

# Eli – The Father Who Would Not Restrain His Sons

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*Master's Plan for Fatherhood*

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**Bible Text:** 1 Samuel 1-4

**Preached on:** Wednesday, March 26, 2014

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Good morning to you. I wish I had a warm cup of coffee to share with you and we could have a little warm fuzzy time together and encourage one another and give you a cheerful message like Deuteronomy 6 or Psalm 127 or Psalm 128 and just gather around the table with our wives and enjoy our time but the task this morning is not quite a warm cup of coffee. It's more like a trumpet in your ear while you're trying to sleep. It's a call of God to wake up and take notice. It's a time to fear God and tremble before him, that we will not make the mistake of the father that we're going to look at this morning. God help us not to make this mistake. Could it be that there's one sin, one mistake, one problem in parenting that we could make that could bring disaster on our family? Disaster on our church? And disaster on our nation? Could it be there is one problem? We could narrow it down to one problem? This is what we're going to look at this morning. This is what we're going to look at this morning and may God help us.

It's not often that I get a chance to preach through four chapters in the Bible in one sermon. In one month, we don't make it through four chapters but today, maybe six months, but today, we're going to try to work through four chapters. I've teased out that which is important for the message today. It doesn't mean that the rest isn't important, every word is important. That which we're comfortable with, we like to talk about, would be Hannah and her son, Samuel, and God answering her prayer and that's what we're most familiar with but today we're not talking about that, we're talking about Eli and his sons. Eli, the priest, and his sons.

With that, let's dive into the text. We'll work our way through. I'll make comment as I go about like we were sitting around the hearth at my household and I'm speaking to my family and at the end we'll make some practical applications. I can't promise we won't do that throughout as well, but we will. Let's do that.

Let's start with 1 Samuel 1:3. We find that the two sons of Eli were priests of the Lord, that's important to know. These were not just his sons but they were leaders in the church and I'm going to use New Testament terms to go with this because it brings practical application. They were leaders in the church.

Verse 9, “Now Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the LORD's temple.” This chair was where the priest would sit but it was also where the judges would sit. He would be there making spiritual judgments on matters of importance. It was a place of importance. He was a very important man. He had arisen to the top, he was the priest of priests and a judge of the people.

We have Hannah, who came with her husband, Elkanah, and his other wife, Peninnah. You know the story and Hannah is praying because she is barren with no children. Verse 10 she says, “In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD. And she made a vow, saying, 'O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.'” I actually didn't have this part in, I added it back because of Numbers 30 that we had. This is a vow she's making and her husband was present and he did not change the vow so the vow stayed in place. If you don't understand Numbers 30, we don't understand what took place here and we think, “Wait a minute, was she making the decision independently? They're going to bring their son and leave him at the temple, the tabernacle, with the priests. Is this what's going to happen?” You kind of get the wrong idea. Is this a good picture of parenting?

But here was a vow and a vow that was similar before. Barren women before her, Samson's mother as well was praying to the Lord desiring a son and made a vow similar and God gave her a son. Others, the prayer for Rebekah. Think about Elizabeth in the New Testament, a barren woman praying for a child and God used these special occasions to bring about a special child for a special purpose.

Verse 12, “As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, 'How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine.' 'Not so, my lord,' Hannah replied, 'I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman,’ a woman of Belial, a daughter of Belial. “I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.”

So, you have a priest who sees a lady praying earnestly and he thinks she's drunk. There are only one of two things that I can think of that could be taking place. One: there was a problem. This is the end of the time of the judges and there were problems but there was a problem and maybe drunk women came to the temple often and were praying. So, he recognized her and thought she was one of the many so he just was used to getting on the drunken women every day. Or he's not seen a woman praying earnestly before because women aren't coming to the temple and praying earnestly and he didn't recognize what she was doing. He had no clue and he presumed that she was drunk. This puts him a way worse light, doesn't it?

Then we go to 1 Samuel 2:11, “Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy ministered before the LORD under Eli the priest.” They left Samuel at the temple. “Eli’s sons were wicked men,” they were sons of Belial. This is what the Scriptures tell us.

