

## Message #6

## I Samuel 2:11-17; 22-24

One of the most heart-wrenching things that a parent could ever face would be to drop your child off at school or church and then learn they were gunned down by some diabolical killer. I have never faced that and my heart goes out to those who have. You do not ever expect to find that kind of evil or corruption in school or in a church. But that kind of evil exists and at times it hits in places you would never think possible.

There are many people who think if they send their children to a Christian School or to some Christian Church, they can feel happy and secure about where those children are. There is no question that we can thank God for a good Christian school and a good Christian church, but one should not automatically assume that just because it is called “Christian,” it is a place that is safe and secure. The truth is the Devil goes to these kinds of places. The Devil prowls around even sacred places to see if he can do his evil work. He has his plants in a variety of places and God’s people need to stay alert and active.

We may recall that when Jesus Christ was here on earth, He had what has been called a “last supper” with His disciples in an Upper Room. This was just prior to His betrayal and this certainly was the most special and sacred moments of His life and it would have been the most sacred place to be that night. But in that Upper Room that night was the Devil (John 13:27). No one saw it or knew it but Jesus. But that Devil was right there.

When Hannah took her little boy to the Tabernacle in Shiloh, I am certain she thought this is the most wonderful and sacred spot on the face of the earth. This had been the very place where she had prayed and where God had answered her prayer. When she left little Samuel at the Tabernacle, she probably assumed this is a safe, holy environment. Little did she know that it was a place of complete moral corruption.

God was sovereign in this and God would protect and promote Samuel, but the fact is, this place was a hedonistic den of corruption. When we come to this part of Samuel’s narrative, what God reveals is this:

**WHEN MY PLACE OF WORSHIP BECOMES CORRUPT AND IRREVERENT, I WILL REMOVE THE CORRUPT AND IRREVERENT LEADERSHIP AND RAISE UP AND REPLACE THEM WITH THOSE GODLY.**

God will not permit evil in a true place of worship to go on forever. This is true in a church and this is true in our own life. God will put a stop to it. He may in pure grace put up with it for a while, but in the end, He will put a stop to it. The warning to the church of Ephesus was you either get refocused right or I will remove the lampstand out of its place (Rev. 2:5).

This is even true eschatologically. There are godless, evil things happening in this world right now and happening in the political world. This evil will continue to intensify until God says that is enough and at that point He will bring on the Tribulation and He will pour out His wrath and He will literally kill most people living in the world.

Now Samuel was plunked right in the middle of this evil environment. He did not initially realize how bad things were, but God is about to show him and he will turn out to be the one God will raise up and use to replace those who were evil leaders. Samuel will become God's leader and God will destroy the sons of Eli, who were supposed to be leaders.

In these verses there are two persons who are specifically identified and described:

**PERSON #1** – Samuel is left in Shiloh and has a godly ministry. **2:11**

In this verse we learn that after they took Samuel to Shiloh, and after they worshipped God and after Hannah offered her praise and prophetic utterance to God, Elkanah traveled back to his home in Kadesh. Obviously, Hannah went with him. They had dropped Samuel off at the tabernacle, just as Hannah had promised. From this verse we learn three facts about Samuel:

**Fact #1** - Samuel was a boy. **2:11a**

The Hebrew word “boy” (naar) is a gender word that refers to a boy and not a girl. It is a word that may be used to refer to a newborn male child (Ex. 2:6; I Sam. 4:21) or it may refer to one who is in his young boyhood years (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, pp. 555-556).

What we know is that Samuel was old enough at this point to minister. So we suspect he was a young boy who was old enough to be given certain assignments and responsibilities. He was probably between 3-5 years old when this begins.

**Fact #2** - Samuel was ministering to the LORD. **2:11b**

**We learn from I Samuel 1:28 that Samuel first worshipped God at Shiloh and now in verse 11 he is ministering for God at Shiloh.** What Samuel was specifically doing was helping Eli at the sanctuary with what he could do and what is significant to see from this is that God views it as ministry to Him. The truth is Samuel, as a boy, was far more godly and priestly than Eli's sons who were the actual priests.

This is a very important point to realize. When God's people help or minister to one who has been called and gifted or appointed by God, God considers it ministry to Him. Samuel was helping Eli and God viewed it as ministry to Him.

There is a great example of that in the New Testament. We may recall that when the Philippians gave money to Paul, Paul said it was not only a ministry for God, but it went on their account and was “a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice well-pleasing to God” (Phil. 4:17-18). They were helping Paul and God viewed it as ministry to Him.

When we read something like that, it is clear that God does view ministry to those He has called and appointed as ministry to Him.

It is also important to realize that when we are at the sanctuary ministering, we are in the presence of God. We must not ever take that lightly.

**Fact #3** - Samuel was ministering before Eli the priest. **2:11c**

Samuel was accountable to Eli. He was working with and for Eli. It is true it was ministry to God, but it also was connected directly to Eli, who was the priest.

Service to the Lord is connected to submitting to proper God-ordained leadership. Later in this very book you will see a corrupt King named Saul, and David will be anointed to replace him. The thing that is so unique is that David is always respectful of Saul because he realizes that God gave him that responsibility.

