



Read:

1 SAMUEL 2;12-36 'ELI'S SONS'

Read PP chapter 56

The Story:

1. What was the law concerning a repentant sinner's blood offering to be sacrificed:

(Lev 3:14-16) All the fat belongs to the Lord. All the fat alone was to be burned on the altar. No Israelite is to eat fat or blood. Specified pieces were taken from the boiling pot for the priests. The remainder was for the bringer of the sacrifice and his family to eat in a sacrificial feast. Thus all hearts were to be directed, in gratitude and faith, to the great Sacrifice that was to take away the sin of the world. PP576

How did Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas do?

They weren't satisfied with their share of the offerings as stipulated by the Lord. After the people had offered their sacrifices and were preparing for the sacred feast, Eli's sons would send their servants to take whatever meat they could. They jabbed their three-pronged forks into the boiling pots and took whatever stuck to their forks, whether there was enough left for the family offering the sacrifice or not.

To make matters worse, before a sacrifice was placed on the altar, one of Eli's sons' servants would say to the man who brought the sacrifice, "Remember that part of this sacrifice belongs to my master, the priest, and he wants his share now before it is given to the Lord." If the man refused and reminded Eli's sons' servant that the Lord had already chosen which parts were His and which parts go to the priests, the servant would say, "My master wants me to take the best part for him now, because he wants it raw, not cooked. If you don't let me have it, I'll go back and get the other servants and we'll take it by force." Eli's sons laughed about it and showed contempt for the Lord.

Over the years Eli heard about the wicked things his sons were doing, but he never corrected them. He shrank from crossing their wills and so failed to deny them anything. He kept making excuses for what they were doing and as time went on, they became more wicked. They even forced the women who served at the entrance of the Sanctuary to sleep with them. *Clear Word v.13-6, 22*

2. What were the results among the congregation from the actions of Hophni and Phinehas as priests?

Their irreverence soon robbed the service of its holy and solemn significance, and the people "abhorred the offering of the Lord". Many people, filled with indignation at the corrupt course of Hophni and Phinehas, ceased to come up to the appointed place of worship. The service which God had ordained was despised and neglected because it was associated with the sins of wicked men, while those whose hearts were inclined to evil were emboldened in sin. Ungodliness, profligacy, and even idolatry prevailed to a fearful extent. PP 576-7

3. What was the unnamed Prophet's prophecy? (v.27-36)

"Wasn't your ancestor, Aaron, a slave in Egypt? Didn't I choose him out of all the men in Israel to be my priest, to minister at my altar, to burn incense before me and to wear the garments of the high priest? Didn't I give to him and his family a share in all the offerings to be burned on the altar? Why then are your sons so greedy, taking more than their share of the sacrifices and offerings that the people bring to me? Aren't these sacrifices and offerings mine? Your sons are stealing what belongs to their God. And what have you done about it? You think more of your sons than you do of me. How long are you going to let them do this? How long are you going to let them steal from me to satisfy their greed and fatten themselves on my sacrifices?"

Therefore, the Lord, the God of Israel says, 'I promised that your family would always serve me. But your sons have ignored the conditions of this promise. I will no longer honor those living in sin and creating disrespect for the priesthood, no matter who their ancestors are. I will only honor those who honor me. Over the years I will close out your family line and cut it off from the priesthood. No one in your family will live to be old. They will all die in the prime of life. In spite of the good things that I will do for Israel, you will see trouble. I will not let one in your family live to be as old as you. Some of your descendants will die by the sword and those who escape the sword will grieve in their hearts and cry bitter tears over what happens to their families.