Verse 12, “Eli’s sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the LORD.” They did not know the Lord. Yes, they’re priests and they’re wicked men. They’re priests and they do not know the Lord. This is a problem.

Verse 13, “Now it was the practice of the priests with the people that whenever anyone offered a sacrifice and while the meat was being boiled, the servant of the priest would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand. He would plunge it into the pan or kettle or caldron or pot, and the priest would take for himself whatever the fork brought up. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh.” When you read that last phrase, this is how they treated him, you get the idea that they’re not treating them right.

If we were to turn to Leviticus 7:31-33, we see that, “The priest shall burn the fat on the altar,” we’ll read about the fat more in a little bit, “but the breast belongs to Aaron and his sons. You are to give the right thigh of your fellowship offerings to the priest as a contribution. The son of Aaron who offers the blood and the fat of the fellowship offering,” which are to God, “shall have the right thigh as his share.” So, the breast and the right thigh were to go to the priest. The fat was supposed to be burned to the Lord. And what they were doing was more like a lottery in that they were putting a fork in and pulling out whatever they could get hoping they could get more and better and even worse than that. So, they’re doing that which is not lawful here but it gets worse: they were doing this to the Israelites.

Verse 15 says this, “But even before the fat was burned, the servant of the priest would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, ‘Give the priest some meat to roast; he won’t accept boiled meat from you, but only raw.’ If the man said to him, ‘Let the fat be burned up first,’ which was right, “and then take whatever you want,” which is not actually according to the law, “the servant would then answer, ‘No, hand it over now; if you don’t, I’ll take it by force.’” So, they were taking the fat which was the sacrifice that was to be offered to the Lord, then taking meat that was not rightfully theirs.

Leviticus 7:22 says, “The LORD said to Moses, ‘Say to the Israelites: “Do not eat any of the fat of cattle, sheep or goats. The fat of an animal found dead or torn by wild animals may be used for any other purpose, but you must not eat it. Anyone who eats the fat of an animal from which an offering by fire may be made to the LORD must be cut off from his people.’”” This is an issue of priests who were not upholding the law taking advantage of the people who were bringing sacrifices to the Lord and they were stealing and eating and we’ll see later, fattening themselves on the Lord’s offerings. This is wickedness. These were sons of Belial. Wickedness.

1 Samuel 2:17, “This sin of the young men was very great in the LORD’s sight, for they were treating the LORD’s offering with contempt.” And I keep leaving a little bit of the

other story in there because the Scripture goes back and forth. “But Samuel was ministering before the LORD - a boy wearing a linen ephod.”

Chapter 2:22, “Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.” So we just learn something else here: not only were they doing this to Israel, showing contempt for the Lord's offering, stealing and eating the Lord's offering, they were sleeping with the women who served at the entrance of the tent of meeting. We have adultery. Exodus 20:14, “You shall not commit adultery.” That's the expectation. Leviticus 20:10, “If a man commits adultery with another man's wife, with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.” Consequence if the expectation is not met.

Chapter 2:23, “So he said to them, 'Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours. No, my sons; it is not a good report that I hear spreading among the LORD's people.’” You get the sense here, even though we'll find out later that he knew about their sins, you get the sense that he didn't know, that he had his head in the sand. He was busy doing religious duties, doing something else great for the Lord and he did not understand what his sons were up to.

Last night we heard one of the men talk about the fathers not being absent. It was in Numbers 30, the father not being absent but another thought is the daughters were not absent. The daughters were not off somewhere else doing something else. They were with their fathers and they knew their fathers and their fathers knew them. Here, I wonder if Eli, he didn't know what was going on. But do you know what's going on with your children? Are you absent? Are they absent? Are you sending them off somewhere else and have no clue? Are they lost in a world of the internet and you don't know it? Do you have a clue? Are they corresponding with people and you don't know it?

