Fleeing Ichabod:

Following after Integrity

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Introduction

- Welcome
- Gratitude & Tribute
- “Road Map”

- **The Man of God**

- Drawn from Paul's admonition to Timothy – I Timothy 6:11-16

- The Man of God is known by what he:

  - Flees from – (6:9-11) – the love of money.

  - Follows after – (6:11) – practical righteousness

  - Fights for – (6:12)

  - Faithful to – (6:12-16)

The Text: I Samuel 2:12-17 (LSB)

"Now the sons of Eli were [1]vile men; they did not know Yahweh. 13 [a]And
this was the legal judgment for the priests with the people: when any
man was offering a sacrifice, the priest's young man would come while
the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand. 14 Then he
would thrust it into the pan or kettle or caldron or pot; all that the fork
would bring up the priest would take for himself. Thus they would do in
Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. 15 Also, before [a]they offered
up the fat in smoke, the priest's young man would come and say to the
man who was sacrificing, "Give the priest meat for roasting; he will not
take boiled meat from you, only raw." 16 Then the man would say to him,
"They must surely offer up the fat in smoke [1]first, and then take as much
as your soul desires," then he would say, "No, you shall give it now; and
if not, I will take it by force." 17 Thus the sin of the young men was very
great before Yahweh, for the men [a]spurned the offering of Yahweh."

I Samuel 2:22-25 (LSB)

“Now Eli was very old; and he heard [a] all that his sons were
doing to all Israel, and how they lay with [b] the women who
served at the doorway of the tent of meeting. 23 So 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 [a] which I hear the people of Yahweh [1] passing
about. 25 “If one man sins against another, [a] God will mediate
for him; but [b] if a man sins against Yahweh, who can pray
for him?” But they would not listen to the voice of their
father, for [c] Yahweh desired to put them to death.

I Samuel 2:27-32 (LSB)

“Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, “Thus says Yahweh, ‘Did I not
indeed reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt,
enslaved to Pharaoh’s house? 28 ‘And did I not choose them from all the tribes
of Israel to be My priests, to go up to My altar, to burn incense, to carry an
ephod before Me; and did I not give to the house of your father all the fire
offerings of the sons of Israel? 29 ‘Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My
offering which I have commanded in My habitation, and honor your sons
above Me, by making yourselves fat with the choicest of every offering of My
people Israel?’ 30 “Therefore Yahweh, the God of Israel, declares, ‘I did indeed
say that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me
forever’; but now Yahweh declares, ‘**Far be it from Me—for those who honor
Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be cursed.** 31 ‘Behold, the
days are coming, and 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..”

I Samuel 2:33-36 (LSB)

“Yet I will not cut off every man of yours from My altar so that
your eyes will fail from weeping and your soul grieve, and all the
increase of your house will be put to death in the prime of life.
‘Now this will be the sign to you which will come concerning your
two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: on the same day both of them will
be put to death. ‘But I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest
who will do according to what is in My heart and in My soul; and I
will build him a faithful house, and he will walk before My
anointed always. ‘And it will be that everyone who is left in your
house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver or a loaf
of bread and say, “Please assign me to one of the priest’s offices so
that I may eat a piece of bread.”””.”

I Samuel 3:10-14 (LSB)

“Then Yahweh came and stood and called as at other times,
“Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for Your slave is
listening.” 11 And Yahweh said to Samuel, “Behold, I am about to do
a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will
tingle. 12 “In that day I will establish against Eli all that I have
spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. 13 “And I have
told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity
which he knew because his sons have been bringing a curse on
themselves, but he did not rebuke them. 14 “Now therefore I have
sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not
be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.”

I Samuel 3:18; 4:19-22 (LSB)

“So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, “It is Yahweh; let Him do what seems good in His eyes.”

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Now his daughter-in-law, Phinehas’s wife, was with child and about to give birth. And she heard the report that the ark of God was taken and that her father-in-law and her husband had died, so she kneeled down and gave birth, for her pains came upon her. And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, “Do not be afraid, for you have given birth to a son.” But she did not answer or pay attention. And she called the boy Ichabod, saying, “The glory has departed from Israel,” because the ark of God was taken and because of her father-in-law and her husband. And she said, “The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God was taken.””

