

BAD BOYS (1 Samuel 2:11b-36)

Sermon in a sentence: When we put God first [*Hannah & Elkanah and Samuel*] we allow blessings to flow in our lives but when we disregard Him and His Kingship in us [*Eli and Hophni and Phinehas*] we set ourselves up for calamity.

INTRODUCTION: REVIEW OF HANNAH: Last Sunday we dived into 1 Samuel and Pastor Richard led our first excursion. What a great Sunday! We rediscovered the power of prayer, and the value of integrity. We realized the strength of a fiercely committed Mom, and the value of a family culture of worship enforced by a God-fearing Dad. Pray, pray, pray! Remember God's answers. Keep your promises, and remember to thank God and worship Him. At the end of his message, Pastor Richard alluded to the fact that Eli the priest had a couple of scoundrel sons, and so we pick up our look at lessons from the life of Samuel here about a third of the way into 1 Samuel chapter 1. [Thank hosts, musicians, etc. and pray]

I. HANNAH'S SON VS. ELI'S SONS

A. Hannah's Son

1. Descriptions of Samuel's growth and ministry, even as a boy, punctuate the stories of the unfaithfulness of Eli's sons.
2. Young Samuel was a picture of innocence and eagerness to serve God.
 - a. Faith of a child...
 - b. In a linen ephod... the garment of a priest. [simplicity, innocence]
3. Samuel grew up with God. (2:21)
YOU'RE NEVER TOO YOUNG TO SERVE GOD. [WE ARE ALL EQUAL BEFORE GOD.]
4. Samuel grew in wisdom, stature, favor with God and man. (2:26)

B. Eli's Sons

[Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli's direction, 2:11b]

1. **They Did Not Acknowledge the Lord.** [Took God for granted; saw the underbelly of ministry?]
2. **They took more than their share (they robbed the people),** 2:13-14 [explain that there were some offerings that were given to the priests to eat and some that were given back to the people to be eaten onsite at the Tabernacle and these goons were taking whatever they wanted of the people's portion as well!]

3. **They Intimidated God's People into depriving God of His portion of the offering, 2:15.**

- a. They took the fat before it could be burned, 2:16
- b. They threatened force, 2:16b

[*Samuel ministered before the Lord, a boy in a linen ephod, 2:18 – picture of purity*]

Sandwiched in between these accounts of the sins of Hophni and Phinehas is this short description of Elkanah and Hannah, who both gave up their firstborn, and at the time, only, child (son). Eli asked God to bless them and they had more children. (2:19-21a)

WHEN WE PUT GOD FIRST, WE ALLOW BLESSINGS TO FLOW IN OUR LIVES.

[*Samuel grew up with the Lord, 2:21*]

4. **They slept with the women who came to minister at the Tabernacle. (2:22)**
 - a. [Some may have consented, but some may not have.]
5. **They shattered trust between people and priest, thus getting in the way of the relationship of God with His people.**

[*Samuel grew in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man, 2:26*]

II. CAUTIONARY TALE: ORACLE AGAINST ELI AND HIS BOYS

A. The Sound of Music

1. What song is being sung over your life?
 - a. Interesting that after Hannah's prayer, pledge, and obedience, there follows a song of praise in 2:1-10. After the disregard, thievery, and disobedience of Hophni and Phinehas (2:11b-26) another kind of song is sadly (but not surprisingly) voiced: an oracle of judgment(2:27-36).
 - b. What kind of song is being sung over your life? The good news is, you can change that tune!
2. **RIGHTEOUSNESS PRODUCES PRAISE; WICKEDNESS BRINGS JUDGMENT.**
 - a. (This sounds very Old Testament, but guess what? That's where we are in 1 Samuel!)
 - b. NT correlation: Galatians 6:7 – "Do not be deceived! God cannot be mocked! You reap what you sow! The one who sows to please the sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."