You know, I've only received about 4-5 messages from my daughters this morning. I have full access to all of their emails. Their emails come to my phone. I read emails all day. I know when they're sent and who they're sent to. Before they send a message to someone else, I get a message that says, “CIS – Can I send?” and I read and say yes. You know, it works the other way too. My children have access to all my email accounts. My email accounts come to them. They know who I have contact with and who I speak with. It's good. My children are with me. They are with me. It's a fence that I build to protect myself from falling into sin. I walk with my children. They are an encouragement to their daddy. They speak to their daddy's heart. I would have nothing, my business would not run without my children. I wouldn't have one. I couldn't do it. It wouldn't work. They are with me. It's an area of protection, a guard.

You know, if we fall into sin and we repent and we do repent and we are sorry for our sin and we confess that to the Lord and he forgives us and we change nothing and it happens again and we repent and we confess our sin to the Lord and we're sincere and he forgives us and we change nothing? I have a friend who sinned, had an adulterous relationship with someone who worked in his office and he confessed and repented and was forgiven.

His wife forgave him and their marriage was restored and then it happened again and he confessed and he repented and he was sorry but he didn't change anything and if your helpmate is somebody else's wife at work and you're there all the time with her and she's serving you and she is working to make you successful, go figure. It's a den of temptation. Protect yourself. Guard yourself. If you sin, change something.

You know, it's my prayer this weekend, yes, we bring many sons to Christ but there is one son I want to bring to Christ, it's my main priority. It's my main priority. In comparison, forget the rest. That's not my heart but in comparison, forget the rest. If I can win one son to Christ, my one son and the rest of my children, my seven daughters, this is my goal in life. This is my purpose in life and in so doing, if I can win others to Christ as an outflow of that, inside out, it's inside out, so be it for the glory of God. But if I'm in the process of trying to win other souls to Christ and I lose the souls that God has given me within my household, I'm a failure and not qualified to even try to win other souls. We'll see that clearly in the Scripture.

I went back to our home town, several of us, and I drove down just one strip, business after business: adultery, adultery, adultery. Men who professed to know Christ, men who went to church with us in the early days, men we grew up with. Destructive. Destructive. You know what? It doesn't start with adultery, it starts with something small. We say no to something small and we start to accept something small. We think this is okay, this is not sin. We refuse to take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ and we start to compromise in little areas and they get bigger and bigger and bigger and then we're so controlled by sin, we start to think crazy thoughts and think that this is good and right and somehow we try to gloss over and purify our sin and think that this can work. But today, while you're sober, you step back and you think, "Where could the relationship lead that's good for anybody?" that's not a relationship with your wife.

Either way, let's know where our sons are, what our sons are doing, let's walk with our sons and if it means changing something drastically, let's do it. I was saved as a 17 year old by the grace of God. Within two days, my older sister was saved, within two weeks, my younger brother was saved, within two months, my father was saved. Two more months, my mother had rededicated her life from a childhood salvation experience that she had and was never churched. Six months later, my younger sister was saved and that was our whole household in a six month period. God, in his mercy, pointed my father to several things. I just read through a notebook that I have of notes of talks that he's given. He's a master outliner, you'll see that I'm not. This guy is. He reminds me of my dad. But his number one outline of just flipping through them was the Master's plan for the family, Deuteronomy 6. That was his favorite thing to talk about but God turned his heart toward his children and his children's heart towards their daddy and God began to teach him and I remember our family sitting and studying and listening to tapes in the days that we listened to tapes and reading books and listening to lectures all about families.

But God set our heart in that direction and as an 18 year old, I remember trying to determine the profession that I wanted to have because I wanted to walk with my children. I saw it as a problem in our society and I wanted to live in such a way that I

could spend time with them. There is no way in your mind you can comprehend how this can happen. If that's where you are, I've been there too. The situation I have is not perfect and if we can't do it in our lifetime, let's set up our sons in such a way that they can. Let's let that at least be our goal. We have a lot of work to get to that goal line. But let's walk with our sons and know our sons.

Verse 24 says, "No, my sons; it is not a good report that I hear spreading among the LORD's people." Was he afraid of what the people were saying? Is that where he gets his report? "Wait a minute, this is getting spread around. All the people are talking about it. This concerns me, sons." Is it an outward show? Saving face? Is it the fear of man?

