

Abuse and Immorality Among Religious Leaders

by James Jennings

This sermon delves into the sobering topic of abuse and immorality among church leaders, drawing from the narrative in 1 Samuel 2. It highlights the abuse of power, sexual immorality, and lack of proper action by religious leaders, contrasting it with the hope found in the character of Samuel. The sermon emphasizes the importance of not turning a blind eye to sin, the consequences of compromising with sin, and the ultimate faithfulness of Jesus Christ as the perfect priest.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 2:12, 1 Samuel 2:22, 1 Samuel 3:13, 1 Samuel 2:29, 1 Samuel 2:35, Proverbs 29:19

Topics: "Abuse of Power", "Faithfulness of Christ"

Description

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Transcript

I was wrestling in prayer throughout the week what I was supposed to bring this hour. And this is all I had. So this is what I'm going to bring.

It's somewhat a sobering topic that we're going to find here in 1 Samuel 2. In a minute, we'll start reading in v. 12. Well, and if you were to give this a title, you could title it Abuse and Immorality Among Church Leaders. Abuse and Immorality Among Church Leaders.

And we're going to read over a chapter here just so you get a feel of the context of what's going on here with Eli and his sons. And you're going to see religious leaders, plural, who are abusing their power and position. They're taking that which is not theirs, parts of the sacrifice, and domineering over these people, and they're engaging in sexual immorality.

And then you're going to see another character. We're going to see another religious leader who's not actually committing the immorality, but he is in sin by not dealing strongly enough with what is going on. And I just had this in my morning reading yesterday.

And I felt like I had not read it in so long. It just put fear in me. And we know the Old Testament, these things are written for our instruction, for our example, that we would not partake in the same things that these people have done.

So, this sadly is more of a common theme in these last few years, especially with the Internet. It's so much easier to find out about immorality and different things among church leadership. You could Google it.

You'd find more cases than you would even want to find. And this is even happening in reformed circles where people have somewhat sound doctrine. Sound doctrine doesn't mean you're going to have a blameless life.

That's part of walking in a manner that is worthy is knowing true truth. So, as we read, you're going to see that this is kind of dark and gloomy, especially with Eli and his sons. It gets darker and darker.

But, you know what we're also going to see? We're going to see interwoven in this chapter, we're going to see something very hopeful and that is Samuel. It basically goes back and forth between the two. Between Eli and his sons and Samuel.

And Samuel, it gets brighter and brighter and brighter. And if you know Samuel well enough, you know not that everyone in Hebrews 11 lived what you would call apparently a pure life, but Samuel is mentioned there as one who by faith enforced justice among other things. He was a holy, godly man.

And that's going to give us hope as we read through this. So, let's pray and then we'll read our passage. Father, Lord, You have written these things for our example, for our instruction.

Lord, there are things here that are an example of what not to do and certain things of what to do. And Lord, I just pray You'd apply these in our hearts. Lord, this is part of Your Word.

It is God-breathed and it is profitable for teaching and reproof. And Lord, I pray, whatever way, Lord, You want this to be used this morning, I pray You'd do that very thing. Use Your Word, Lord, to put fear in us in a healthy way, Lord, that we would not have these things ever set among us.

And Lord, put thanks in us for the work You did in Samuel's life. And so, Lord, we just set our eyes on You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

So we're going to read starting in 1 Samuel 2, verse 12. And as we read, you'll see some of these things start to unfold. 1 Samuel 2, verse 12.

Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the Lord. The custom of the priest, and this is the custom that his sons introduced, it's not a good thing, with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant would come while the meat was boiling with a three-pronged fork in his hand.

He would thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot. All that the fork brought up, the priest would take for himself. This is what they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there.

It's not a commendation. Moreover, before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, give meat for the priest to roast. For he will not accept boiled meat from you, but only raw meat.

And if the man said to him, well, let me burn the fat first, burn that ultimately to the Lord, then you can take as much as you wish, he would say. And he would say, no, you must give it now. And if not, I will take it by force.

So here we see people in leadership position. There's abuse happening here. There's taking what does not belong to them.

Verse 17, Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the Lord. For the men, and we'll consider who that's referring to later on, for the men treated the offering of the Lord with contempt. Samuel was ministering before the Lord.

Now we hear about Samuel. A boy clothed with a linen ephod. And his mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year.