Practical Principles

1. Understand the Danger

- Premature Death – Hophni, Phineas and his wife
- Disgrace and Dishonor
- Harm to the next generation(s) – Ichabod, Ahijah/ Ahimelech (the sons of Ahitub) I Samuel 14:3; 22:11-20, Abiathar I Kings 2:26-27 (approx. 130 years)
- Disqualification

- Doctrinal Declension
- Loss of the intimate, manifest presence – the glory of God – in ministry – “Ichabod”
- The “stricter judgment” of those privileged to teach – James 3:1

- -- if you, I say, should live contrary to your doctrine, and 'by breaking the law should dishonour God, the name of God will be blasphemed' among the ignorant and ungodly 'through you.' **And you are not unacquainted with that standing decree of heaven, 'Them that honour me I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.' Never did man dishonour God, but it proved the greatest dishonour to himself. God will find out ways enough to wipe off any stain that is cast upon him; but you will not so easily remove the shame and sorrow from yourselves."**

  - Richard Baxter, The Reformed Pastor, Chapter I, Section 2, Paragraph 7)

2. Understand the Goal

- The overseer seeks to glorify God through his stewardship.
- "**For the overseer must be beyond reproach as God's steward, not self-willed … not fond of dishonest gain,"** (Titus 1:7 (LSB)). Above reproach as a steward over God's:
    - **Prestige** (Joel 2:15-17; Philippians 1:18-20; I Timothy 3:7);
    - **Proclamation** (Acts 6:2);
    - **Perplexities (Mysteries)** (I Cor. 4:1);
    - **Property** (Acts 4:33-37) ; and
    - **People/Progeny** (John 17:6-12; Hebrews 13:17 (cf. Amos 3:12; Exodus 22:13)).

- **In short, pursue "Integrity" — Psalms 101; 15**

- "**I will consider the way of the blameless. When will You come to me? I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart.** I will set no vile thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not cling to me. A crooked heart shall depart from me; I will know no evil. Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy; Whoever has a haughty look and an arrogant heart, I will not endure. **My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may abide with me; He who walks in the way of the blameless is the one who will minister to me.** He who practices deceit shall not dwell within my house; He who speaks lies shall not be established before my eyes." (Psalm 101:2-7 LSB)

- "O Yahweh, who may sojourn in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy mountain? **He who walks blamelessly**, and works righteousness, And speaks truth in his heart. (Psalm 15:1-2 LSB)

A crooked heart shall depart from me; I will know no evil.
Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy; Whoever has a haughty look and an arrogant heart, I will not endure.

My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may abide with me; He who walks in the way of the blameless is the one who will minister to me.
He who practices deceit shall not dwell within my house; He who speaks lies shall not be established before my ey

- “When you view God's Word as the ultimate authority, that opens the way for developing integrity instead of compromise. The American Heritage Dictionary (Houghton Mifflin, 1992) defines integrity as "steadfast adherence to a strict moral or ethical code,""the state of being unimpaired; soundness," or "the quality or condition of being whole or undivided; completeness." It comes from the word integer, which means "whole" or "complete."

- Integrity essentially means being true to one's ethical standards, in our case, God's standards. Its synonyms are honesty, sincerity, incorruptibilty. It describes someone without hypocrisy or duplicity-someone who is completely consistent with his or her stated convictions. A person who lacks integrity-someone who says one thing and does another—is a hypocrite. * * *

- **Nowhere is integrity more critical than in the leadership of the church, because the spiritual leader must maintain integrity to set a credible example for all to follow.** Yet there are many in leadership who lack integrity and thus by definition are hypocrites."

  - John F. MacArthur, The Power of Integrity, pp. ix-x

3. Know our God

- Have a proper blend of the subjective/experiential and the objective/theological
  - The sons of Eli did not "know the Lord" — (**yada**). No experiential knowledge of God. They had failed to "stand in the council of God" (Jeremiah 23:18).
  - They had disregarded the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). They had scorned the "legal judgment" (**mispat**) and the offering (2:13, 17) of God.

- Treat God’s Word with Humility and Integrity

- In contrast, “… the people who know (yada) their God will display strength and take action.” (Daniel 11:32 LSB). That action will seek the glory of God and will demonstrate integrity.