Verse 25, "If a man sins against another man, God may mediate for him; but if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?" His sons, however, did not listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the LORD's will to put them to death." They were already that far gone. They didn't listen to their father's rebuke. We'll see that there's more to the sin of Eli as we work through the passage.

Verse 26 says, "And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with men." Now, you think about where he was, in the presence of all this going on, Eli is the head of where he is, Eli's sons are priests where the boy, Samuel, is but God is still working and he's working in a young man's life.

Chapter 2:27, "Now a man of God came to Eli." We don't know who the man is, people speculate. "And said to him, 'This is what the LORD says,'" it was a man with the Lord's message, the message is most important, "Did I not clearly reveal myself to your father's house when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh? I chose your father out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod in my presence. I also gave your father's house all the offerings made with fire by the Israelites." So, this was the house of Aaron and this was the sacrifices and what God was going to give to the priests, the offerings.

It says this in verse 29, "Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling?" You take more. You take something else. He's talking to Eli now so it's not just his sons. "Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?" It's Eli fattening himself on the choice parts.

"Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: "I promised that your house and your father's house would minister before me forever." But now the LORD declares: "Far be it from me! Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained." So, why do you honor your sons more than you honor me? You know, I've been there, you've been there. You know this. Last night, someone mentioned about the child pitching a fit over gum in the grocery store. It's easy to be afraid that the child will pitch a fit and so you give in to the child and do what the child wants. This is honoring the child and not honoring God. This is not what God requires. It's no different. I've had men tell me that they're afraid they were going to lose their sons. They knew that this was

right to change and do this, to follow this principle found in Scripture but they're afraid if they did that they would lose their sons. Well, they're already afraid they're losing their sons. You know, our answer is: no, I'm afraid you're going to lose your sons if you don't do this. You cannot go wrong by putting God's principles into practice. Do this, it's your only hope but don't fear your sons more than you fear God and honor them more than you honor God and don't obey God because of it.

Verse 30, "I promised that your house and your father's house would minister before me forever.' But now the LORD declares: 'Far be it from me!" So, it was the house of Aaron and it was Eliezer, Aaron's son who were the high priests for a number of years and they didn't do right. It was taken from them and given to Ithamar's house, which was Eli's lineage. So, now it's going to be taken from Eli and his descendants and it's not until Zadak, it goes back to Eliezer's house and it's at the time of the temple in Jerusalem and we'll probably see that again.

So, the result of this sin is great. You have two levels of things going on here. Another area I started to mention earlier, was that my father understood quickly the idea of jurisdictional authority, that God has instituted the family, he instituted the church, he instituted the government and each gave them, as Scott called it last night, a tool. The government bears the sword and doesn't bear the sword for nothing, it has its purposes and its rightful purposes. The home, the family, the father bears the rod and you have the instrument, the rod for correction and to train your children for discipline. Then the church has this tool of church discipline and we'll step through that at the end here too and it's just as important and it's just as much sin for the elders of a church and members of a church not to carry through with church discipline as it is a father not to use the rod in disciplining their children. It's equal. These are weighty things to use God's terms.

There are a lot of parallels. Well, here in this account of Eli and his sons, we have two things going on at once: we have the high priest and the priests, church leadership, who are in sin and there is church discipline that should take place. Again, I'm using New Testament terms. Church discipline should take place. We've already seen that they should be cut off and they should be put to death. It's what the law says. Expectation, the law was given. The consequences are given also in the law and what's missing is a consistent delivery. That's how you discipline a child. What's missing is a consistent delivery. So, everyone is doing what's right in their own eyes and we have total chaos in the church and we'll see where it leads.

Chapter 2:31, "The time is coming when I will cut short your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your family line." We have to think of Ephesians 6 and the Ten Commandments. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honor your father and mother for it is the first commandment with a promise that it may go well with you, that you may enjoy a long life." Your descendants will be cut off. There will not be an old man in your family line.

"And you will see distress in my dwelling. Although good will be done to Israel, in your family line there will never be an old man. Every one of you that I do not cut off from my

altar will be spared only to blind your eyes with tears and to grieve your heart, and all your descendants will die in the prime of life.” So, let's be broken-hearted watching everyone die young.