Hophni and Phinehas will die on the same day as a sign to you that what I have said will come to pass. I will raise up a faithful young man to serve me as high priest who will also be my prophet and will govern Israel for me. He will listen to me and do what's in My heart. I will establish his family, and his descendant will continue to serve as priests, even after Israel turns the government over to a king. Those left in your family will come to him begging for money and food. They'll beg him for a job helping the priests, just to get something to eat." *Clear Word v.27-36*

4. Did Eli ever take his sons to task? To what effect?

Yes, feebly. When Eli was about 90 years old he said to his sons, "Why do you keep doing such wicked things? Over the years I've heard all about what you've been doing but I have prayed that you would come to your senses. What you're doing isn't right. Your example is not what it should be and everywhere I go the Lord's people are talking about it. You know that if a man sins against another person but makes restitution, he may be pardoned. But when a man sins against the Lord, He's solely responsible to Him. No one else can help him." But the sons didn't pay any attention to him. So the Lord decided He must put an end to their wickedness. *Clear Word v.23-5*



The Principles:

Read Testimonies for the church vol. 4 Page 516-17

1. What the 'sin was of Eli'?

Eli was a good man, pure in morals; but he was too indulgent. He displeased God because he did not strengthen the weak points in his character. He did not want to hurt the feelings of anyone and had not the moral courage to rebuke and reprove sin. His sons were vile men; yet he did not remove them from their position of trust....He loved peace and harmony, and became more and more insensible to impurity and crime. ... When existing evils are not met and checked, because men have too little courage to reprove wrong, or because they have too little interest or are too indolent to tax their own powers in putting forth earnest efforts to purify the family or the church of God, they are accountable for the evil which may result in consequence of neglect to do their duty. We are just as accountable for evils that we might have checked in others, by reproof, by warning, by exercise of parental or pastoral authority, as if we were guilty of the acts ourselves.

Eli was gentle, loving, and kind, and had a true interest in the service of God and the prosperity of His cause. He was a man who had power in prayer.... But he was wanting; he did not have firmness of character to reprove sin and execute justice against the sinner so that God could depend upon him to keep Israel pure.... Sin is sin; righteousness is righteousness. The trumpet note of warning must be sounded... We are living in a fearfully wicked age. The worship of God will become corrupted unless there are side-awake men at every post of duty....God wants brave men for action, who will not regard the setting up of idols and the coming in of abominations without lifting up the voice like a trumpet, showing the people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins. *4Testimonies 516-17*

Eli was an indulgent father. Loving peace and ease, he did not exercise his authority to correct the evil habits and passions of his children. Rather than contend with them or punish them, he would submit to their will and give them their own way. He did not regard the education of his sons as one of the most important of his responsibilities, he treated the matter as of little consequence. Eli shrank from this duty, because it involved crossing the will of his sons, and would make it necessary to punish and deny them. Without weighing the terrible consequences that would follow his course, he indulged his children in whatever they desired and neglected the work of fitting them for the service of God and the duties of life.

Eli erred greatly in permitting his sons to minister in holy office. He became blinded to their sins; but at last they reached a pass where he could no longer hide his eyes from the crimes of his sons. The people complained of their violent deeds, and the high priest was grieved and distressed. He dared remain silent no longer. But his sons cared for no one else but themselves. Their hard hearts were not touched. They heard his mild admonitions, but would not change their evil course though warned of the consequences of their sin. Had Eli dealt justly with his wicked sons, they would have been rejected from the priestly office and punished with death. But when the judge of Israel neglected his work, God took the matter in hand.

PP 575-7

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2. The SDA Commentary says, "It pleased God to kill Hophni and Phinehas". Does God strike people dead without giving them another chance?

Eli's sons had rejected God's protective control, chosen their own selfish way, and deliberately forsaken the counsel of Heaven. In turning away from the Lord (PS 34:7) they sealed their own doom. It was the Philistines who killed them yet God permitted their death because of their refusal to follow Him. God leaves the rejecters of His mercy to themselves, to reap what they have sown. GC36

Questions and Take-aways:

"Sons of Belial"

Deut 13:13 ...evil men have come along and taught the people to worship strange gods...

Judas

King Saul

Hophni and Phinehas

All who've rejected the Holy Spirit

v.35 a faithful priest...

If he chooses to do so, man may associate himself to Christ. If he refuses, he has only himself to blame.

SDA commentary p.464