

“Given Over to Sin”
1 Samuel 2:22-25
(Preached at Trinity, May 15, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **1 Samuel 1:3** we were given the names of two of the priests responsible for receiving Elkanah's annual sacrifice, Hophni and Phinehas.
 - A. They were the sons of Eli. Eli was both the high priest and he also served as one of Israel's final judges for 40 years.
1 Samuel 1:3 NAU - "And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests to the LORD there."
 - B. We aren't given any biographical information on Hophni and Phinehas. We know their age would have been between 30-50.
Numbers 4:23 NAU - "from thirty years and upward to fifty years old, you shall number them; all who enter to perform the service to do the work in the tent of meeting."
 - C. These men had been raised around the Tabernacle. The priesthood was a part of their lives from the earliest days of their lives. They had watched the service of their father. And yet they had no regard for the holy things of God. They are identified as worthless men—literally the sons of Belial.
1 Samuel 2:12 NAU - "Now the sons of Eli were worthless men"
2. What a blessing to be raised under the privilege of the priesthood. The Levites were highly blessed to be involved in the administration of the Holy.
1 Chronicles 23:28 NAU - " For their office is to assist the sons of Aaron with the service of the house of the LORD, in the courts and in the chambers and in the purifying of all holy things, even the work of the service of the house of God,"
 - a. To God's people there was no greater blessing than to enter the House of the Lord. David declared:
Psalms 27:4 NAU - "One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD And to meditate in His temple."
 - b. What a blessing to be born into a Christian home. To be raised with Christ held high and the church with a central place. Millions of children have never known this blessing.
 - c. For these wicked sons of Eli being raised in such an environment was a small thing. They held no sense of awe for that which is holy. They used their office to fill their own selfish lusts. They abused both the sacrifice and those who brought it. We read in **Verse 17**: "Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for the men despised the offering of the LORD."
3. How many countless times had they been corrected by their father. How many opportunities were they given to repent? And yet, they continued in their sin. God's mercy is not to be undervalued. Nor is it to be toyed with.

4. As we come to **Verse 25** we have to read it carefully.
1 Samuel 2:25 NAU - "But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the LORD desired to put them to death."
 - a. We naturally want to read it "the sons of Eli would not listen to the voice of their father and consequently God decided to put them to death."
 - b. But instead it says Eli's sons did not listen *BECAUSE* God had decided to put them to death. Hophni and Phinehas' resistance to their father was the *result* of God's judgment.
5. Their hearts became more and more hardened so that they finally became beyond repentance. It is a terrifying thing that a man can continue defying God and finally be given over to his sin.
6. What we find here is an example of God's judicial hardening; of Divine reprobation. Reprobation simply means to abandon.
 - A. There is an eternal aspect of reprobation. God looked upon the fallen race of humanity and chose or elected a multitude unto salvation. The rest were left to perish in their sin. The reprobate receive justice while the elect receive mercy. None are treated unjustly or unfairly.
 - B. There is also a temporal aspect of reprobation. There is a genuine offer of the Gospel to all men. All are commanded to repent and follow Christ. Continued rebellion against God results in a continuing hardening towards God. This is merely a reflection of God's eternal reprobation.
 - C. We find Hophni and Phinehas had hardened their hearts against the warnings of God so long that God gave them over to final condemnation. We find here the reprobation of a sinner. God abandons them to their sin.
7. W. G. Blaikie of the Church of Scotland in the 19th century wrote:
 "Hophni and Phinehas experienced the fate of men who deliberately sin against the light, who love their lusts so well that nothing will induce them to fight against them; they were so hardened that repentance became impossible, and it was necessary for them to undergo the full retribution of their wickedness¹"
- I. We find examples abounding in Scripture
 1. In the days of the Patriarchs the people of Canaan were exceedingly wicked.
 - a. They had enjoyed living in this land flowing with milk and honey and yet they did not glorify God for it. Instead they praised and worshipped their idols.
 - b. God granted them over 400 years to repent. God revealed this to Abraham. **Genesis 15:13-16 NAU** - "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. ¹⁴ "But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. ¹⁵ "As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ "Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete."

¹ Davis, D. R. (2000). *1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart* (p. 34). Scotland: Christian Focus Publications.