So he's obviously growing and his mom is making new clothes each year as he grows. This is a young guy. When she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice, then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say, may the Lord give you children by this woman for the petition she asked of the Lord.

So then they would return to their home. Indeed, the Lord visited Hannah and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters, and the boy Samuel grew in the presence of the Lord. So here a woman is who is barren.

God gave her Samuel and now He's given her more sons. He hears her prayers. Verse 22, Now Eli was very old.

He kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel. He heard how they laid with women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of the meeting. There the sexual immorality is that's going on among these leaders.

And he said to them, to his sons, why do you do such things? I hear of your evil dealings from all these people. No, my sons, this is not a good report that I hear the people of the Lord spreading abroad. If someone sins against a man, and he kind of gives a warning to them, God will mediate for him.

But if someone sins against the Lord implying that's what they're doing, who can intercede for him? But, his sons would not listen to the voice of their father because it was the will of the Lord to not soften their hearts, but to put them to death. So God's going to kill these two men, these abusive, immoral church leaders you could call it. Israel was not the church.

I'm just using that term in a generic way. Something that you could apply right now. That's my point.

Verse 26, so here, darker and darker with Eli and his sons. Verse 26, Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and also with man. So this is still hopeful with Samuel.

Things are getting better. Verse 27, And there came a man of God to Eli and said to him, Thus says the Lord, did I indeed reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt subject to the house of Pharaoh? Did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest? To go up to My altar to burn incense, to wear an ephod before Me? I gave to the house of your father all of My offerings by fire from the people of Israel. Why then do you scorn My sacrifices and My offerings that I command for My dwelling? And you honor your sons above Me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of My

people Israel? Therefore, the Lord, the God of Israel declares, I promised that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before Me forever.

But now, the Lord declares, far be it from Me, for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house so that there will not be an old man in your house. And there are Jewish historians who looked at the genealogies and it said there wasn't a man in his house that lived more than 18 years.

Verse 33, the only one of you whom I shall not cut off from My altar shall be spared to weep his eyes out, to grieve his heart, and all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword of men. And this that shall come upon your two sons, Hothni and Phinehas, shall be the sign to you. Both of them shall die on the same day.

And I will raise up Myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in My heart and in My mind." See, Eli and his sons were not doing according to what was in the heart and mind of God. I will build him a sure house and he shall go in and out before My anointed forever. And everyone who is left in your house shall come to implore him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and shall say, please put me in one of the priest's places that I may eat a morsel of bread.

Chapter 3, let's keep reading. Let's get the feel of this. Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord in the presence of Eli.

So he calls him a boy. He's young. You're witnessing all of this.

And the word of the Lord was rare in those days. There was no frequent vision. It wasn't normative.

At that time, Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place. The lamp of God had not yet dawned out and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called Samuel and He said, here I am.

And ran to Eli and said, here I am, for you called Me. But he said, I did not call. Lie down again.

So he went and laid down. And the Lord called again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, here I am, for you called Me.

But he said, I did not call, my son. Lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord.

Now I know it just said that about Eli's sons. They were worthless men. They did not know the Lord.

He had not had, I would say, a manifestation as he's having right now of the Lord's presence. And the Word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. That's the idea.

And the Lord called Samuel again the third time and he arose and went to Eli and said, here I am, for you called Me. Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore, Eli said to Samuel, go lie down and if He calls you, you shall say, speak, Lord, for your servant hears.

So Samuel went and laid down in his place. And the Lord came and stood, calling at another time, Samuel, Samuel. And Samuel said, speak for your servant hears.

Then the Lord said to Samuel, behold, I'm about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. On that day, I will fulfill against Eli all that I've spoken concerning his house from beginning to end. And I declare to him that I'm about to punish his house forever because of the sin that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God.

And he did not restrain. He did not stop them. Therefore, I swear to the house of Eli that the sin of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.

Samuel lay until morning. You can imagine he's got a lot on his mind. Then he opened the door to the house of the Lord and he was afraid to tell the vision to Eli.

But Eli called and said, Samuel, my son. He said, here I am. And Eli said, what was it that He told you? Do not hide it from me.

May God do so to you and more also if you hide anything from Me, all that was told to you. So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, it is the Lord.

Let Him do what seems good to Him. And Samuel grew and the Lord was with him. So it's a bright hope again in Samuel.