“And what happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign to you - they will both die on the same day.” It's going to be a sign to you, that all of this is going to take place. They will die.

Verse 35, “I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his house, and he will minister before my anointed one always.” This is a picture of the priest to come, Zadok, and the temple and glory days in Jerusalem but more importantly, Christ who is to come, the great high priest.

Verse 36, “Then everyone left in your family line will come and bow down before him for a piece of silver,” that's the smallest piece of money. They are wealthy priests now. The high priest, they're wealthy. They will bow down and beg for a small sum of money and listen to this, “and a crust of bread and plead, 'Appoint me to some priestly office so I can have food to eat.’” So, they go from the top back because of their contempt for the Lord's offering and stole from the people of Israel, stole from the Lord and ate his fat, to begging for crusts and half-pennys so that they'd have something to eat. This is God's judgment never to have an old man in your line. The priesthood gone to another line, taken away forever.

Chapter 3:1, “The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli.” This should be obvious, “In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.” We're going to skip down to verse 7, “Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. The LORD called Samuel a third time,” verse 8, it's already happened two times, you know how it goes. He went to Eli and Eli told him it wasn't him calling him, go back to bed. We could say old Eli wasn't very keen on hearing the Lord either and didn't know who it was or what was going on. But here he says, “Here I am; you called me. Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, 'Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, “Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place. The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Then Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.' And the LORD said to Samuel: 'See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle.’” That word “tingle” is like the sound of a sudden bolt of thunder, it's a bolt of lightning and a sound of thunder. When I read that, I thought you're in the turkey blind and all of a sudden the gun goes off next to you, someone has fired a shotgun and you weren't ready. It's this shock. Something is going to happen that will shock all the people.

“At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family - from beginning to end.” Remember, this is the Lord speaking to Samuel. Verse 13, “For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about.” Here's where we see that he knew about the sin, maybe it was after he heard from the people,



maybe he had not clue beforehand and then he heard but at least here he's judged because he knew about the sin. "His sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them." And if there is one key verse in the whole four chapters, this is it. This was the sin that caused all of this destruction that's been prophesied and what we'll see.

He failed to restrain his sons. He failed to restrain his sons. He knew about their sin. He rebuked them and they didn't listen but it wasn't enough. His rebuke wasn't enough. He didn't take action. To know and not take action is sin and sin that costs. He failed to restrain them. We'll come back to that. "Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli, 'The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.'"

In fear of running out of time, I'm going to move to chapter 4:2. There is a large part there at the end of 3 that, of course, Samuel tells Eli this and then it talks about Samuel and the word of God not falling to the ground and Samuel becomes known as a prophet.

"The Philistines deployed their forces to meet Israel, and as the battle spread, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand of them on the battlefield. When the soldiers returned to camp, the elders of Israel asked, 'Why did the LORD bring defeat upon us today before the Philistines?'" This is a good question. This is a good question. It's a question we ask often. You know, within our business, if all of a sudden things just slow down we don't believe this just happens by chance. It's not some business model that we're looking at graphs and trying to figure out what happened. We don't start there. We go, "Lord, is there something that I've done? Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and see if there be any wicked way in me. Lead me in the way everlasting. God, have mercy on me." I start there. And if I don't start there, my wife asks me, "Is everything okay?" Which is good. Then I go, "Lord, is there something else I'm supposed to do this week? Do you have something else for me? Let's find out what it is. We want to do it. If things slow down, then you're giving us extra time to do something else and we want to make wise use of our time." It's a good thing.

We need to ask these questions. "Wait a minute, why has defeat come upon us?" Which means they have no clue that their whole system of worship is debauched. Their high priest and priests deserve death and are under a curse and they don't have a clue. So, they do what most people do, they break the law of God and they're under the judgment of God and instead of repenting and turning back to God, they come up with another something else to do which is also another breaking of God's law and things get worse. Instead of repenting and backing back up, they keep working the wrong direction and come up with another great idea and try to solve a problem. My dad would always say and I know it's not original with him but: God fixes a fix to fix ya and if you fix the fix before he fixes ya, he'll fix another fix to fix ya? He's trying to fix ya and if you dodge it, do you want me to say that again? He fixes a fix to fix ya, that's what God's doing but if you fix the fix before he fixes ya, he'll fix another fix to fix ya. It makes sense, doesn't it? Alabama sense.

