

“God’s Judgment Upon a Father”
1 Samuel 2:27-36
(Preached at Trinity, May 22, 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 are introduced to Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas.
1 Samuel 1:3 NAU - "And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests to the LORD there."
2. We know they are grown men. In **Verse 22** we read that Eli was an old man.
1 Samuel 2:22 NAU - "Now Eli was very old"
3. We are also told that although Eli’s sons were priests, they were not righteous men. In fact the opposite was true of them.
1 Samuel 2:12 NAU - "Now the sons of Eli were worthless men"
4. Although they were priests they had no respect for the Tabernacle or the sacrifices or the people of God. And they had no respect for their father.
 - A. We read in **Verse 17** that God was not unmindful of their behavior.
1 Samuel 2:17 NAU - "Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for the men despised the offering of the LORD."
 - B. As we saw last time, the two sons of Eli were under God’s judgment. God had given them over to their sin.
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."
5. We aren’t told anything about their mother. We can only assume she was dead. What must capture our attention is Eli as the father of Hophni and Phinehas. These adult men had no respect for their father. What we must not fail to see is, not only were Hophni and Phinehas under God’s condemnation, so was their father.
6. God sends an unnamed prophet to announce judgment upon the house of Eli for his failure to oversee his sons – **Verse 27** - "Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him"
 - A. God reminds Eli of the high calling of the Levites and the office of the priesthood.
1 Samuel 2:28 NAU - "Did I not choose them from all the tribes of Israel to be My priests"
 - B. Then God brings His charge against Eli:
1 Samuel 2:29 NAU - "Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling, and honor your sons above Me"
 - C. Finally judgment is pronounced:
1 Samuel 2:31 NAU - "Behold, the days are coming when I will break your strength and the strength of your father's house so that there will not be an old man in your house."
7. God is pronouncing terrible judgment upon the house of Eli.
Where did Eli go wrong as a father? This must serve as a warning to every father.

- I. First, he failed to give adequate instruction to his sons
- A. Eli was never really involved in the lives of his sons
1. It would seem he was an absentee father. He just sat passively on the side.
1 Samuel 1:9 NAU - "Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple of the LORD."
 Most likely, he spent most of his life sitting on the sidelines which probably contributed to his large size.
1 Samuel 4:18 NAU - "When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell off the seat backward beside the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for he was old and heavy."
 2. Notice, Eli "heard" of his sons actions but did not observe it personally. He wasn't actively involved.
1 Samuel 2:22 NAU - "Now Eli was very old; and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting."
1 Samuel 2:23 NAU - "He said to them, "Why do you do such things, the evil things that I hear from all these people?"
1 Samuel 2:24 NAU - "No, my sons; for the report is not good which I hear the LORD'S people circulating."
 3. Eli was the high priest. He should have known in detail all that was going in in the Tabernacle. He shouldn't have heard it second hand.
 4. And he was the father of Hophni and Phinehas. He should have known what was going on in their lives.
 5. They were now adults but this was most likely the pattern that had gone on their entire lives.
- B. This was the continued problem we find in the Old Testament
1. God required careful involvement by the fathers
Deuteronomy 6:6-7 NAU - "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up."
 2. Over and over, however, we find the fathers removed from their children
 3. Jacob had little involvement in the lives of his children
 - a. In **Genesis 34** we find his young daughter Dinah being allowed to wander more freely than wisdom would dictate – with dreadful consequences.
 - b. The sons of Jacob were not taught the virtues of godliness
 They became hardened in sin.
 - Jacob seemed disconnected to the deeds of his sons with the Shechemites who had defiled their sister Dinah
 - Reuben slept with Bilhah, his father's concubine, and the Scripture simply says, "and Jacob heard it."
 4. David had little involvement in the lives of his sons and we find this the consistent pattern of the kings of Israel.

- C. How many fathers today fall into this category?
1. They aren't actively involved in the lives of their children. They are aloof and removed from them.
 2. When the children are young there is little involvement and as they get older the same pattern continues.
 3. Others may report that there is a problem but they give little attention themselves. They only "hear."
Verse 24 - the report is not good which I hear the LORD'S people circulating."
 4. We must always guard against blind spots—things we refuse to see about our children and our parenting. Eli's sons did not become incorrigible overnight. Eli just refused to see.
- II. Second, he failed to hold his sons responsible for their actions
- A. Although Eli "heard" about the sinful actions of his sons he did nothing to curb their behavior.
1. Eli did rebuke them
1 Sam 2:23-24 NAU - "He said to them, "Why do you do such things, the evil things that I hear from all these people? ²⁴ "No, my sons; for the report is not good which I hear the LORD'S people circulating."
 2. His rebuke did not lead to punishment. He should have immediately removed them from office.
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."
 3. Eli never held his sons accountable for their actions
 4. Again, this was an ongoing sin of many of the OT saints
1 Kings 1:5-6 NAU - "Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king." So he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen with fifty men to run before him. ⁶ His father had never crossed him at any time by asking, "Why have you done so?" And he was also a very handsome man, and he was born after Absalom."
The NIV reads: "(His father had never rebuked him by asking, "Why do you behave as you do?"
- B. Fathers must hold their children accountable for their actions – they must properly discipline their children
1. Instruction and correction needs to be enforced by discipline
 2. Consistent, patient, and loving discipline are part of the calling of a Godly father.
 3. God demands proper discipline
Proverbs 22:15 NAS - "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him."
Proverbs 13:24 NAS - "He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently."
Proverbs 29:15 NAS - "The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother."
Proverbs 29:17 NAS - "Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; He will also delight your soul."