The Lord let none of His words fall to the ground, that all of Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the Lord. And we're not going to keep reading, but as you go on in the next chapter, Eli's sons die. And then v. 18, chapter 4, as soon as he mentioned the ark of God, that the ark of God was captured, Eli fell over backwards from his seat by the side of the gate and his neck was broken and he died.

For the man was old and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years. So, I just want to get overall feel.

So if you just got here, this is all God gave me to speak on. I'm speaking on abuse and immorality among church leadership. And we see examples of this that we could apply in our own day.

So what I want to do here is go over quickly ten observations about Hopni and Phinehas' sin. Ten observations about their sin. Because this is written as an example and for our instruction.

Then I want to look at their father. Then I want to look at God's response and then Samuel. So that's kind of the direction we're headed in.

And one thing I didn't mention, you read in here, you see the name Phinehas. This is not the same Phinehas that was mentioned earlier on that was jealous for God. This is a different person, the same name.

The other was a son of Eliezer. So, first point, observations about Hopni and Phinehas and their sin. The first observation is this, they were lost men.

You can be a religious leader and not be circumcised of the heart. Throughout the Old Testament, regeneration is there. It talks about an uncircumcised heart.

We know in Ezekiel 36, it talks about God taking out the heart of stone, giving a heart of flesh. This is not some New Testament reality. That's why Jesus could say to Nicodemus, you should have known about these things.

Because it's all over the Old Testament. 1 Samuel 2.12 The sons of Elie were worthless men. In some versions, it renders they were sons of Beel.

It did not appear like that's in the original. That's why the ESV doesn't put it. But they were worthless men.

Why did they have no worth? Because they did not know the Lord. They did not know the Lord. What does Jesus say to many in Matthew 7? Depart from Me, I never knew you.

I never had intimacy with you. I did not know you in an intimate way. What's one of the greatest evidences? We know God in the heart.

That our heart's been changed. If you say you know Him, but you walk in darkness, you lie and do not practice the truth. These men, their lack of fruit in their life and all of their sin testifies against them that there had been no change in their heart.

They were religious, in the service, but lost. And boy, do we have a lot of that today. Not just among false religion and Catholicism, but even in one of the very cases going on with someone who's reformed.

I was reading the court document and someone there said, I don't believe the guy's a Christian. The person who committed those acts. Well, yes, when you look at a person's life, what is their pattern? Is it a life of sin? What's going on there? So first point, the brothers were lost.

There's no evidence here that they were in Christ, in the Old Testament, that they had faith like Samuel. Second point, if you're lost and not regarding the Lord, what's that lead to? If you don't know God, you're not going to regard His standards. And the second point is this, the worthless brothers abused their power and position.

And they forced those coming to sacrifice to give to them what was not their share. Look at 1 Samuel 2 v. 16. And if a man said to him, let them burn the fat first, that should be what's happening.

And then take as much as you wish. He would say, no, you must give it now. That's what the servant of the priest would say.

And then if not, I will take it by force. This is totally an example of abuse of power. Of taking something that's not their share.

There's a commentary I have where it's Pinck, Gill, and Matthew Henry. They say this, a peace offering, part of which belonged to the Lord, the fat that was burned. And the breast and the shoulder would go to the priest.

The rest to the owner who made a feast of it for his family and friends. But the priest's servant came while the meat was boiling. That is, while those parts were boiling for the owner and his family, which was done in some part of the tabernacle.

And he'd come with a flesh hook of three teeth in his hand with which he was sent by order of the priest that slew the sacrifice and offered it to whom belonged the parts before mentioned, and he would take the contents that were not his. While the rest was boiling with an instrument as here described. He took for himself what was not his own property that did not belong to him.

It also mentioned here, he wanted the meat raw. What's going on there? He liked roast meat better than boiled. But because the three-forked flesh hook did not always bring up the best pieces out of the boiling pot, and therefore, he resolved to have the flesh raw, that he might have the best, as well as seasoning it to his own likings.

So I don't know how this guy's going to... I shouldn't get part of this anyways, but I don't even know how the guy's going to season it. So let's go and get some of that so we can do what we want with it. And then guess what? If you refuse? It says right there, we take it by force.

Take it by force. The last thing they mention in this commentary, taking what was not their own and taking it by a forceful manner. And before the Lord had His part in the offering.

And all this was done in the tabernacle and the presence of God, which plainly showed that they had not the fear of God before their eyes, nor any sense of His omniscience and omnipresence any more than of His holiness and justice. You know it says in Ezekiel 36, there are shepherds who feed themselves. And the Lord says, I'm going to rescue My sheep from their mouths.

