

Broomfield



# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MINISTRY OF THE WORD

---

Volume 4 Issue 25

June 19, 2005

## Compromised Worship

### *Apostasy and Its Attributes, Part 5*

A study of economics reveals a variety of financial systems by which societies have functioned. For example there are cash based societies, service based societies, and barter societies. In each of the cultures a worker's pay takes on a different form. For example, in one culture the plumber might be paid in hard currency such as gold. In another culture the same plumber might be paid with fiat money. Some cultures might pay the plumber in chickens. And yet in still another society, he could be paid in a service being rendered to him — like his lawn being cut. Truly, payment for services rendered — one's wage — can take a variety of different forms. This is why when we read Romans 6:23, we must realize that this verse can imply many things, “For the wages of sin is death.”

According to this verse, when a person sins, he can expect by way of a wage the payment of death. Yet as I just referenced, this payment can take on a variety of different forms. In fact, the passage at which we are looking gives us a fourfold description of the wages of sin — specifically the wages of unrepentant sin in the life of the child of God.

We have been looking at Eli, a man who, unlike his sons, loved the Lord AND his sin. And so as a result of sowing unto a lifetime of spiritual compromise, seeking the lusts of the flesh, and mediocrity in his faith we read of the consequences — the wages — of his apostate living.

Thus far we have seen two consequences. The first was the loss of personal privilege in the kingdom of God. Eli did not lose his salvation because of his love of self and sin, rather he lost the privilege of serving as a priest.

This loss of privilege led to the second consequence: Compromise in our children's walk with God. This is such a horrific thought — and yet one which Eli's life witnessed to. If we live satisfied with our sin, at some point, our children will be the ones who foot the bill!

As we pick up where we left off, we will look at two more consequences of apostasy in our walks with Christ the third of which is compromised worship.

1 Samuel 2:32, “**And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation**, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever.”

With this God ups the ante as He shows the progressively bad consequences of Eli's sin. It is one thing to have lost privileges in the Kingdom of God, and it is still another to know that our rebellion has hurt our children.<sup>1</sup> But here we read that Eli's spiritual lethargy also resulted in the compromise of God's worship — or as the text reads, “my habitation<sup>2</sup>,” referencing the temple and its worship in Shiloh. Notice the text.

1 Samuel 2:32, “**And thou shalt see<sup>3</sup> an enemy<sup>4</sup> in my habitation**, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever.”

## Claustrophobia

The word rendered *enemy* here speaks of that which is narrow or confining. Many have felt claustrophobic and the panic that comes from being in a tight or confined space. For example, when I was a child, my older brothers used to love to pin me down and cover my head with their body. I'll never forget the panic and terror that I felt when they did this.

Well, that's the idea behind this term. It speaks of the horror that is aroused from an emotionally and/or a spiritually tight place. For example, in Jeremiah 4:31 it references the struggle and pain that a woman encounters when bearing her first child. In Jeremiah 6:24, it refers to the terror that a woman might experience at the approach of a raping army. In Jeremiah 30:7, it speaks of the severe punishment that Judah would experience on account of violating the covenant<sup>5</sup>

Now this “horror” or “distress” in which the worship of God would be placed is something God said that Eli himself would see.

Now the term rendered *see* here is not the usual word for “seeing” in the Hebrew.<sup>6</sup> This word usually is used in reference to a careful, sustained contemplation.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the idea is not that Eli would behold for a brief moment the terrorizing of God's worship. Rather, it is that he would become intimately acquainted with it.

This is the third consequence attributed to Eli's spiritual lethargy. He would live to see the day when God's worship and God's temple would be compromised, terrorized, decimated, and destroyed. And that is exactly what happened.

In 1 Samuel 4:11 we read that the Ark of the Covenant was captured and taken by the Philistines! The Shilohic priesthood was wiped out. Soon after this, the temple at Shiloh was destroyed.<sup>8</sup> And for the next couple of generations, the ark would not be restored to a tabernacle rather it would be kept “in moth balls” in Nob and later Gibeon.

---

<sup>1</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 2:30-33

<sup>2</sup> NASB renders this term dwelling.

<sup>3</sup> נָבַט nabat

<sup>4</sup> רֵאֵשֶׁת צָר tsar also rendered distress.

<sup>5</sup> Compare also Psalm 78:49

<sup>6</sup> רָאָה ra'ah

<sup>7</sup> Compare Isaiah 5:12, Psalm 74:20; 119:6, 15

<sup>8</sup> Compare Jeremiah 7:12, 14; 26:6, 9

Why the devastation? Because of Eli's sustained and life-long love affair with his sin!

Behold the consequence of mediocrity in our walks with Christ. Not only does it cost us spiritual privilege, harm our children and their children but it results in the compromise of the greatest privilege we have in Christ: His worship! Such are the wages of our sin!

## Amos

The book of Amos was written at a time in the history of God's people where life was easy. Affluence was the mark of society. The people of God lived in what is considered the Golden Age of Israel. Indeed, trade and commerce flourished, and there was a pronounced drift of labor from the land to the city.