So, they do this: why did the Lord bring defeat upon us today before the Philistines? Here's their idea, "Let us bring the ark of the LORD's covenant from Shiloh, so that it

may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies.” So, they do something that is not lawfully right either. Let's take the ark and bring it out here to the battlefield. Inventions of man. Coming up with another great idea.

“So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim. And Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.” Now, if I was in battle, two people I would not want to be standing by is Hophni and Phinehas. I wouldn't want to be anywhere near them. They're not on my team.

“When the ark of the LORD's covenant came into the camp, all Israel raised such a great shout that the ground shook.” It sounds of a charismatic nature. Whoopee! Woohoo! Whatever. But they were cheering because the law of God had been broken and they thought something good was going to happen. They didn't get it, did they?

“Hearing the uproar, the Philistines asked, 'What's all this shouting in the Hebrew camp?' When they learned that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp, the Philistines were afraid. 'A god has come into the camp,' they said. 'We're in trouble! Nothing like this has happened before. Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? They are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the desert. Be strong, Philistines! Be men, or you will be subject to the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Be men, and fight!' So the Philistines fought, and the Israelites were defeated and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great; Israel lost thirty thousand foot soldiers.” So, it went from 4,000 to bringing out the ark and losing 30 more thousand so 34,000 we're talking.

I want to go back and compare this to battles and wars in our history and things that we know about but it's pretty devastating, 34,000 people. In one battle, 30,000 in one day. That's a slaughter.

Then worse, “The ark of God was captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died. That same day a Benjamite ran from the battle line and went to Shiloh, his clothes torn and dust on his head. When he arrived, there was Eli sitting on his chair by the side of the road, watching, because his heart feared for the ark of God.” His heart should have feared for the ark of God. He knew it wasn't right. “When the man entered the town and told what had happened, the whole town sent up a cry. Eli heard the outcry and asked, 'What is the meaning of this uproar?' The man hurried over to Eli, who was ninety-eight years old and whose eyes were set so that he could not see.” That's more than physical sight, isn't it. “He told Eli, 'I have just come from the battle line; I fled from it this very day.' Eli asked, 'What happened, my son?' The man who brought the news replied, 'Israel fled before the Philistines, and the army has suffered heavy losses. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured. When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell backward off his chair by the side of the gate. His neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man and heavy. He had led Israel forty years. His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant and near the time of delivery. When she heard the news that the ark of God had been captured and that her father-in-law

and her husband were dead, she went into labor and gave birth, but was overcome by her labor pains. As she was dying, the women attending her said, 'Don't despair; you have given birth to a son.' But she did not respond or pay any attention. She named the boy Ichabod, saying, 'The glory has departed from Israel' - because of the capture of the ark of God and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband. She said, 'The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.'"

So, there you have it. How does the sin of one man bring destruction on his family for generations? Bring destruction on the priesthood? Destruction on the town? The ark when it was recaptured and never came back to Shiloh. The priesthood never fell within Eli's household again. Destruction on all of these things because why? He failed to restrain his sons. He knew of their sins, he rebuked them but he failed to restrain his sons and it goes to Ichabod, "the glory has departed." Has the glory departed? What about us? What about our nation? What about our churches? What about our families? You see the problem, fathers failing to restrain their sons. You see the problem, church members failing to bring church discipline against those that are in sin. Ichabod. Ichabod, the glory has departed.

I have a few more minutes. Let me say a few things about restraining our sons. Our goal in child discipline and church discipline is restoration, is restoring a sinner. It's always restoring a sinner. To bring about repentance, forgiveness and restoration and ultimately with our children, the people we're trying to restore, it's their heart. It's a heart issue, that's what we're targeting.