B. The Meaning of the Oracle

1. **The Priesthood is Close to the Heart of God** (2:27-28, NLT)

²⁷One day a man of God came to Eli and gave him this message from the Lord: "I revealed Myself to your ancestors when they were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. ²⁸I chose your ancestor Aaron from among all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to offer sacrifices on My altar, to burn incense, and to wear the ephod as he served Me. And I assigned the sacrificial offerings to you priests.

2. Eli and His Sons Scorned God's Sacrifices (2:29a, NLT)

^{29A}So why do you scorn My sacrifices and offerings?

- a. God's desire for how His offerings were to operate: Leviticus 3:3-5, 16 [ESV]

³And from the sacrifice of the peace offering, as a food offering to the LORD, he (the worshiper) shall offer the fat covering the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails, ⁴and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys. ⁵Then Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar on top of the burnt offering, which is on the wood on the fire; it is a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

¹⁶And the priest shall burn them on the altar as a food offering with a pleasing aroma. All fat is the Lord's.

3. **ELI HONORED HIS SONS MORE THAN GOD** (v. 29b, NLT)

^{29B}Why do you give your sons more honor than you give Me—for you and they have become fat from the best offerings of My people Israel!

- a. Eli was complicit because he benefited from his sons' malfeasance (2:29b)
- b. Eli thought he was being passive, but by doing nothing he was just as responsible for his son's sins as they were.

QUESTION OF THE DAY: IN YOUR LIFE, IS THERE SOMEONE OR SOMETHING MORE IMPORTANT THAN GOD?

- b. I would challenge all of us with this thought: Eli may have put his sons before God, but there was someone else he put before God, too – himself. (It was easier to go along.)

4. God's judgment on Eli, 2:30-36, NLT

³⁰“Therefore, the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I promised that your branch of the tribe of Levi would always be my priests. But I will honor those who honor me, and I will despise those who think lightly of me. ³¹The time is coming when I will put an end to your family, so it will no longer serve as my priests. All the members of your family will die before their time. None will reach old age. ³²You will watch with envy as I pour out prosperity on the people of Israel. But no members of your family will ever live out their days. ³³The few not cut off from serving at my altar will survive, but only so their eyes can go blind and their hearts break, and their children will die a violent death. ³⁴And to prove that what I have said will come true, I will cause your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, to die on the same day! ³⁵“Then I will raise up a faithful priest who will serve me and do what I desire. I will establish his family, and they will be priests to my anointed kings forever. ³⁶Then all of your surviving family will bow before him, begging for money and food. ‘Please,’ they will say, ‘give us jobs among the priests so we will have enough to eat.’”

- a. **God honors those who honor Him, and those who despise Him are cursed.**
Once again, YOU CAN CHOOSE THE SONG SUNG OVER YOUR LIFE.
- b. In a single day God will destroy Hophni and Phinehas and raise up a priest who will be faithful to Him.
- c. God's purposes prevail: Aaron had two sons:
 1. Ithamar, from whose line Eli and Hophni and Phinehas came; and Eleazar, from whose line came a priest named Zadok.
 2. Zadok was installed as chief priest over Solomon's Temple when he finally became fed up with the turmoil that resulted from Eli's descendants being priest. It is Zadok who Eli's great great great grandsons come to begging for a place in the priesthood and some small form of sustenance.
 3. On the near horizon, God raised up a priest named Samuel who would do “what is in My heart and soul.” (1 Samuel 2:35) Samuel's parents, Elkanah and Hannah were Levites. As Samuel grew he served functions of priest, judge, and prophet in Israel.

In our day, because Jesus died for our sins and made a way for us to go directly to God the Father, we who believe in Christ are all priests before God and need no one to function as a mediator between us and God. Yet, God is still seeking from His people the Christians, priests who will do according to what is on His heart and His mind to do. May we be *those* priests.

GOD HAS A RIGHT TO REIGN IN YOU AND TO REIN YOU IN IF NEEDED.

WILL YOU YIELD TO HIM AS LEADER AND KING IN YOUR LIFE? WILL YOU VALUE HIS PRESENCE IN YOUR LIFE? WILL YOU PUT HIM FIRST?