Again, same thing. This happens in our generation today. The prosperity gospel.

How much manipulation and forcing to get money from people. The sacrifice that they're wanting to offer is some support for missions for something, and you've got some shyster who comes along and he's forcefully manipulating them to get some of that money that he has no part touching. Okay, a third thing about their sin.

Their abuse corrupted all and became a standard. V. 12, v. 13, the custom of the priest with the people. That's not a commendable thing.

This had become a custom in their day. The standards had dropped to be something they should not be. This was becoming widespread.

Same things happen in our day. Widespread acceptance of homosexuality. You can be a Christian.

You can be a homosexual. That's becoming widespread. You could fill in the blank.

There's all sorts of things in our day that are becoming customs that contradict the Scriptures. That's what these men who don't know the Lord, one of the things they're braining about. Unbiblical standards.

The standards are dropping. So, if I'm willing to take part of a sacrifice that's not mine, and I'm willing to go in a temple or I'm in the tent of meetings and take that, does that show a fear of God? If I'm willing to do that, what else do you think these men were going to do? If they're going to take part of the sacrifice that doesn't belong to them, they're also going to take women that don't belong to them and they're going to be immoral. 1 Samuel 2:22 Now, Eli was very old.

He kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel and how they lay with the women. They were committing sexual immorality with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of the meeting. Now, that word serving, part of the idea is the women who assembled there.

These women are assembling here at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And these guys had the nerve to go and in some way lure these people off and commit gross immorality with them. No fear of God.

Same thing's happening today. People, they've got women in the church, secretaries, whatever it is, and all these cases coming out. Immorality.

Immorality. It's sad. We're in a sad... But there's nothing new.

Lost men and even the best of Christians like David, a man after God's own heart, could fall into such things. This is for our instruction, brethren, that we not all pray. If you will overreach in your share of the sacrifice, it won't stop there.

You'll overreach in other areas like the immorality that is mentioned. And I read this and it says how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of the meeting. You can look at that and say the full responsibility was on these men and I fully understand that, but you know, it reminded me of a text in Proverbs 7 that talks about the prostitute.

You know what it says of the prostitute? You know what she says to the man she tries to seduce? She says, I had to go and first offer sacrifices. So this woman is going to the tent of meeting offering sacrifices, and then going away and trying to seduce. So it can happen on both ends.

You could have lost men taking advantage and abusing women, or you could have women seeking to seduce men. Fifth thing, where did the sin take place? At the entrance to the tent of the meeting. 1 Samuel 2.22, we just read that.

At the entrance to the tent of the meeting. The tent of the meeting. Deuteronomy 31.

What should I think when I think of the tent of the meeting? And the Lord appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood over the entrance of the tent. That happened in the past. The very place the pillar... The very place God manifested Himself.

And that's where you're going to go and do these things? And lure these people away? And go in this very tent of meeting? And yes, later, the temple? And do these things? Same thing today. The church. Not a building, but local churches.

The very place you should expect there to be purity and godliness. What do you have happening? You have different things coming up where there's immorality, abuse. It's scary.

Sixth thing, how was their sin described? 1 Samuel 3.13 We don't need to come up with our own definition. God gives us a pretty good one. The Lord is speaking to Samuel.

And He says here His sons were blaspheming God. Blaspheming God. They're bringing a curse upon themselves.

They're despising God. They count God as trivial. God is very small in their eyes.

They count Him as trivial. Any church that doesn't practice church discipline counts God as trivial. Any church that lets people in the leadership who are living right now in immorality, they don't fear God.

I mean, I read some megachurch pastor's son-in-law fell into adultery and a month later, he's back in the pulpit. No fear of God. No fear of God.

These worthless brothers. The seventh thing about their sin, they ignored correction. 2 Cor.

2.25 mentions that. They would not listen to the voice of their father. So He reproves them.

They don't listen. And then it actually gives a reason why they don't listen here. And it's interesting, it doesn't give the reason of the failures of their father.

They would not listen to the voice of their father because it was the will of the Lord to put them to death. It doesn't put the blame on the dad right there. It actually is saying God did not will to soften their hearts, but rather, I'm done with them.

I'm going to put them to death. That means, you know what? The Lord could have willed for them to have broken and contrite hearts and in some way to not go on in the path they continued to go on. Eighth thing about Hopni and Phanehas' sin.

