

Eli 1Samuel 2:22-25

22 Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. 23 So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. 24 "No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the LORD'S people transgress. 25 "If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?" Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the LORD desired to kill them. NKJV

Eli means *ascent, elevation*, and concr. *the highest*, Ges.

And it would seem that God had planned him to be so. He was high priest, a descendant from Aaron through Ithamar the youngest son of Aaron. He was also exalted in Israel as a judge for forty years. He also had been blessed with great age, being in his nineties. God had blessed him with two sons and several grandsons.

But Eli lived in a difficult time. This book follows at the end of the period of the judges. And one verse that describes so well that time is Judges 21:25 25. In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

But as it has been with other great men so it was with Eli, there were some fatal flaws in his life.

I. Eli's Children Reflected on Him

A. They were wicked.

1. 1 Sam 2:12 Now the sons of Eli were corrupt;
2. Wickedness always permeates the whole life of a person.
 - a. Regardless of what our society says.
 - b. "What does his personal life have to do with the way he does his job?"
 - c. The idea being that a person might be wicked in his personal life but a good man everywhere else.
 - d. What a fallacy!

B. They were sacrilegious.

1. 1 Sam 2:12 Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the LORD. 13 And the priests' custom with the people was that when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fleshhook in his hand while the meat was boiling. 14 Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; and the priest would take for himself all that the fleshhook brought up. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. 15 Also, before they burned the

fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who sacrificed, "Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you, but raw." 16 And if the man said to him, "They should really burn the fat first; then you may take as much as your heart desires," he would then answer him, "No, but you must give it now; and if not, I will take it by force." 17 Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

2. They saw the worship of the people as just a way to satisfy themselves.
3. They cared more for their own belly than the offerings to the Lord.

C. They were immoral.

1. 1 Sam 2: 22 Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.
2. Not only were they immoral but used their office as priest to further their sinful ways.
3. Think of how much they despised God, His worship and his tabernacle.

D. Their sin also caused others to sin.

1. 2:24 "No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the LORD'S people transgress.
2. It is so true, that when our leaders become corrupt the nation has that as their standard of conduct.

E. They had sinned beyond the place of repentance.

1. 1Jo 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.
2. Eli knew the seriousness of his son's sins.
3. 2:25 "If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?" Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the LORD desired to kill them.
4. Eli made a distinction between sinning against men and sinning against God.
5. God was not going to allow these men to escape judgment.
6. 3:14 "And 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.

II. Eli's fault was in that he had not dealt with their sin in a suitable manner.

- A. His problem was that he cared more for his children than for God.
 - 1. 1 Sam 2: 29 ‘Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling place, and honor your sons more than Me,
 - 2. Now some might think that was an admirable quality, but it is not.
 - 3. Lu 14:26 "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.
 - 4. Jesus is not saying that we should hate our parents, but in comparison with our love and dedication to Him it would seem like hate.
- B. He only half heartedly rebuked them.
 - 1. 2:23 So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. 24 "No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear.
 - 2. 3:13 "For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them.
- C. Sense Eli knew the holiness and judgment of God, why did he not take more forceful measures to restrain his sons when they sinned against God?

III. God’s Judgment

- A. The house of Eli was to be removed from being priests.
- B. His two sons would die in one day.
- C. Judgment would also fall on the whole nation, all for the sins of Hophni and Phinehas.
 - 1. 1 Sam 4: 3 And when the people had come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines?
 - 2. Instead of seeking God and repenting they try the natural way out.
 - 3. They send for the ark, trying to force God to fight for them.
 - 4. But in the following battle, Israel is defeated, the ark is captured and Hophni and Phinehas are killed.
 - 5. When Eli hears news of all this, he falls off his chair backward and dies.
 - 6. The wife of Phinehas, who is almost full term in her pregnancy goes into premature child birth. 4:21 Then she named the child Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel!" because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband.

- IV. Maybe the greatest tragedy was Eli's failure to repent.
- A. 1Sa 3:18 Then Samuel told him everything, and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It is the LORD. Let Him do what seems good to Him."
 - B. What a difference might have been if he had only repented and removed his sons from being priests in Israel.
 - C. Maybe when they say the seriousness of their father they might have repented as well.

1 Sam 2: 22 Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. 23 So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. 24 "No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the LORD'S people transgress. 25 "If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?" Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the LORD desired to kill them.

1 Sam 2: 29 'Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling place, and honor your sons more than Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?' 30 "Therefore the LORD God of Israel says: 'I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever.' But now the LORD says: 'Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. 31 'Behold, the days are coming that I will cut off your arm and the arm of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house. 32 'And you will see an enemy in My dwelling place, despite all the good which God does for Israel. And there shall not be an old man in your house forever. 33 'But any of your men whom I do not cut off from My altar shall consume your eyes and grieve your heart. And all the descendants of your house shall die in the flower of their age. 34 'Now this shall be a sign to you that will come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall die, both of them. 35 'Then I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in My heart and in My mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before My anointed forever. 36 'And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left in your house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and say, "Please, put me in one of the priestly positions, that I may eat a piece of bread.'"

1 Sam 3: 11 ¶ Then the LORD said to Samuel: "Behold, I will do something in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. 12 "In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. 13 "For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them. 14 "And 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." 15 So Samuel lay down until morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision. 16 Then Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son!" And he answered, "Here I am." 17 And he said, "What is the word that the LORD spoke to you? Please do not hide it from me. God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the things that He said

to you." 18 Then Samuel told him everything, and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It is the LORD. Let Him do what seems good to Him."

1 Sam 4: 3 And when the people had come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD from Shiloh to us, that when it comes among us it may save us from the hand of our enemies." 4 So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who dwells between the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. 5 And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted so loudly that the earth shook. 6 Now when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, "What does the sound of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean?" Then they understood that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp. 7 So the Philistines were afraid, for they said, "God has come into the camp!" And they said, "Woe to us! For such a thing has never happened before. 8 "Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. 9 "Be strong and conduct yourselves like men, you Philistines, that you do not become servants of the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Conduct yourselves like men, and fight!"

10 ¶ So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent. There was a very great slaughter, and there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. 11 Also the ark of God was captured; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

12 ¶ Then a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line the same day, and came to Shiloh with his clothes torn and dirt on his head. 13 Now when he came, there was Eli, sitting on a seat by the wayside watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city and told it, all the city cried out. 14 When Eli heard the noise of the outcry, he said, "What does the sound of this tumult mean?" And the man came quickly and told Eli. 15 Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were so dim that he could not see. 16 Then the man said to Eli, "I am he who came from the battle. And I fled today from the battle line." And he said, "What happened, my son?" 17 So the messenger answered and said, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has been a great slaughter among the people. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead; and the ark of God has been captured." 18 Then it happened, when he made mention of the ark of God, that Eli fell off the seat backward by the side of the gate; and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

19 ¶ Now his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, due to be delivered; and when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and gave birth, for her labor pains came upon her. 20 And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, "Do not fear, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer, nor did she regard it. 21 Then she named the child Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel!" because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. 22 And she said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."