III. Third, he held his sons in higher esteem than God

1 Samuel 2:29 NAU - "Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling, and honor your sons above Me, by making yourselves fat with the choicest of every offering of My people Israel?"

- A. This was a scathing rebuke of Eli
1. God is saying that in Eli's refusal to correct his sons he had chosen them above Him.
 2. Eli could not bear to disgrace his sons. He could not bear shaming them by removing them from office.
This was the pattern over and over their whole lives. It was much easier to pretend all was well.
 3. He could not bear to cause his sons displeasure.
 4. Again of David we read, "His father had never crossed him at any time by asking, "Why have you done so?"
 5. Eli was a weak father and over indulgent. Such a character would have disqualified him from serving as a pastor in the NT church.
- 1 Timothy 3:4-5 NAU** - "He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity ⁵ (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)"

B. This continues to be a parental failure

1. Parents tend to dote over their children
2. Most parents today are too concerned about upsetting their children
We must never allow our affection for our children cause us to withhold correction. Does God not love us more? But does He not chasten?
Hebrews 12:5-6 NAS - "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; ⁶ For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives."

IV. Samuel stands in sharp contrast to Eli's sons

1 Samuel 2:11-12 NAU - "Then Elkanah went to his home at Ramah. But the boy ministered to the LORD before Eli the priest. ¹² Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the LORD"

1 Samuel 2:17-18 NAU - "Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for the men despised the offering of the LORD. ¹⁸ Now Samuel was ministering before the LORD, as a boy wearing a linen ephod."

- A. Hannah and Elkanah dedicated their son to God
1. They understood that Samuel did not belong to them
 2. Neither do your children belong to you. Have you dedicated them to God?
 3. Hannah waited until he was weaned to bring him to the House of God
 - a. This could take three or four years. Hannah continually taught her young son about God.
 - b. This reminds us that training our children begins at birth. It reminds us that the hearts of our children are shaped at an early age

- B. Although Hannah had given Samuel to the service of God she still remained active in his life.
- 1 Samuel 2:19 NAU** - "And his mother would make him a little robe and bring it to him from year to year when she would come up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice."
1. This tells us that she often came to her son.
 2. It should be noted that Ramah was less than seven miles from Jerusalem.
 - a. We can't imagine that Hannah didn't make frequent trips to see Samuel. What an influence she must have had upon his life
 - b. What a contrast this is to Eli who had little influence upon his sons
 3. Samuel understood the special nature of the priesthood long before he personally filled the office

1 Samuel 2:18 NAU - "Now Samuel was ministering before the LORD, as a boy wearing a linen ephod."

 - a. The ephod was a priestly garment even though Samuel as a boy was not old enough to be a priest.
 - b. He would have been allowed to do menial tasks in the Tabernacle, all the while recognizing the holiness of the House of God. He served with reverence. He was "ministering before the Lord"
 4. And how Hannah must have prayed for her son.

1 Samuel 2:1 NAU - "Then Hannah prayed and said, "My heart exults in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD"

 - a. Samuel had few Godly models around him
Hophni and Phinehas were the priests.
 - b. Samuel is a demonstration of the importance of God's hand upon our children. We live in a world full of negative influences. We need to pray that God will bless the children that we have dedicated unto Him.
 5. What a contrast between the son of Hanna and Elkanah and the sons of Eli. God wants us to see the contrast and give earnest heed.
Samuel ministered to the LORD.
Eli's sons were worthless.

Conclusion:

1. This is a fearful passage. We must understand how important it is for us to train up our children before God.
Hannah and Elkanah dedicated Samuel to God. Sadly, there is no indication that Eli the high priest dedicated his sons unto God.
2. If we fail to train up our children in the discipline and instruction of God they will live Godless lives and bring God's judgment upon them.
1 Samuel 2:12 NAU - "Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the LORD"
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."
3. But we will also bear responsibility for how we raise our children.
1 Samuel 3:13 NAU - "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."