

## **Eli's Passive Parenting and His Perverted Progeny (1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-25)**

### **Eli's Wicked Sons (v.12-17, 22)**

- The Spirit of the LORD submits the resume of Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: they were "worthless men."
- The Hebrew means "sons of Belial" or "agents of destruction."
- The feminine form is used in 1:16 when Hannah asked Eli not to consider her a "worthless woman." The irony is that as Eli is passing judgment on Hannah for being worthless, his own sons fit that very description.
- Eli's sons were marked by two prevailing vices; greed and lechery.

### Greed: (v.13-17)

- The priests who served at God's house were to receive portions from the sacrifices that were offered.
- The law specified which portions were reserved for the priests, depending on the type of animal and sacrifice offered.
- According to priestly legislation by the Pentateuch, the clergy were to receive the breast and the right thigh of the sacrificed animal (Leviticus 7:28-36), while they were to receive the shoulder, two cheeks and stomach of any sacrificial ox or sheep (Deuteronomy 18:3).
- They demanded their own form of "potluck." They would send their servants to skewer meat from the family pots. The boiling meat would have been reserved for the family, yet Eli's sons took meat other than what was prescribed by the Torah.
- Not only did they stab at whatever portions they wanted, but they also took of the fat portions, which were reserved for the LORD (Leviticus 7:22-25, 31).

They demanded the fat portions and if the worshipper did not give it to them, they threatened to use force. The devout Israelites who brought their sacrifices witnessed sacrilegious attitude and contempt for the LORD. Beyond that, they violated the conscience of Israelites who came to Shiloh for worship with a true heart.

### Lechery (v.22)

- The sons of Eli had sex with the women who were serving at the tent of meeting. These may have been devout women who would clean and address the needs of the tabernacle. They should have been treated with the utmost dignity, respect, and chastity. The wicked sons of Eli are treating them like temple prostitutes.

- Many of these women would have been young. They would have believed that Shiloh was a "gate to heaven." After their time in Shiloh, they are now thinking it is a "gate to hell."

The greed of Eli's sons preyed on worthy men who brought their sacrifices in obedience and worship to the LORD and their lechery seduced the very women who were serving at the tent of meeting.

### **2. Fathers, Learn from Eli (v.23-24)**

- There is no description given during the times of Judges as horrific as the description of the depravity of Eli's sons.
- Eli's judgment on Hannah provides us information not only about what happened at these feasts, but also on him as the supposed spiritual leader.
- Notice his "conversation." Eli never rebukes his sons. He acknowledges the poor report (v.24) but does nothing more when he has the authority to do so. He did not even have a "talk." He made an observation about what others were saying and noted "it is not good."
- Eli should have removed them from office immediately after the reports came in. He never did. His response provides insight as a parent.
- Eli was a passive parent who allowed his children to govern and run the family. He may have made threats at best, but never followed through. He was "all bark and no bite." He set his children up for failure by abdicating his parental God-ordained authority to his sons. Eli would rather disgrace God than his sons. His sons knew that there would be no consequences for their behavior. Parents dishonor themselves when they do not follow through with discipline. Eli conditioned his two sons to believe that dishonor towards him as a father, and also to the LORD, would have no consequences.
- Eli spared the rod many times and ruined his children (Proverbs 13:24).

### **3. Repent Before it is Too Late (v.25)**

- Eli's sons did not respond to Eli's words. Why? "It was the will of the LORD to put them to death." Their depravity had self-imploded.
- While Eli was not responsible for the actions of his sons, he did not do everything he could to foster genuine honor for him as their father and the LORD as their God.
- God determined to put them to death before Eli's conversation. Eli did not know that his conversation would prove to be ineffective.
- Eli's sons lived an unrepentant life of habitual perversion, greed, lust and selfishness. Eventually, the LORD handed them over to themselves. Their conscience was hardened, and they were unresponsive to the promptings of grace. God removed His hand of mercy and had decided to kill them.

- There was one last offering, one last incident at the entrance of the tabernacle and one last conviction. Repent of your sin while you are still sensitive. Call on the LORD to forgive you and give you a clean heart.

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