The worthless brothers' sin was against all of Israel. 1 Samuel 2.22 it says right there, now Eli was very old and kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel. It doesn't say to a few people.

These people were in a leadership position and it's affecting all of them under them. Coming to offer sacrifices and here you've got this abuse going on. This isn't happening in some side place.

This is happening at the tent of the meeting. Ninth thing, the worthless brothers did not care about how their testimony was their approach to Israel. They're so hardened.

They know these reports are going abroad and they don't care. You kind of think that would wake you up to reality. Verse 24, No, my sons, it is no good report that I hear the people of the Lord spreading abroad.

So the people of the Lord are spreading this abroad. And it's not like they're like, oh wow, we didn't know the secret was out and people know about what's really going on. No effect, apparently.

They're just going on in their abuse. Sadly, many in our day do vile things in the name of Christianity. It spreads abroad and our enemy the devil finds a way to twist it to make it reflect that this is what's true of all Christians.

A tenth thing about their sin. Their hypocrisy led astray and was a stumbling block to the Israelites. Their hypocrisy led astray.

We see that in v. 17 of chapter 2. Thus, the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the Lord. For the men. What men? The ESV, you kind of read this and you read the men and it's like the men.

Hottney and Phinehas, right? Other versions render it where it seems to more clearly point to the men, meaning the men of Israel. V. 16, and if the man said to him, so the people who are trying to do the right thing, when the priests are doing the wrong thing, these people, this continued abuse, and the priests are taking that which is not their share, thus, the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the Lord. For the men, the Israelites, they then treated the offering of the Lord with contempt.

Why should I come to the church meetings if there's just going to be abuse and hypocrisy? Forget the church. Just a bunch of hypocrites. Forget going and offering sacrifices.

That's the kind of thing. Now, many people take that as what the men refers to, but you know what? Even if it doesn't and it actually refers to Hottney and Phinehas, guess what? You know that's happening. That happens when there's hypocrisy.

People love to use that to excuse their own sin. And, they're not just excusing their own sin. We actually can put a stumbling block before someone.

We could do that. We should make sure, 2 Corinthians 6, verse 3 says, that no fault be found with our ministry. Why take my sacrifice if they're just going to try to force me to give up the majority of the meat? I'm fed up with that.

Okay, second thing we're moving on to. Observations about Eli's sin. As I mentioned in the introduction, we see here two leaders who are sexually immoral and who are abusing their authority and power and position.

And we see a leader who isn't engaged from what we see in the immorality, but he is ultimately giving way and approval for it by not doing what he should do. So let's think about Eli the father. His sin.

First thing is this, Eli received multiple reports of abuse and he never took proper action. He failed to use his power to punish and restrain them. Again, verse 22, Eli was very old and he kept hearing.

He what? Kept hearing. He heard for the first time? Is that what it says? No. He kept hearing.

It's coming back to his ears. Again and again. Another email.

Another report. Another this. Another that.

He kept hearing. He kept hearing all they were doing. How they lay with women who were serving at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and he said to them, why do you do these things? This isn't good.

So he had multiple reports. The Lord says he never took proper action. 313, when I declared to him that I'm about to punish his house forever for the sin that he knew because his sons were blaspheming God.

He knew. And he did not restrain them. He didn't stop them.

God is holding him accountable for not stopping them. He could have. He can't say there wasn't a way to stop them.

The Lord says he knew about it and he did not stop it. He never took proper action to restrain. And sadly, what happens today, sometimes you've got abuse going on.

Same thing. Reports, reports, reports. But the guy is so famous.

If the elder board doesn't do it, if we confront this and we believe these things, then the whole ministry is going to fall apart. Well, guess what? If sin is going on like this for years, the ministry is already falling apart. Why try to keep it alive? And then what happens? It gets published in the media and then the leaders have to confess that they're cornered because the Me Too movement is going on in our culture.

And then finally, that elder board, they turn on the person they were previously trying to protect because they have no other option. Stuff like that's happening in our generation. No fear of God.

You just get in a corner and then you'll finally agree with God. They didn't have that opportunity. They got in a corner and God killed them.

Eli attempted to reproof. We already saw. The sons would not listen to the voice of the Father, but the voice of the Father, his reproof there was a joke compared to what was required for the situation.