- c. They came under God's curse – utterly abandoned by God.
Joshua 11:18-20 NAU - "Joshua waged war a long time with all these kings. ¹⁹ There was not a city which made peace with the sons of Israel except the Hivites living in Gibeon; they took them all in battle. ²⁰ For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, to meet Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses."
2. We can also see this with Pharaoh in Egypt. He continued to harden his heart against the threatening of God. Finally, God turned his heart to stone so that he could not repent. As we persist in hardening our heart God then hardens it.
Romans 9:17-18 NAS - "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth." ¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires."
- a. Pharaoh hardened his heart
Exodus 8:32 NAS - "But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and he did not let the people go."
- b. But we also read that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. We might say Pharaoh persisted in hardness as the result of God's hardening.
Exodus 10:1 NAS - "Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants"
3. We also see this with the hardness of the people during the ministry of Jesus
John 12:37-40 NAS - "But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him; ³⁸ that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, "LORD, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" ³⁹ For this cause they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, ⁴⁰ "He has blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart; lest they see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them."
4. Paul spoke of this judicial hardening
2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 NAU - "For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, ¹² in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness."
- II. There are some things which we need to understand about this doctrine of reprobation
- A. This doctrine does not teach that God purposed to take innocent creatures and make them wicked
1. God didn't take righteous Hophni and Phinehas and turn their hearts against their father.
- a. They had long persisted in their sin and they brought God's judgment down upon them.
1 Samuel 3:13 NAU - "For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them."

- b. God brought judgment upon their continued refusal to repent. God confirmed them in the way they wanted to go and abandoned them so they *could not* repent.
In Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, the Man in the Iron Cage told Christian, "I have so hardened by heart, that I cannot repent."
 - c. God's wrath isn't something reserved only for the future but is also revealed today.
 - 2. We have to remember; God did not create sinful creatures in order to destroy them. He created righteous men in order to bless them.
Sin has brought all manner of misery upon men
 - 3. As a token of God's mercy God restrains the sinfulness of the human heart. No man is as sinful as he is capable and no man's sin reflects the full capacity of his corruption.
This should terrify every lost man. If God abandons a man in his sin he can plunge into all manner of depravity.
- B. God's offer of mercy and grace extends to all men but He will not endure forever.
 - 1. God commands all men everywhere to repent.
 - 2. God patiently endures with sinful men giving ample opportunity to repent. God takes no pleasure in the condemnation of the wicked.
Ezekiel 33:11 NAU - "As I live!" declares the Lord GOD, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?"
But the longer we pursue our sinful lusts the harder our hearts become. The most terrifying thing is for a man to finally be given over to his sin.
 - 3. When we will not worship God He will give us over to the lusts of our sinful heart.
Romans 1:28 NAU - "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,"
 - 4. Sin always grows and increases. It captivates our hearts more and more.
 - a. The Bible compares it to leaven or yeast. As men continue in their rejection of God God gives them over to reprobation.
 - b. It is usually a gradual progression. When men will not have God He gives them over to their idols. He abandons them to their sin.
- C. God gives men up as an expression of His judgment.
 - 1. In other words, Hophni and Phinehas increased in sin not by the mere permission of God but as an act of His divine judgment.
1 Samuel 2:25 NAU - "But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the LORD desired to put them to death."
Luther – "When God deals with transgressors according to His stern justice, He permits the perverse sinner to break His commandments all the more viciously in order that He might punish him the more severely."
 - 2. This is what we mean by "judicial hardening." It is the just righteous condemnation of God

3. God commands obedience of all men. He commands that all men turn from their sins and follow Him.
When we refuse He pulls back His hand of restraining grace.
 - a. The human heart is capable of all manner of sin
 - b. All we have to do is examine history – Look at the wicked cruelty we are capable of. Look at the crucifixion – the scourging.
 - c. God gives us over to our base nature
Romans 1:21 NAU - "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened."
4. Jesus said even the small amount of understanding they have is removed
Matthew 13:12-13 NAU - "For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. ¹³ "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand."
5. It is testimony to the present wrath of God upon sinners

III. What are the results of this hardening?

- A. The sinner falls more and more in love with their physical appetites be it food, sex, slumber, material things.
 1. The appetites and lusts of Hophni and Phinehas could not be satisfied. This is what Paul meant when he said they become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.
 2. In their quest for satisfying these physical appetites they have no room for God.
 4. The 1689 Baptist Confession –
“As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as the righteous judge, for former sin doth blind and harden; from them he not only withholdeth his grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understanding, and wrought in their hearts; but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth shame to such objects as their corruption makes occasion of sin; and withal, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, under those means which God useth for the softening of others.”
- B. The hardened man will not seek Christ.
 1. We must never forget the balance between God’s sovereignty and human responsibility.
 2. Salvation is God’s work. But every man is commanded to turn from his sin and trust Christ. No one can blame God for their condemnation. Hophni and Phinehas are in hell, yet they cannot blame God.

Conclusion:

1. The person who continues in sin becomes more and more hardened. Delay is deadly. There is no reason to delay. Turn today, turn now. If you are not following Him fully turn today without delay.
- 2.. The Bible commands that our only hope of repentance is to turn to Him today.
Hebrews 3:15 NAS - "Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me."