

# Week 2 - Eli and His Sons

*I Samuel 2:12-3:21*

## Introduction

Last week we witnessed the birth of Samuel, the last Judge of Israel. We saw Hannah wrestle with God over her brokenness, and God answered her prayer.

This morning we are going to see Samuel get called by God, and his first prophecy is to his mentor Eli. And it isn't positive.

**We will follow this through to the end of Eli's life in chapter 7.**

## Good-For-Nothings

**READ I Samuel 2:12-17**

They were treating the offering with contempt, literally stealing from God. **Note that they say that they are doing this for Eli, and it appears that God saw him as being part of it (v29).** My guess, is that he didn't ask and simply "turned a blind eye".

*And v22 shows us that they were having sexual relations with the women that came to serve in the temple. They would have had tremendous social power over these women, and they used that to satisfy their lust in defilement of the presence of God in His temple.*

Eli rebukes them, but he does not stop them. He doesn't remove them from the temple. OT history shows how God holds the high priest responsible for allowing the temple to be defiled, yet Eli cannot find the courage to deal with them.

**Meanwhile, Samuel continues to grow up being a faithful minister to the Lord in the temple. He is a clear contrast to Hophni and Phinehas.**

## The Unnamed Prophet

**A prophet whose name is not given, comes to Eli and gives him a prophecy from God.** *God says to Eli, "I brought your fathers to this place to serve as priests in my temple. I went to great lengths to get them out of Egypt, and here you are allowing this kind of thing to go on in the temple."*

**READ I Samuel 2:29-36**

*Eli's entire priestly inheritance is going to be cut off completely because of this.*

# God Calls Samuel

The author points out that Samuel was sleeping near the ark of the covenant, which was the physical location where God chose to continually rest His presence. It was the holiest, scariest, place on the planet earth.

**This is not presumption, or casualness, with Samuel. It's relationship. And it's also a powerful way to tell us that God considered Samuel to be righteous, because he isn't dead.** I'm sure if Hophni or Phinehas had tried to sleep next to the ark, they would not have survived.

While Samuel sleeps next to the ark, God calls out his name "Samuel!"

Samuel wakes up, thinks it's Eli and runs to Eli saying, "Here I am!"

Eli tells him to stop acting the fool, and sends him back to bed.

This happens 3 times, and on the third time Eli realises that it's God speaking to Samuel. Eli tells him to answer God on the next time and say, "Speak, LORD, for your servant hears."

God calls Samuel a fourth time, Samuel answers as Eli instructed, and God speaks to Samuel about Eli.

**God tells Samuel what the unnamed prophet also said. He tells Samuel that God is going to cut off the household of Eli because of their wickedness, and because Eli was unwilling to stop them. God is clear that they are past the point of repentance. (vv. 8-14)**

**In the morning, Samuel very reluctantly has to tell Eli what God said. Eli submits to it. (v. 15-18)**

To not treat the temple worship as sacred is to not treat God as sacred.

**We will see next week that what is happening here inside the temple is a microcosm of what is happening all across the nation of Israel.**

*For now, let's see how we can apply this to ourselves.*

## A Little Leaven...

**In the NT, the principle stands.** 1 Corinthians 5 is a good example of what we call "Church Discipline". A man is having an incestuous relationship with his Mother in Law. Paul repeats a metaphor of Jesus saying, *"Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."* (1 Cor. 5:6-7)

**The temple is now the people, not the building as in Samuel's day.** When someone claims to be a part of the people of God (in the "temple"), but makes **consistent, willful, decisions to continue in unrepentant sin**, they cannot remain in "the temple". *Paul says to cast them out so that they might come to repentance, but also so that the church will not be defiled.*

Of course, there is a right process to this involving repeated, grace-filled, earnest appeals to the person with many chances to acknowledge their sin and accept help. **We do everything with love, grace, and humility. But we can never forget that this “temple” is holy.**

**Being a part of the Body of Christ is a sacred thing. We will not be perfect, but we can be repentant. (Legalism is about perfection, grace is about repentance)** We can agree with what God says about our sin (that it is, in fact, sin), and we can confess our sin to one another and we can keep pressing forward. But the Christian that refuses to acknowledge their sin, refuses to repent, refuses to listen to the grace-filled rebuke of fellow believers, and willfully persists in rebellion against God, cannot stay in the “temple” - we can no longer call them Christians with any confidence.

I regularly find myself heartbroken over the way modern evangelicalism seems to be increasingly lowering the sacredness of what it means to belong to the Body of Christ, to be in the “temple”. I’m not talking about meeting attendance, though that can be a symptom. I’m talking about seeing your place in the Church as inconsequential - take me, or leave me - my presence doesn’t matter. And how I live doesn’t matter either.

This is true “church discipline” - treating each other, and the gospel that binds us together, as sacred, holy, and eternal.

## Conclusion

I was just having a conversation with someone this weekend that has had some pretty bad church experiences. There have been lots of reasons for it, but I think the way back from that begins with saying that despite the problem, the Body of Christ is sacred.

**It’s worth the trouble.** It’s worth the sacrifices, the work, the pain, the loss, all of it.

**READ Revelation 19:6-9**