That's the same thing with today. There is sin of such magnitude and it's handled in such a small way. Proverbs 29, 19, by mere words a servant is not disciplined.

For though he understands, he will not respond. That's sadly with Eli. He used words, but he needed more than that.

The second thing about Eli's sin. Why did Eli ignore the reports? Why? 1 Samuel 2.29 gives us an answer. Why then do you scorn my sacrifices and my offerings that I command for my dwelling? This is the Lord.

Verse 27. And honor your sons above Me. Honor your sons above Me.

Why did he ignore the reports? All going well with his sons was more important to him than all of God's ways being obeyed. He had a greater burden for his sons' honor than God's honor. If he dealt with them, it would shame them.

If I expose my sons, it will shame them. But by not dealing with them, it was a shameful testimony to all of Israel. It was a stumbling block.

It was being spread abroad. Other nations hearing about it. What a shame.

So why did Eli ignore the reports? He honored his sons above men. He cared more about his sons and their honor than the honor and glory of God. And that's the same thing we see today.

Sadly, a lot of partiality. Even with Eli, these were his sons. Was that a factor? What if these weren't his sons? Would he have handled it the same way? Or would he have actually done what he should have done? You can only assume there.

A leader at one church this year, one of the pastors was in sin for 20-something years. And someone said in their leader board, they said, we trusted him. And this clouded our judgment to the factual evidence that was being produced.

Some knew about it. They kept silent for 20 years. Twenty years.

They would see what's going on right here. We kept hearing that he would go and lay with women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of the meeting. Twenty years.

Nothing. Did nothing. And then it takes lost secular culture to have this whole Me Too movement start, and now Christians get cornered and they stop hiding their hypocrisy.

It should not be so. It's sad. I say Christians.

Professing Christians. Some, no doubt, are genuine. David fell.

He did not live in sin. These men were living in sin. Were they grieved? No, they didn't care.

They didn't care. And they didn't just have immorality, they had abuse of power. They had all sorts of things going on.

If you're covering up sin to protect the ministry, what's that say? Third thing about Eli's sin, it's also striking to me that both of Eli's sons did the same things. Both. It's kind of sad.

They go together. Phanehas and Hapni. Together.

You kind of wish one would have gone the righteous path to the other. What can we glean from that? I was trying to think what could be contained there for our application? You could say from that, well, maybe it was the father. Maybe that's all the more evidence against Eli and the way his failures affected both of his sons.

But then I went and read 1 Samuel 8. It talks about Samuel's sons. It says, his sons did not walk in the ways, but turned aside after a gang. They took bribes and perverted justice.

So here you had Samuel, a godly guy. Eli, who's not dealing with sin compromising. And they all had sons who were wicked.

What a reminder. We're caught up. We need the grace of God to save our children.

We need His power. Do we need to be responsible? Do we need to deal correctly? You better believe it. We should never excuse just using mere words only and say what we're doing is sufficient.

A fourth thing about Eli's sin. Eli was an accomplice. He wasn't just an accomplice in that he did not restrain them.

But he actually took part in the abuse of power that was going on. He benefited from it. 2 Corinthians 2. Look what it says.

Why then do you scorn my sacrifices, honor your sons above Me by fattening yourselves? Eli's included there. Fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of My people Israel. And you could say, well, how do we know for certain that some of the meat that his sons are taking that is not part of their share is actually going in his belly? You see that in chapter 4, verse 18.

When he fell, his neck broke. He died, for he was old and heavy. He was heavy.

Because his sons, the abuse going on of power, forcing that which was not theirs and taking it. He didn't restrain them, and he also took part in eating that meat and getting to season it how he wanted it to be. But you know what? It sounds so foolish in view of eternity.

You look at this and you're like, you've got to be kidding. Why would he trade food that perishes? That's how deceitful sin is. You know, a little emotional attachment happens.

And before you know it, your heart gets in heart adultery and then sin just creeps along. It takes you out. You don't want to mess with sin.

You don't want to underestimate it. I've mentioned this. Don Curran, at the Fellowship Conference, I was talking to him.

I said, what do you remember about Bob Jennings that really stuck out to you? And he said one time they were walking on a trail praying and Don brought up to him a pastor who ran away with another man into homosexuality. And Don joked and said to Bob, oh, if you hear that ever happen to me, you'll know it's a

lie. And Bob turned at Don.