Because there was no threat from any external power, a whole generation began to concentrate upon material things, and this quickly resulted in a demand for luxury items. It wasn't long before a powerful aristocracy arose which coincided with a virtual disappearance of a middle class in Israelite society. Consequently, within a few short years the poor had been reduced to the level of servitude, and when conditions made it necessary they were sold into bondage by their masters.<sup>9</sup>

Now because of the seemingly “good times” we do not read about wholesale compromise in the worship of God — at least not like in the other prophets. In fact, it is just the opposite. Temple worship was highly attended. The temple offerings were never better. But here's the hitch: While the people of God did not outwardly abandon Yahweh in favor of worshipping Baal — as at other times — nevertheless they did adopt a Baal-approach to worship, seeking excitement, experience, and the ecstatic over and against covenantal faithfulness. R. K. Harrison described this era with these words:

“Self-interest in social affairs made for self-indulgence in matters of religion. The northern sanctuaries were crowded with worshippers who, in the main, were rejoicing in the prosperity of the times, and found an expression for their desires in the erotic religious rites that were concomitant of a pagan Canaanite Baal worship. Prophets and priests associated with the sanctuaries profited from the lavish gifts of the worshippers, and naturally condoned these exercises in the name of religion...”<sup>10</sup>

Quite a sorry scene! And yet how did God respond to sanctuaries packed by people who were more in love with their sin than their Savior?

Amos 8:11-12, “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.”

How did God respond?

He took from His people their worship and His word! In essence saying if you want fun in worship, and to be moved to an experience, have your ears tickled, and to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, you've got it! But it will come at a great cost — THE COST OF ME — such that in the future you will be as a

---

<sup>9</sup> Compare Amos 2:6

<sup>10</sup> R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, page 886

thirsty individual in a desert wandering around looking for the slightest hint of spiritual sustenance, going from north to south to east to west BUT YOU WILL NOT FIND IT NOR ME!<sup>11</sup>

Oh brothers and sisters, what a curse to live at a time when God disciplines His people by giving them what they want. What a curse when God allows His worship and His word to be compromised. And what a curse when God actively removes from His people the gift of genuine worship and a solid pulpit! I'd rather have war, famine, sickness, distress, disease, or physical persecution than to live in an age where seeking we will not find, hungering we won't be filled, thirsting we will not be satisfied!

And yet such is the consequence of mediocre Christianity loving Christ and loving sin. The punishment that I believe is being met out in our land today! I've said this in the past, but it bears repeating here; many of you have read such passages like 2 Timothy which says, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" ( 2 Timothy 3:12) and have concluded that because you have never been physically persecuted, maybe you aren't living a godly life. Listen! We live in an age and era where persecution against the people of God has taken the form of internal and spiritual compromise when it comes to the worship of God and His pulpit NOT of external and physical assaults.

Thus if you have grieved over the worship being offered in so many churches and denominations today — including our own —and have longed for the true preaching of the word of God and yet have struggled to find it then you and I with Eli know firsthand the "distress of God's dwelling."

Ask Guy and Justina when they return from their honeymoon in England: Did they find strong, spiritually stable congregations in England? Or did they struggle to find a place to worship that wasn't rife with compromise?

What used to be the heart and soul of vital, living, and deep Christianity — Europe — today is a desert with scarcely the word of God.

Now, I am thankful that in the United States that true pulpits, strong expositors of the word of God, and solid and Biblical worship can still be found. Yet if we as an evangelical church remain on our current course in which we eagerly fulfill the lust of the flesh in the form of longing for experience, fun, entertainment, and self-fulfillment our children and we (if we live long enough) will behold the destruction and devastation of the worship of God in our land!

## **Personal Devastation**

This is the third consequence for apostate Christianity! And yet there is one more: personal devastation.

1 Samuel 2:31, "Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house."

This verse reads very interestingly in the Hebrew. The reading of cutting off your arm gives a picture of total devastation and ruin. We find this same expression in 1 Samuel 5 when the Ark of the Covenant is captured by the Philistine lords and placed as booty in the house of their god, Dagon.<sup>12</sup> Yet God would not be mocked. In the morning the priests of Dagon went into their temple and beheld the statue of

---

<sup>11</sup> Compare also Jeremiah 7:8-15. This passage is very similar to Amos.

<sup>12</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 5:2

Dagon on its face before the Ark.<sup>13</sup> Obviously shocked, they up-righted their stone deity and went about their business.

It was the next morning that the pagan priests witnessed the total and absolute devastation of their deity. Not only was their “god” once again on the ground before the Ark of the Covenant but God had chopped off the arms and feet (and head) of Dagon.

1 Samuel 5:4, “And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; **and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him.**”

This symbolized God’s complete and total sovereignty over this false god and the devastation and brokenness of Dagon and its religion.

Now it is this expression that God used here to describe what was going to happen to Eli. Not only would Eli be deposed from office, his children suffer violence, and he would behold the distress of God’s dwelling but he personally would be devastated! Eli’s strength and authority would be gone and he would be left alone to struggle in his spiritual bankruptcy!

In fact, notice further:

1 Samuel 2:33, “And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes [literally “wear out”], and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.”

