

## False Priests: Hophni and Phinehas

As I've noted before, the book of Judges tends to focus on the roughly 150 years out of about 450 years overall of the downside of Israel at that time. It also provides a backdrop for the books of Ruth and 1 and 2 Samuel and it is a dark background highlighting anarchy and lawlessness. This degeneracy had infiltrated every part of Israeli society (though of course not every *person*), including the *priesthood*. Almost as if God is in a hurry to broach the subject, we learn of two of Eli's sons; Hophni and Phinehas.

*Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; **they did not know the Lord** (1 Samuel 2:12 NKJV; emphasis added)*

Imagine being in the service to the Lord and not actually *knowing* God at all? How sad is that? Is that happening today? You bet it is, unfortunately.

Eli was a priest who lived during the time of the Judges. You may recall his initial meeting with Hannah who eventually gives birth to a son, Samuel, whom she had promised to "loan" to the Lord (1 Samuel 1). Samuel eventually became a priest and judge in Israel. He learned the sacrificial system and priestly responsibilities under Eli. Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas also learned priestly responsibilities from him but turned out much differently from Samuel.

Verses 13-16 of 1 Samuel 2 inform us that Hophni and Phinehas, two priestly heretics, decided they would withhold the best from God when people brought their animals to sacrifice. They would send a servant to take as much good flesh as a large cooking fork could hold. If the person offering the sacrifices objected, the servant would become menacing, promising to take the meat by *force* if necessary. Verse 17 sums up how God viewed their actions.

*Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord.*

They were actually *stealing* from God what was due only Him! As terrible as this was, God was not done informing us of other sins that these two priests in name only committed. 1 Samuel 2:22 tells us more of the sordid tale.

Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

At this point, father Eli tries to be a *parent* in verses 23 through 25.

*Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the Lord's people transgress. If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?*

The plain fact of the matter is that these two sons of Eli should not have been in the priesthood at all. Eli should've removed them long before this point. The result was their arrogance and hateful attitude toward God, which ultimately reflected on Eli.

The Pharisees of Jesus' day were much like Hophni and Phinehas. Jesus called out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees for which their hatred of Him grew. Jesus was telling the truth, but they didn't want to hear that because they were very important people who received accolades and honor from the average person in Israel. Jesus apparently was not aware of just how important the Pharisees were to Israel. It is clear, the Pharisees were not interested in being true to God nor in truthfully representing God before Israel and the world. Again, are we seeing this happening within Christendom today? Yes.

Paul also spent time calling false teachers and troublemakers out by name in a few of his epistles. There was and remains a need for this within the Church today in light of our circumstances and growing apathy and heresy within Christendom as a whole. There are too many men and women leaders today who poke God in the eye with their false teachings and little is done. These people are routinely held up as being amazing Bible teachers. It's despicable. If Paul were with us today, many would be "hushing" him up if he were to call some of these teachers on the carpet. I will include some of these teachers in an upcoming article to continue my previous series on [False Prophets and Teachers](#).

The sinful tragedy of Hophni and Phinehas as well as Eli cannot be overemphasized here. Juxtaposed against the lawlessness of Hophni and Phinehas and relative indifference of Eli, is Samuel himself who, "*grew in stature, and in favor both with the Lord and men* (v 26).

Starting in verse 27 of 1 Samuel 2, God speaks **to** Eli through an unnamed prophet. That prophet pronounces God's judgment, "*Behold, the days are coming that I will cut off your arm and the arm of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house*" (v 31). This prophecy was later emphasized to Eli through the young Samuel (chapter 3) before it occurred.

*Now this shall be a sign to you that will come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall die, both of them. Then I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in My heart and in My mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before My anointed forever. (vv 34-35)*

In one day, both Hophni and Phinehas died as did Eli. God had *begun* ending the line of Eli by directly killing his two sons and then Eli himself fell backwards in his chair after hearing the news of his sons' deaths and died as well (cf. 1 Samuel 4). It was finished by Saul when the priests of Nob were slaughtered though one priest, Abiathar, escaped to David (1 Samuel 22). Abiathar eventually died of course, and thus Eli's lineage came to an absolute end.

