who lived there.

This week our attention shifts to the priests at the temple, Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. One might expect these men, who lived and served at the temple, to be examples of godliness; but they were far from it. Through this study, ask yourself – “Why did God record their story in His sacred Word?”

### **Eli’s Worthless Sons! – 1 Samuel 2:12-17**

1. How are the sons of Eli the High Priest described in verse 12? Though they were priests in the temple (tabernacle) what was their relationship to God? What does this tell us about religious practices and relationship with God?
2. How do you think these ungodly men became priests? What is wrong with this system? (Remember the saying: God has no grandchildren? What does that mean?)
3. What were Hophni and Phinehas doing at the temple during the sacrifices according to verses 13-14? What was wrong with this? (cf. Leviticus 7:28-34) What is the attitude of these men towards God?
4. What else were Hophni and Phinehas doing in regards to the offerings according to verses 15-16? What was wrong with this?
5. Verse 17 gives us God’s perspective on what was happening. What does God call their actions in this verse? Why?

## **On the Other Hand... there is Samuel – 1 Samuel 2:18-21**

6. Scripture turns our attention away from the natural sons of the priest to his “adopted son,” Samuel. What was Samuel doing? (v. 18) Why the description “a boy clothed with a linen ephod”?
7. Hannah now had two reasons to desire a trip to Shiloh. What were they (v 19)? What sign of her love did she present Samuel each year?
8. What blessing did Eli pray over Elkanah and Hannah as they worshipped at the temple (v. 20)?
9. In what way did God show his pleasure and blessing in the life of Elkanah and Hannah (v. 21)? The verse ends with a note about Samuel. Is this part of the blessing? Explain.

## **A Helpless Father – 1 Samuel 2:22-26**

10. What do we learn about Eli in verse 22? Is he aware of what his sons are doing? What added sin are they participating in according to this verse?
11. Verses 23-24 make it clear that the reputation of these sons of Eli and what they are doing has spread far and wide, and Eli hears about his sons from the people. Whose reputation is sullied by their actions?
12. In verse 25 Eli tells his sons an important truth about sin. What is it?
13. How do Eli’s sons respond to the advice and scolding of their father (v. 25)? What do you make of the phrase, “for it was the will of the Lord to put them to death”?
14. Again the contrast between Samuel and Eli’s sons. How is Samuel progressing (cf. Luke 2:52)?

## **Sin has Consequences – 1 Samuel 2:27-36**

15. Who came to warn Eli about the consequences of his family's ways? (v. 27)  
Who does he speak for?
16. In verses 27-28 God reminds Eli of an important truth about his position as a priest. What is the message of these verses?
17. What are the crimes Eli is accused of according to verse 29?
18. According to verse 30 what promise had God made to Eli's father and family?  
Due to the actions of Eli's sons, what has changed?
19. According to verses 31-33 what will happen to the family line of Eli?
20. What will happen to Hophni and Phinehas? What does it mean "this will be a sign to you"? (v. 34)
21. With the destruction of Eli's family, who will represent the people before God, and God to the people (who will be their priest)? (cf. 35)
22. What does the future look like for the family of Eli (v. 36)?

### **Conclusion:**

What a privilege and blessing to be a priest before God. Pastors and Missionaries feel the same sense of privilege and blessing. However, with great privilege comes great responsibility. Eli's family were to represent God to the people, and convey God's standards and purposes to the people both in their words and in their actions. The actions of Hophni and Phinehas dishonoured not only the role of priest but the God they were to represent.

God has not given up on the corporate worship of His people, so He will raise up a new priest. He will come from a new family, because God is not restricted in His actions. Of course we see how God is raising up Samuel to be that priest.

But this is not the only time we see God making a change in the priestly line. For generations the priesthood would come from the tribe of Levi, but a day would come when that would be set aside. Instead, God would raise up a great High

Priest in the likeness of Melchizedek, the Priestly King Abraham met after rescuing Lot. Hebrews 7 explains how the better priesthood provided a better covenant. Who was the new priest, the new representative of God that would draw people to God and teach them the ways of God? It was Jesus.

God graciously chose Eli and his family to be priests. They were cared for and blessed by the law God gave to His people. But it was “conditional election.” When Eli’s family did not honour God in their actions, they lost their positions. There was no formal way to “de-priest” someone so the alternative was to see them killed. This is exactly what is predicted. One cannot help but see God extending a lifeline to this family, a chance for them to repent and seek forgiveness. But it never happens.

So, why did God record the deeds of this sinful family?