And he said, don't underestimate the power of sin. Don't underestimate it. Let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

You could hear that report of that man running off into such immorality and say that'll never happen to me. If you have a proud thought like that, we need God to keep us. Here we have this right here staring us in the face in the midst of our generation.

It should put the fear of God in us that we not compromise in any little area. We don't want reports spreading abroad. So, God's response.

First, Eli himself told his sons one reason why they should be concerned. Look at 1 Samuel 2.25. Eli's saying to his sons, look, if someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him. But if someone sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him? But they would not listen to the voice of their father.

There's truth in what he's saying. You're sinning against God. You're going on in rebellion against God.

Who's going to mediate for you? You go sin against these other people, you can run to the Lord, you've got a mediator. You're in all-out rebellion against the Judge of the Universe. The Lord said, I'm going to lightly esteem you.

I'm going to cut off your strength. Both your sons will die on the same day. You know who gives life and who takes life? God does.

As it says, He cuts the thread of your life. God determined both his sons would die on that day and God killed them. The Lord said, I'm going to punish his house forever.

Both his sons died. The ark was taken. What is God's response? Eventually, in 1 Kings 2, Samuel expelled Abathar from being priest to the Lord, thus fulfilling the word of the Lord that he had spoken concerning the house of Eli and Shiloh.

God fulfilled His word and took them out. You know what God's response was? You're going to dishonor me like that? You go to battle? You're going to lose. And 30,000 Israelites died.

The ark was taken. I mean, things just crumbled. You try to go to war with these type of things going on? It's going to be a disaster.

Now, let's think about Samuel. This is a man who was born of answered prayer from his mother. God heard her.

I was thinking about Samuel. He's a boy and he's witnessing all of this. Would that impact your life? Not just that.

The Lord comes to him. 3.13 You've got to go tell Eli, I'm about to punish his house forever for the sin that he knew. I mean, you're hearing that.

Because the sons were blaspheming God. He did not restrain them. I mean, Samuel's response, v. 15, he was afraid.

If you're Samuel and you're a young man and you're witnessing all of this and you're about to witness the very judgment of God, and you've got to be the one who's going to go there and tell Eli that. Samuel did not just forget that 20 years down the road. This isn't in the text, but you know why I would say one reason why Samuel was holy? Because he went through that.

He witnessed these things. And it was an example to him. Just like Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10 of what the Israelites, it's an example to us for our instruction.

And you know what? That's one application for you and me. As we look at these godly men out there. You know, one brother just emailing a girl, counseling her, and ends up in this whole scandal.

Just an email. Just an email counseling him to a woman. Trying to serve her.

Things get worse, worse, worse. That should make us say, hmm, I better be very, very careful. I better be very careful.

So Samuel was afraid to tell the vision. I mean, he's going through all of this. Observing the failures that are happening.

And thank God, with Samuel, things got brighter and brighter and he was not corrupted. And that's how it should be for us. By the grace of God, things will get better.

Holiness will increase, not decrease. As things get darker among professing Christianity, may things only be brighter and brighter. May we only fear God more and more and more and more.

So what do we learn? I mean, these different things mentioned, but I thought one, we should learn that I might not be the one committing the immorality, but if I know of it and do nothing, I become an accomplice. If the way you deal with sin is not strong enough, the Lord will hold you accountable as Eli did. That's a very valid application for church leaders in our day.

We have a strong admonition here to not deal with sin lightly. Just like I said, if churches don't practice church discipline, they're dealing with sin lightly. They're letting corruption go on in the church.

Paul said these things should not be named among us. It should not be happening among us. A second thing we learn.

When there is sin in the camp, victory on the battlefield fails. Whether Achan's day or right here. Verse 10, chapter 4, I mean, get this, verse 4-7.

Look at this, the Philistines were afraid. I mean, Israel's coming. They said a god is coming to the camp.

They said, woe to us! Woe to us! Nothing like this has happened before. Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness. Now, they don't have their history right.

The Egyptians didn't die from plagues in the wilderness. They've got bad history here. Verse 9, Take courage and be men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews.

Verse 10, they're thinking we're toast. The Philistines fought and Israel was defeated. And Israel fled, every man, to his home.

And there was a very great slaughter for 30,000 foot soldiers of Israel fell. Isn't that something? Their own enemies were terrified and yet ended up getting a victory. What a shame.

A third thing we learn, we have a very, very strong exhortation here to not put man above God. Those whom you love, the famous preacher, or your own kids, could tempt you to turn a blind eye. That never happened to us.