These are from my father: three "Cs" of child discipline. 1. Communicate expectations. The word "communicate" is "to convey with understanding." You have different children and different ages. It means something different. The goal is the same, the standard is the same, it's God's standard but how we communicate that and help our children reach that may be different. It's not throwing a rock at somebody, it's throwing a pass in such a manner that they can catch it. There's a big difference. We convey with understanding but let them know our expectations.

The second "C" is also communicate. It's an important part of being a father, communication. Communicate consequences. These are the consequences if the expectations aren't met. It's got to be clear. Then all of a sudden, the discipline process becomes objective and not subjective. The child isn't wondering what's going on and when. It's not a matter of they don't know the expectations and are waiting for someone to whack them. Have you ever worked for somebody that did that? You don't really know what you're supposed to do, you're just trying to work, trying to do what you think you're supposed to do and they just keep getting on to you and that's how you learn what they want you to do? It's real frustrating. At any age, for anybody. But you can't father like that. That's exasperating your children.

Communicate, convey with understanding the expectations and the consequences if they're not made. Then this is it, this is the failure of Eli, the third "C": consistent delivery. Consistent delivery. Our prayer for our children when they were young was,

“God, help us catch them every time they sin.” Every time. But it's objective at that point. The child chooses to be disciplined. They understand, they know and they choose.

This is also from my father's notes: three things to teach a child that wants to listen. When you teach a child to listen, it's they hear your voice – now, you don't want to interrupt them when they're in the middle of something. We use something we learned years ago with the five minute rule: in five minutes, we're going to meet in the living room and we're going to do this or whatever. But, in general, any time they hear their father's voice, they stop what they're doing and they look at you and they look with intent. They look at you and they listen. That's what listening is. They stop and look at you and they listen and I can hear my daddy say this a thousand times, they listen with the intent to obey. “Yes, Lord, your servant is listening.” That's what Samuel said. They're listening with intent to obey.

So, you want to teach your children to listen, you want to teach your children to obey and you also want to teach them to honor. We did Ephesians 6 already but this obey is the action and the honor is the attitude. This obedience should be the first time obedience. This is our standard. This is God's standard and anything else is disobedience. It should be immediate. Delayed obedience is disobedience. It echoes. I'm going to keep saying “my father” over and over. It echoes from my father and I hope it echoes to my children and it echoes to my grandchildren that anything else is less than the standard. This honor is the attitude.

I'm going to say this one last thing, I think. Ah, maybe a few more things. Childishness versus foolishness. The Proverbs make a distinction between the two. Childishness is irresponsibility of a child. They make mistakes. They're honest mistakes, they're children. This should be handled real different than foolishness. Foolishness is this: it's the heart of the child that says no. They understand and they look at you and they say no. Now, they may be smarter than that. That's rebellion. It's open rebellion and this deserves the chastisement or the rod that we talked about last night. Every time, that's what it deserves.

This “no” can come and this is where it gets difficult, it can come in the message of why and there are different whys but it could come in the message of why or it could be what's called passive rebellion. They say, “Yes, sir,” and they smile and they go and do something else that's good but not what you asked them to do. That's real sly.

I was going to say this, the obedience and the honor, I'm going to back up. The honor is the attitude. In our family with the little children, we use the word happy spirit. You're going to obey and you're going to obey with a happy spirit. And if you obey and not with a happy spirit, you're still disciplined. The two have to go together and the obedience without the happy spirit is not acceptable. You're not going to poke your lip out and stomp and obey daddy.

The discipline process within the church is this: there are four steps. You see a brother in sin, Matthew 18:15-17, I'm not going to read it. See a brother in sin, you go to that

brother and if the brother repents, you win the brother over, you've restored, you win a brother. If he doesn't you take 1-2 others so you have 2-3 witnesses and hopefully you win the brother over that way. If not, then you bring it before the church and hopefully before the elders of the church, you win the brother over. It's restoration, that's what we're after. Not punishment. We're not trying to make a scene. Then if not, it's excommunication, treat him as a tax collector or sinner.