The picture here is of a face red and swollen from the tears that have been cried. In fact, the expression used in this text is close to the curse formula of Leviticus 26.

Leviticus 26:16, “I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.”

Moses had warned the people of God that this fate awaited them if they rebelled against God.<sup>14</sup> Such is the personal devastation that accompanies spiritual defection! It brings with it a terrorizing of the soul!

From this we see the final consequence of Christian apostasy: Personal Devastation! Not only would everything that Eli loved be tainted by his sin, he too would know the misery and brokenness that comes from spiritual compromise! He would personally know the hell that sin always and ultimately creates!

Brothers and sisters don't miss this, for so often we have it all wrong. When things are going bad for us — when all the stop lights are red, we are stuck in traffic, we get laid off from work, and things don't go our way — it is tempting to look at our sin and conclude that God must be punishing us.

Oh, let us not be so silly!

When God disciplines the child of God on account of his love of sinning it is not in the form of red lights,

---

<sup>13</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 5:3

<sup>14</sup> Compare also Deuteronomy 28:65

failed business deals, and ill health and the sundry other things that are part and parcel of life in this state of sin and misery. It is far worse!

Rather, God allows rottenness to enter into our being such that we become spiritually devastated. He gives us our sin void of His grace!

Psalm 106:15, “And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.”

After giving a list of demoralizations that God’s people endured, God said this:

Jeremiah 4:18, “Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart.”<sup>15</sup>

David described the result of living in unrepentant sin this way:

Psalm 32:3-4, “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.”

God has also promised His children that when they love their sin more than the Savior that He “will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it” (Leviticus 26:16).

To the Christian in love with his sin, God told Eli, “Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm” (1 Samuel 2:31).

## **Sacking of Rome**

That is why I consider the council that occurred during the sacking of Rome as a parable of our modern times. Recall the story.

As the Goths approached Rome in 410 AD, it is said that a council of Bishops had convened to discuss some of the more weighty questions plaguing Christianity. For example they debated these questions:

- If a fly falls into holy water, is the fly holy or the water tainted?
- How many angels can fit on the head of a pin?

Talk about missing the point! The world as they knew it was being destroyed. And these Bishops concerned themselves with folly!

And yet are we not like them? Are we not mimicking the same disregard for what really is important?

Our souls are rotting away on account of our love of sinning. Our walks are shallow. More and more worship services and pulpits in our land are being given over to “experience.” Our children are being lost by the thousands. And we're fighting with our spouses as to which movie we're going to watch on Friday night!

---

<sup>15</sup> Compare also Jeremiah 2:17

Oh, let this passage convict, crush, and destroy our love of sinning. We've allowed a serious enemy to dwell within our borders- that enemy is our love of pleasure, self, sinning, and satisfying our flesh! This monster has done more harm to the church and its children than all external foes combined!

Now in response to this message you and I can shrink back into self-pity and shame — like Eli! Or, we can strive all the more diligently in our war against the flesh! As the Hebrew writer put this:

Hebrews 12:4, “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.”

You say, “But I've slipped so far. Is there any hope for me?”

I love how John Ensor put it:

“Sheep and swine can both end up in the mire. Yet the essential difference in their two natures is quite visible from the reaction each has to its fallen condition. While sheep do stray and stumble into the mire, they quickly loathe the situation and struggle to get free. They may be dirty, but they desire to be clean. They may be stuck, but they bleat for their shepherd to come and save them out of the muck. But swine, in keeping with their nature, wallow in the muck, content to stay there all day.”<sup>16</sup>

So which are you: sheep or swine?

Fellow sheep: Let us not be discouraged by this text, but encouraged to run to the Great Shepherd and beg for mercy. Let us pray that He take away our love of sinning. Let us seek God's face. Let us confess our sin! Let us plead the grace of Christ! And as we've seen in this study, He will by all means hear our prayer, heal our souls, and pull us out of the muck!

Psalm 50:15, “And call upon me in the day of trouble<sup>17</sup>: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> John Ensor, commenting on 2 Peter 2:22

<sup>17</sup> This is the same word in our text literally meaning narrowness, tightness or distress. צרה tsarah

<sup>18</sup> Compare also Psalm 37:39

## **Subscription Information**

A subscription to the *Broomfield Presbyterian Church Ministry of the Word* is on a free basis. To subscribe or unsubscribe send a post card to *Broomfield Presbyterian Church Ministry of the Word*®, Post Office Box 691, Windsor, Colorado 80550. Or you may send your request by email to [Nels Nelson](mailto:Nels.Nelson@broomfieldpc.org). *The Broomfield Presbyterian Church Ministry of the Word* is published regularly.

## **VISIT US WHEN IN Broomfield, COLORADO**

Feel free to visit Broomfield Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Broomfield Presbyterian Church is located at Kohl Elementary School, 10th Street and Kohl, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Broomfield Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

All our sermons can be accessed via the World Wide Web. There recording for this sermon can be found at [Compromised Worship](http://broomfieldpc.org/sermons). The web address for all sermons at Broomfield can be found out as follows: <http://broomfieldopc.sermonaudio.com>

## **About the Preacher**

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on June 19, 2005. Greg is the Preacher at Broomfield Presbyterian Church.