



Broomfield PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Volume 4 Issue 39

September 25, 2005

Eli Repents

Waiting on the Lord

When Christ walked this earth, He did many things that were misunderstood. He cast out demons, and the Jews said that He was of Satan.¹ He ministered to reputed sinners, and many accused Him of dissipation.² He proclaimed the glorious message that He would rebuild the ruined temple of His body in three days, and the Jews thought He was speaking in reference to the temple in Jerusalem.³

Indeed, it is possible to gaze upon an act of godliness and mistake it for neglect, passivity, lack of care, and compromise. In fact, I am guilty of this very action regarding Eli. A couple of months back when I introduced you to this High Priest in 1 Samuel 2, I criticized him for his response in this passage. God here has just informed him of impending doom. And rather than throwing himself on the mercy of the Lord, I said that his response seemed cold and uncaring.

Now while that is a possible interpretation on the surface, it truly is a misunderstanding of Eli's response. As we'll see Eli here doesn't say, "It is Elohim/Adonai..." Rather, he calls upon God's covenant name making this NOT an act of carelessness BUT an act of great trust and faith.

See Eli here is "waiting upon the Lord" — a most difficult and grueling call. To wait upon the Lord is to rely upon the goodness of God in a situation which seems to say God is not good, He doesn't have your best in mind. For example, after being informed of impending doom, Habakkuk said this:

Habakkuk 3:16, "When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops."

That is what waiting on the Lord is all about. It is the exercise of faith in deteriorating circumstances. It is what we are called to in the Psalms.

Psalm 27:14, "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."

¹ Compare Matthew 12:24

² Compare Matthew 11:19

³ Compare John 2:19-21

This is exactly what Eli is doing here — he's waiting on the Lord.

This of course raises obvious questions: How is it that past saints could wait on the Lord... to slay them? How is it that they could sit quietly and patiently waiting for the day of destruction with the knowledge that God could deliver them if He chose? How is it that they could undergo so much and yet their faith didn't waiver?

The Basis

This passage gives us the answer to these questions. It is a snap shot of one man's trust and hope in the Lord. It is a cross section of faith. It contains the elements of a heart that is waiting on the Lord. Let's look at the elements one-by-one, beginning with the basis for waiting on the Lord.

1 Samuel 3:18, “And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. **And he said, It is the LORD⁴: let him do what seemeth him good.**”

It is very important to note that Eli here is NOT saying, “What Allah wills!” This would be a heartless declaration and is not applicable in this text. Rather notice, Eli calls upon the covenant name that God revealed to Moses (a name that the patriarchs did NOT know.)⁵

Exodus 3:13, “And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?”

Here Moses wants to know what to say to the people. He wants to know what name he should use for God: Allah, Elohim, Amen-re, Osiris, Baal? He wants to know God's name, character, and identity?

Exodus 3:15, “And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.”

This is a significant response because at this juncture in redemptive history, God is making good on the promise that He made with Abraham and his children. Thus at this time of covenant-fulfillment, it is significant that the Lord reveals a name by which His people were to know Him as a memorial to all generations- the name which from this point on would represent His goodness, fidelity, love, and care.

And what name is it?

YAHWEH. The name henceforth used of God over 5,300 times. It is His covenant name.

The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* said this of YAHWEH in Exodus 3.

“God's immediately preceding promise to Moses had been, 'Certainly I will be with you' (Exodus 3:12)... Indeed, the fundamental promise of his testament is, 'I will be their God, and they will be my people' (Exodus 6:7, etc.; contrast Hosea 1:9); thus 'Yahweh,' [best translated as] 'faithful

⁴ יהוה Y@hovah yeh-ho-vaw

⁵ Compare Exodus 6:3

presence,' is God's testamentary nature, or name (Exodus 6:2, 4; Deuteronomy 7:9; Isaiah 26:4)."⁶

Continuing the wordbook states:

"Scripture speaks of the Tetragrammaton as 'this glorious and fearful name' (Deut 28:58) or simply 'the name' (Leviticus 24:11)... [As such] it connotes God's nearness, his concern for man, and the revelation of his redemptive covenant."⁷

And so when we think of "Yahweh," we must think of a gracious Being who deigns to fellowship with man. Asaph put it this way: "But for me it is good to be near God; [henceforth] I have made the Lord GOD my refuge" (Psalm 73:28 ESV).

Proverbs 18:10, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

Uzziah

And yet that does not do complete justice to this appellation. For it also is used in Scripture not only as a reference to God's covenant faithfulness and love — His faithful presence — but it is used also in reference to His complete and total sovereignty over this world.

Isaiah 6:1-4, "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke."

With the close of Uzziah's reign as king, came the close of the golden era of Judah. Never again would this political entity know such wealth, stability, and prosperity. With the rise of Uzziah, Judah was ushered into a golden era of peace and safety which lasted close to fifty-five years!

Toward the end of Uzziah's life, war was on the horizon. With war would come the expected famine, disease, oppression, and death which accompanied strife in the ancient world. Now a common name by which Uzziah would have been known in the Hebrew was, *Adonai* — which translated is *Lord*.