Really? These are instructions. As we continue marching on as a church, these are things we should remember. Remember, as we counsel others, different things, as it said, verse 29, you honor your sons above Me.

Just like that one person in that church, they knew about it for 20 years, but, you know, we thought we knew who he is. And we trust him. Are there going to be false accusations? Sure.

But if there's facts, you can't ignore it. Fourth thing, what does the Lord want? Look at 1 Samuel 2, verse 25. But they would... I'm sorry, 35.

And I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in My heart and what is in My mind. Who is the faithful priest that was ultimately raised up that did everything perfectly according to the mind and heart of God? Jesus Christ. There's a lot of hope in that one reality.

When we come to Him, does He abuse us? No. Does He force us in such a way as Eli's sons did? No. Rather, He didn't count His life of any value and offered Himself for us as a sacrifice.

So it's not us taking sacrifices. He offers Himself. I was thinking, if you've experienced abuse at hands of clergy, and I know some here have mentioned in their testimonies, they grew up in a Catholic church, were abused by priests in different things.

Or maybe someone in these recent years is a preacher whom you loved and they were revealed as a hypocrite. A play actor. I can assure you this, Jesus Christ is no hypocrite.

Jesus Christ is no play actor. He is perfect and seated in Heaven right now. Men can fail you.

Christ will not. Now, men, by the grace of God, want to say as those leaders did in Hebrews 13, pray for us, for we are certain that our consciences are clear. We should be able to say that by the grace of God.

At the same time, acknowledge, men have failures. But Jesus Christ, there's no failure. There's no abuse.

He is the perfect priest. He offers Himself as a sacrifice. So, even if you experienced abuse and immorality among church leaders, it does not change what's true of our great leader, Jesus Christ.

He never changes. He's faithful to the end. So that's all I have.

As I've said, as Paul says, these things are written for our instruction, for our example, upon whom the end of the ages have come. And we're in a culture where a lot of this is coming out to the light. And we should not just ignore it.

Ignore it in one way. You don't need to go read about filth and defile your mind. But we should not ignore it in that it's a lesson for us to take heed just like what we have many, many years ago with these two sons here.

What a shame the things they were doing. What a shame that as many would say, it caused the Israelites to treat the offering of the Lord with contempt. The last thing we want is for people to treat Christianity with contempt.

To despise Christianity because of hypocrisy. And rather than mention it before the 11, because we have five minutes, one thing I'm reminded of is what we mentioned Wednesday night. This pastor who today has a business meeting in his church, and he is a man of God, and they're trying to kick him out.

The way the church is set up isn't good because it's a Southern Baptist type of church. But I'm going to close in prayer and I'm going to pray for him because what a thing if the Lord would stand rather than allow judgment and they lose this man. It's for their own good.

They have him! God could judge them and let them remove him today. Or God could reveal hypocrisy among these others and allow them to stay and be a blessing to them. So let's pray.

Father, Lord, we thank You for Your utter faithfulness to us. And Lord, I pray in the name of Your Son that You would help Tim, myself, John, Tawfiq, and Lord, it seems Craig is being raised up. Lord, You'd help all of us to walk in a manner worthy of the Gospel.

Lord, to walk in purity. And Lord, we know if we fear You, Lord, if we revere Your Word, Lord, He who calls wisdom His intimate friend will be kept from the forbidden woman. And Lord, we love Your Word.

We love Your truth. Lord, we love Your Son who's revealed to us, who is the faithful, great High Priest. And so Lord, we pray You'd keep us.

We pray, Lord, You'd save people who have had horrible experiences with abusive leadership. Lord, would You save them? And Lord, where men are being accused of abusive leadership, where there is none. Lord, like this church this morning in another city.

Lord, we pray that You would protect that man. Lord, here accusations are leveled that are not true. Lord, You know.

You search men's hearts. And Father, we ask, I ask in the name of Your Son, please, Lord, protect that dear brother. Lord, allow this meeting to go in such a way, Lord, where You would be the victor.

Whether that's through him staying, or through him going and other true Christians leaving with him and that group being judged by losing someone who's faithful to You. Lord, Your ways are beyond ours. We ask for Your perfect will in that.

Lord, strengthen that brother. Be with the words of his lips. And Lord, we just ask You to bless our time now even as we fellowship and talk amongst each other.

In Christ's redeeming name, Amen.

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