What might have been different had Eli had the backbone train up his sons properly or to remove them from the priesthood when he saw their ongoing sin? This same truth *should* apply to many within Christendom today, yet not only do they continue their blasphemous teachings, but they are often applauded by the people in the pews. Why is that? Because of a complete dearth of

discernment today. Emotional virtue has made its way into Christendom. If it "feelz" good, then it must *be* good, right? Wrong.

We hear a great deal today from Christians who argue we should never "judge." We should always offer "grace and love." Since we are all sinners, we should never be in the position of calling out sin in anyone else. I've read too many times when some Christian leader falls through sin, many Christians come to the fore with "*he who is without sin cast the first stone*" and other snippets of Scripture, usually ripped out of context. I'm going to spend some time in at least one upcoming article dealing with the subject of *judging* (here's [an article](#) I wrote a few years ago). But in short, if God meant that we should never with humility correct others in the Church, if we should never speak out against the sin that others are willfully involved in, then I have to wonder why we have other portions of the NT that expressly tell us to do exactly that? That sin could involve sexual liaisons, pilfering from the church, teaching heresy or something else. It cannot be allowed to go unchecked.

The word today is "*grace*" as though this means that Christians are to accept everything including sin and heresy without ever offering a word of chastisement or biblical correction. Why are we focused so much on grace to the exclusion of anything else? Have these Christians read the book of Galatians as merely one example?

It's remarkable how often I read of Christians who rise to defend fallen Christian leaders by playing the "he who is without sin" card. One person recently stated she "understood" Ravi's "sexual addiction" because she was a recovering heroin addict herself. I don't see how the two equate. On one hand, heroin, a psychotropic chemical, can and does alter the brain patterns resulting in a physical addiction that causes the brain to *need* more heroin. Alcoholism is similar where the brain comes to *need* alcohol because it cannot survive without it due to chemical changes that have occurred. If a seasoned alcoholic goes without alcohol for 7-10 days, the DTs (Delirium Tremens) will kick in and could actually *kill* that person if they do not get either more alcohol or medical treatment to overcome.

A sexual addict? I have no idea what that is except to say that it is someone who is *hooked* on sex/pornography because of the fact that they deliberately *focus* on it too much until it becomes a habitual preoccupation. Just as Ravi did, these "addicts" tend to design their lives to fulfill their lusts. They also lie often to cover their tracks. There is no chemical change in the brain because someone is addicted to sex, as far as I'm aware. They could stop it if they chose by *fleeing* from it, leaning on God to empower them to do so. But modern psychology has simply given men and women another excuse to sin by claiming there is such a thing as "sexual addiction," thereby removing the responsibility from the person.

The Church has to do better. We need to do as Paul has stated. We should "mark and avoid" all those who preach a different gospel; who traffic in lies and who heap sin upon sin and eventual ruin on their lives.

*Now I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who create divisions and obstacles that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Turn away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites.*

*By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. (Romans 16:17-18)*

Today, it's "*Hey, whoever is without sin should cast the first stone*" or "*grace, grace, grace.*" The truth? We should *not* hate others. We should *not* delight in pointing out failures either in ourselves or others, but it must be done if we are to be a building unto God that clearly seeks His will and for His glory. The question is how much do we *love* God and how much do we *love* Self?

Too many today enter into ministry with their own agendas, in order to feed their own appetites. In fact too many women in leadership positions teach both men and women and many of these are from the Southern Baptist Convention, which seems to increase in heresy weekly. It is discouraging what I'm seeing taking place. Very discouraging.

Today's Christendom has become the Laodicean Church. We are weak, ineffective and heretical. Yet we appear proud of it, unwilling to rock the boat and root out error. The Church of Laodicea lacked sound teaching. They could not see truth nor did they miss it. They felt "blessed" because they were rich. Like too many Christians today who have become enamored with their own "blessedness," they fail to understand God's nearing judgment. They smile as the hurricane approaches, completely oblivious. Those who offer rebuttals to error are seen as "trouble makers" and panned.

It is time for those who love the Lord to stand up and reject the spirit of Babylon that has seriously infected Christendom today. I don't believe there remains a reasonable excuse to remain in a church where dysfunctional leaders clearly lack discernment. I realize it is a difficult thing for many Christians to consider leaving a church. But if truth and discernment is lacking what choice is there? Better to fellowship with just several committed Christians than be involved in a body of people who cannot see the problems in their midst and think everything is fine.