Thus when we read here that it was the year of King Uzziah's death — and thus the death of Isaiah's and all of God's people's Lord — Isaiah saw NOT Adonai — the picture of earthly, yet mutable security — BUT YAWEH — the picture here is of eternal and unchanging security — we conclude that Isaiah here literally is being blown away at the revelation of God.

Majesty

Thus notice the emphasis as it relates to Yahweh — the focus is on God's majesty — and that in a three fold way the first being His majesty.

⁶ R. Laird Harris. Editor; Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Volume 1, page 212. Emphasis mine

⁷ Ibid., page 212

Isaiah 6:1, “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.”

In Bible times, the length of the train of a king's robe reflected his glory. Here we read of a scene where God's robe literally filled the temple.

Majesty of His Worship

Isaiah 6:2-3, “Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.”

The significance here is seen when we consider the fact that the Seraphim were sinless beings! They cry out in amazement, “Holy! Holy! Holy! is the Lord of Hosts.” This indicates that God is a being so utterly unlike anything in creation. He is completely other than us. God is worthy of the worship of sinless beings.

The Majesty Presence

Isaiah 6:4, “And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.”

Calvin said that the “him” of this verse is God! The picture here is nothing less than the awesomeness of God. God's is so great that His presence alone shakes heaven!

From all of this I hope you see that when we think of Yahweh, we must think ALSO of a Sovereign Being Who reigns over this world. A Being of such greatness, holiness, omnipotence, and glory that nothing can thwart Him!

Isaiah 6:5, “Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”

What is the basis for “Waiting on the Lord?”

How is it that men of old could trust God in deteriorating circumstances?

Because they knew the LORD — Yahweh — is a name that denotes the covenantal love of God whereby He deals with us as children. The name that indicates a complete and total sovereignty of a Being well beyond us!

Thus, when we read of Habakkuk⁸, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego⁹, and David¹⁰ we must understand they waited on God because they knew that their God not only reigns supreme in the heavens, but He holds everything in His hand¹¹. They knew that God upholds all things by the word of His power.¹² And

⁸ Compare Habakkuk 3:16-18

⁹ Compare Daniel 3:16-18

¹⁰ Compare 2 Samuel 15:26

¹¹ Compare Proverbs 21:1

they knew that God is good!

Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”

Because this is the first time that Eli personally references God by His covenant name, YAWEH, we know this is the basis for Eli’s response.¹³ Until now, Eli’s preferred name has been ‘*El*’ for God. That he makes this shift in our text after receiving so harsh a judgment indicates a shift in his own thinking regarding God. While things were good, God was ‘*El*’ to Eli. But now with his back to the wall, Eli rested upon *Yahweh*!

And hence we see here that the basis for God’s people waiting upon the Lord is knowledge that He is Yahweh!

The Confession

What will it look like if we wait upon the Lord? How was Eli’s trust given expression in his life?

1 Samuel 3:18, “And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good¹⁴. ”

Eli’s confession is this: “Let the Lord do what is good in His eyes.” On the surface this could sound like, “What Allah wills!” But it is not! The key word in this passage is, *good*. It is a word of some significance in the Bible. After God created the world he said “behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). The word rendered *good* represents nothing less than that which is essentially good. In other words, it is not simply good in its effects, or good because of its relation to something else. It is good in and of itself. It is good by virtue of the One who is the Author and Creator of it.

Thus for something to be “good” in God’s eyes it will evidence four characteristics.

- It will be Consistent with God’s character.
- It will be something that furthers God’s will.
- It will glorify God.
- It ultimately will be to our benefit.

All this is implied by the word, *good*. Thus Joseph’s creed in the face of horror was “you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good” (Genesis 50:20). Peter’s exhortation to a persecuted and suffering people was “Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right” (1 Peter 4:19). Christ’s exhortation for when we pray is “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). And Eli’s response to impending doom was “It is the LORD: let Him do what IS good to Him” (1 Samuel 3:18).

From this we see the heartbeat of all who wait upon the Lord. They trust a sovereign God who loves us to do what is consistent with His character; furthers His will; brings Him glory; and ultimately is for our

¹² Compare Hebrews 1:3

¹³ This is not to say that Eli doesn’t employ the term YAWEH (compare also 1 Samuel 2:24, and 3:9). However his usage of the term is not personal and certainly not in reference to himself — until now!

¹⁴ בּוֹא towb

benefit.

My experience is that not many Christians do this very well. I have seen the Lord deal severely with His children. But I have not so often seen God's children entrust themselves to God to do what is right. Not many kiss the rod, acknowledge its justice and their deserving of it, and meekly accept God's terms. And not many give glory to God when He has ordained a bitter providence.

The Confusion

Again it wasn't but a couple of months ago I stood in this pulpit and openly criticized Eli for his statements here. I gazed upon His trust and faith and confused it with passivity, coldness, and fatal resignation. And yet you must see, I HAD GOOD CAUSE.

The opening chapters of Samuel do not speak with flattering words when it comes to Eli. He is weak, passive, and at times cold. Eli cared little for the things of God.