This is what we do and the purpose is not out of spite or being mean, it's to restore the brother. This is why we discipline our children, it's to restore them to a right relationship with their father. It's important that we clear their conscience because they know they're guilty. They come to us and repent and cry and confess and if we don't use the rod when we're supposed to, we're doing them a disservice. We've taught them cheap repentance. Same thing with church discipline, we've got to care through the process.

You know, in the case of Eli and his sons, you had the church rulers and discipline issues so it's a little different. 1 Timothy 5:19-20 says, "Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses." So, it's not even entertained at the church level unless there are 2-3 witnesses. "Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly," so it's different there too, they are rebuked publicly, "so that the others may take warning." There is another reason to rebuke publicly is this: if an elder is in sin and over the issue, say they leave the church or maybe they're removed. They leave the church or are removed from the church and it's not brought publicly, half the church will think that he was mistreated and half the church will think that he was treated right and you're going to have a split. You're going to have a split. It has to be public. The other thing that will take place, that elder will go to another church and just step right in and the next thing you know, they're preaching somewhere else. It's important that all the brothers know, that everyone knows. And it's not to be mean but it's to restore the brother, to purify the church.

In the discipline process, I wanted to go and I can't, I wanted to go to Titus 1:6 and I wanted to go to 1 Timothy 3:4 and look at the qualifications of an elder. Here's the Ichabod. When we have elders who are not disciplining their sons, elders that are not restraining their sons and churches put up with it, you're talking about qualifications of elders, a husband of one wife which is a moral issue, a one woman man. Phinehas and Hophni broke this. Then you have the case where Eli was not managing his household well. You have two cases, we could get into that but we won't. But this standard must be upheld. The only reason I can think that it's not primarily in America is because so many of the people in the churches, their sons are in rebellion and they feel okay because the preacher's son is in rebellion. What a terrible thing. The preacher's kids have this bad rap and it's okay and acceptable. No, if that's the case, the preacher is not qualified to preach anymore. We've got it backwards. We need to get that straight or Ichabod, the glory has departed.

You know, the question always is when there's a leader that's removed is: when can he go back? Do you know what the answer is? You don't know. No one knows because the discipline process it's not the time to ask that question. We're looking for repentance and

we're looking for restoration. We're trying to restore a marriage, trying to restore a family and then when the person is qualified again, which is not because, "Oh, I repent. I confess." And it may be that they eat crusts and beg for half-pennys first. That may be what happens.

Let me say one last thing and then I'll close. What if a son who is out of the elder's household is in rebellion? It says he must be believing or faithful. Some people would try to say that's a believer, some people will say it's not a believer but just faithful and somebody will say, "When he's out of the household, it's not my house anymore, it's somebody else's." So, you have a son in rebellion that's not in your household, so it's not your household? What are you saying? What if it's a second son or a third or a fourth? Then we have a pattern. A son is getting out of your household and showing up to be rebellious, debauched, wild living in disobedience. What is that? You don't have to answer that question for me. Let me tell you what I think: my commitment is this, if my son is in rebellion at any age and there's a problem and I have a household of children, I don't have time to preach. You get it? I don't have time to preach. I have another duty and it's to pursue my son, that my son would follow after the Lord. That's it. It's not a matter of whether I'm qualified or not. I tell my children, "I will follow you to the ends of the earth to win you to Christ." Nothing else matters. Nothing.

The discipline process is a purifying process. It's a purifying process for those that are under discipline and it's a purifying process for those that are administering the discipline. It's time for everyone to fear God. There is no sin that is hidden. Be sure your sin will find you out. And it's a purifying process for everyone who watches the process. God have mercy on me, a sinner. May we find favor in God's eyes through his Son in true forgiveness, that we would show true repentance, find true forgiveness and we would be restored to right relationships with our heavenly Father and with our earthly father as well.

Let's pray.

*Father in heaven, I thank you for your goodness and your love. I thank you for your example as a Father, a Father who loves us, a Father who disciplines us, a Father who cares for us, a Father who gives us principles to follow in our households, principles to follow in our churches. God, that you would be glorified, that you would bring your sons to repentance, to forgiveness and to restoration. In Jesus' name. Amen.*