- Remember that He has said “ ‘By those who come near Me, I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be glorified.’” (Leviticus 10:3 LSB)

4. Do Not Expect Secrecy

"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. So he said to them, "Why do you do such things, the evil things that I hear from all these people?" (1 Samuel 2:22-23 LSB)

"The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their sins follow after. So also good works are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed." (1 Timothy 5:24-25 LSB)

See also Numbers 32:23; Isaiah 59:12; Mark 4:22; II Corinthians 4:2

- “Through the years, I’ve said this thousands of times: time and truth go hand in hand. Given enough time, the truth comes out. You can’t hide your heart.”
    - John MacArthur, The Man of God, pp. 30

5. Guard against a Hardening of the Heart

- When informed of an ongoing problem, when warned against a certain practice, respond with humble action.
  - Despite "common knowledge" of his son's sins, despite two warnings from unlikely sources (the unnamed "Man of God", Samuel) Eli, as Judge and High Priest, took no action to restrain them. Cf. Ahab, I Kings 21:27-29.
  - The sons of Eli — "But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for Yahweh desired to put them to death." (1 Samuel 2:25 LSB)

- “... Eli's sons did not listen to him because ("for") Yahweh had decided to put them to death. Hophni's and Phinehas' resistance was not the rationale for Yahweh's judgment but the result of his judgment. A perfectly just judgment. We cannot divorce verse 25 from the previous account of Hophni's and Phinehas' impudence and immorality. In that light verse 25b says that for their persisting rebellion Yahweh decided to put them to death and that, therefore, they had not listened to Eli’s plea. So the text teaches that someone can remain so firm in his rebellion that God will confirm him in it, so much so that he will remain utterly deaf to and unmoved by any warning of judgment or pleas for repentance. “
  - Dale Ralph Davis, I Samuel: Looking on the Heart, pp. 33-34

6. Guard Against "Self-Interest" and the Love of Money

- The sons of Eli — and Eli (I Samuel 2:29; 4:18) — had "made [themselves] fat" by forcefully taking more of the people's offerings than God had directed.
- Acts 20:33-34; I Timothy 3:3

- Caution with “self-dealing transactions”
- Honor the intent of your donors; honor the representations made to them
- Know and comply with pertinent legal standards in these areas

7. Cultivate Active Elder Financial Oversight

- Of the use of donated funds;
- Giving to be primarily through the local church (I Corinthians 16:1-4)
- Subject to the oversight of the elders
  - Possible training in basic accounting
  - Procedures to guard against embezzlement

- “God’s funds should only be put in the hands of a church’s most godly men, who will prayerfully and in the energy of the Holy Spirit supervise its use, as priests who present the offerings of the people of God.”
    - John F. MacArthur, MacArthur New Testament Commentary I Corinthians, chapter 46, pp. 456; See also “Concerning the Collection” Parts 2 and 3, November 6, 13, 1977, Grace to You, 1884 and 1885

8. Guard against Sexual Temptation

- "An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife ..." (1 Timothy 3:2 LSB)
- Treat "the younger women as sisters, in all purity." (1 Timothy 5:2 LSB)
- Avoid sexual temptation — and "sexual harassment" — within the church workplace (I Samuel 2:22)

9. Maintain Elder Accountability

- Eli knew of the sins of his sons, his fellow priests and orally rebuked them – but did nothing. (I Samuel 2:22-25)
- “Those who continue in sin, reprove in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful. I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His elect angels, to observe these instructions without bias, doing nothing in partiality. Do not lay hands upon anyone hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; **keep yourself pure.**”
    - (1 Timothy 5:20–22 LSB)

10. Respond Wisely to "Attacks" — Even When Slanderous

- Avoid public response
- Is there <u>any</u> truth? If so, take corrective action. Doing so will bring something good out of evil.

- “So when we hear of others talking against us behind our backs, though they do very ill in so doing, yet the right improvement of it will be, to reflect upon ourselves, and consider whether we indeed have not those faults which they lay to our charge. This will be a more Christian and a more wise improvement of it, than to be in a rage, to revile again, and to entertain an ill-will towards them for their evil-speaking. This is the most wise and prudent improvement of such things. Hereby we may get good out of evil. And this is the surest way to defeat the designs of our enemies in reviling andbackbiting us. They do it from ill will, and to do us an injury; but in this way we may turn it to our own good.”
    - — Jonathan Edwards (“A Christian’s Cautions”)

Conclusion

- “Ichabod” marks the disastrous consequences of compromised and disqualified leadership. In contrast, God promised that He would raise up a “faithful priest” (I Samuel 2:35). God continues to raise up faithful leaders marked by obedience and integrity for His glory.

- “Fight the good fight of faith.”
  (1 Timothy 6:12 LSB)

“Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

- “Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal might! Amen.” (1 Timothy 6:12-16 LSB)

Possible Q & A