1 Samuel 2:29, “Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?”

We read about Hophni and Phinehas' abuse in 1 Samuel 2:12-17 and we are shocked. Yet Eli wasn't. In fact, he actually benefited from their rebellion as he himself ate that part of the sacrifice intended only for God.

Eli was a man pleaser.

1 Samuel 3:13, “For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.”

It is clear that Eli was more concerned about what his sons thought than God.¹⁵ Thus when Eli was forced to make a choice, he sided with pleasing his sons rather than the Lord.

Eli had what might be called, “An Inferiority Complex.” He was afraid to confront the real abuse of the mighty and powerful, but quick to rebuke the weak and helpless.¹⁶ One of Eli's downfalls is that he didn't rebuke his sons.¹⁷ Yet give him a woman who is by herself praying with the slightest appearance of evil¹⁸ and he is all over her!

1 Samuel 1:13-14, “Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.”

Eli's walk with God at best was distant. In 1 Samuel, Hannah is recorded as praying no less than four

¹⁵ Compare also 1 Samuel 2:23-24. The text seems to indicate that Eli's response was more on account of the rumors than anything else.

¹⁶ Compare 1 Samuel 3:13; 1:13-14

¹⁷ Compare 1 Samuel 3:13

¹⁸ Compare 1 Samuel 1:13-14

times¹⁹ and each time her prayer was directed to “Yahweh” (which again is God's personal, covenant name). And yet Eli is never said to have prayed — not even once in this book! And when he actually does reference God personally — except for 1 Samuel 3:18b — he does not use the Lord's personal, covenantal name!

Finally, Eli also “embraced” all sorts of idolatry, wickedness, and deceit. Psalm 78 details the abuses of His people in redemptive history. Listen to God's commentary on 1 Samuel 1-4.

Psalm 78:56-61, “Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies: But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men; And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand.”

Brothers and sisters, the list of abuses detailed here all occurred in Eli's lifetime. Thus under his watch — and therefore his endorsement — God's people forsook their God to worship that which was not God.

The result was the abandonment on the part of God of the Shiloh sanctuary — but only after God's people had abandoned it first! And so yes, I confused a godly act on the part of Eli for “more of the same.” I mistook this text upon first glance for passivity and coldness.

But listen that is what makes this passage so great. As I have contended all along, if there is any correspondence in Samuel between the characters of this book and us it is not the godly Hannah and Samuel — they are so Christ like, who could compare? It is not the wretched Hophni and Phinehas — at least not for the genuine child of God. It is Eli!

Truly as I gaze upon the first four chapters of Samuel I see more parallels between myself and Eli than anyone else — and I think you do too.

Until now this has been our shame- but today you must see that it is our joy! No matter how far you have fallen, how inconsistent your walk has been, how cold you might feel, how wicked you may have been if you know the Lord Jesus Christ, then it is never too late to wait upon Him. It is never too late to trust His character. It is never too late to put yourself in His care. It is never too late to throw yourself upon His mercy. It is never too late to entrust yourself to a faithful Creator in doing what is right and good!

And so in spite of the trials, bitter providences, hardships, and ills, this day let us come back to our first love. Let us renew our wedding vows to Him. Let us wait upon YAHWEH.

Isaiah 40:31, “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

If we will trust God — wait upon Him — He promises to renew our strength, raise us up like eagles so that we may soar, and enable us to walk and not grow weary and run and not faint. Oh, let us this day take our focus off of the waves, and the trials and tribulations and trust the character of our sovereign God to do what is good!

¹⁹ Compare 1 Samuel 1:10, 12, 26, 27

Yes! You may be on a crash course with eternity. But the pilot of your ship is none-other than God Himself!

You may say, “But I don't read this when it came to Eli. When did God strengthen Him? When did Eli “mount up with wings like eagles/ When did he run and not grow weary and walk and not faint?”

Instead we read that shortly after this passage:

- He went blind (1 Samuel 4:15)!
- The ark of God was taken into battle and lost (1 Samuel 4:3, 11a).
- His sons were killed (1 Samuel 4:11a).
- He fell off of his chair, broke his neck, and Himself died (1 Samuel 4:18)!
- And the temple at Shiloh was destroyed (1 Samuel 2:32; cf. Jeremiah 7:12-15)!

Let me ask you something: Since when are the fleeting years of this life the end of salvation? Why is it that we must take God's promises in reference to the here and now? Why must we always look for flowery beds of ease here?

THIS SIDE OF HEAVEN IS NOT GLORY— IT NEVER HAS BEEN!

Accordingly, don't miss it! Today if we could see Eli we would not see a broken individual struggling in his walk to please the Lord and man. We would see a saint in glory who has gained new strength. He has mounted up with wings like eagles. He can walk for a thousand years and never grow weary. He can run and never faint.

In the words of John:

1 John 3:1, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God...”

In response, let us therefore this day wait upon the Lord- let us “entrust [our] souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.” (1 Peter 4:19).

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](#). *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 [Eli Repents](#). 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 September 25, 2005. Greg is the Preacher at Broomfield Presbyterian Church.