There can be little doubt that what God specifically wants to do is contrast the ministry of Samuel with the ministry of Eli's sons. Samuel had a wonderful, God-honoring, God-glorifying ministry as he was serving God, but it was not the same for Eli's sons.

**PERSON #2** – Eli's sons are priests in Shiloh who have a worthless ministry. **2:12-17; 22-24**

We may remember that Eli had falsely accused Hannah of being a drunken, worthless woman (I Sam. 1:14-15). The actual ones who were worthless were his own sons. In direct contrast to the godly ministry of the boy Samuel, Eli's sons were totally and completely godless. In fact, the text says they were "worthless men."

The Hebrew word "worthless" (belial) is one that means in God's estimation these men were vile, wicked, unprofitable and useless and worthless. The word indicates God viewed them as good for nothing and satanic. There was no value or profit to their existence in ministry (*Ibid.*, p. 122).

Now in this context there are at least four reasons God viewed these men as worthless. By the way, this does show that one may go to worship services regularly and actually be a leader and God sees them as good for nothing. God views them as vile, wicked and useless.

**Reason #1** - Eli's sons were worthless because they did not know God. **2:12**

It all started right here. These men in leadership did not have a real personal relationship with God. They did not know God. They were leaders in religious worship, but they did not have a real relationship with God. They are worthless.

Truth is worth is found in a relationship with God. In fact, one does not have real value until one is in a right relationship with the God who ordained their life.

Eli's sons were frauds. They were priests of Israel and they were ministering in Shiloh and they did not know the God of Israel or the God of the Bible.

Just because one is a leader does not mean he actually knows God. We may be certain God knows the leader because "the LORD is a God of knowledge" (I Sam. 2:3). Just because someone gets elected to be a leader does not mean he/she knows the God of the Bible. Many worthless, good-for-nothing frauds end up in positions of power and leadership. Look at Eli's sons.

There are lots of people like this. They hang around the place of worship, but they have no real, personal relationship with God. They have no conviction of sin. They have no interest in lining up their beliefs and lives with the Word of God. They are worthless, satanic frauds.

**Reason #2** - Eli's sons were worthless because they disobeyed God's Word. **2:13-17**

The offerings were very sacred to God. God specifically and carefully detailed how and when those offerings were to be given. Eli's sons didn't care what God's Word said and they were loose and careless in what they did.

When it came to obeying the Word of God in the offerings, there were two specific violations of which they were guilty:

**(Violation #1)** - They took more than what God allotted them. **2:13-14**

The allotted portion for the priests is described and detailed in Leviticus 7:33-34. They made a good living, God saw to that. They were entitled to good provisions for themselves and their families. The priests were to receive the breast and the thigh. It was very precisely spelled out what belonged to them. But Eli's sons were lazy and greedy.

The sons of Eli didn't concern themselves with the Word of God. They would come up to some sacred offering with a three-pronged fork and take out as much as they wanted. It did not matter to them whether or not it was even Biblical. They did it anyway. They took as much as they wanted and they took what they wanted

**(Violation #2)** - They took their offering before they were Biblically authorized to do it. **2:15-16**

According to Leviticus 3:3, 5, the fat was to be burned first before the priests were to take their portion. The sons of Eli didn't care about Biblical truth on this matter. They would take it before the fat was burned and if a man challenged them, they would threaten to take the whole thing by force. These were godless and corrupt priests who indulged themselves in every way.

We are not far removed from this at all. We are living in a time when most churches could care less what God's Word says about worship and the careful study of the Word of God. Frankly, most churches do what they want regardless of what the Word of God says.

You can see that with women pastors. You can see that in places that are supposed to be sacred that have become secular.

**Reason #3** - Eli's sons were worthless because of their immorality. **2:22**

**Verse 22** begins with the fact that Eli was very old. He could not be at these places where his sons were, but he was hearing about what they were doing. He heard the reports.

These worthless sons of Eli were regularly involved in immoral behavior with the women who served at the tabernacle. There is nothing more detestable than this. There is nothing more worthless and useless than a religious leader who uses his position to seduce women. Do you want to know what is so bad about this? We are not even shocked by this anymore. Men who use their religious leadership positions to pursue immoral things is something we hear about all the time.

The church is to be a place of sacred worship dedicated to purity. When a leader turns it into a place to pursue his sinful lusts and passions, that church is totally worthless. I do not agree with churches that have all of the subgroups. For example, some churches feature their "singles groups." I know of too many stories where the singles group became a sexual group.

Lest you think I am being a little too rigid and intense on this, I remind us all of how Jesus Christ blasted the church of Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29) because it permitted a woman to teach and lead people into immoral behavior. He said I will start killing people in the church who do that.

Now I believe the best place to meet a potential mate is at church. But I think it is always in the context of real, true worship. Those who pray and ask God to lead them and then faithfully worship God will discover God will do just that.

**Reason #4** - Eli's sons were worthless because of their testimony. **2:23-24**

The testimony of these sons was not one of those who loved God and His Word; it was one of immoral behavior and worthless worship. Eli confronted them with that.

Their testimony was "circulating" and it was affecting others. People were discussing the fact that those two priestly sons of Eli were being immoral at the very temple where they were supposed to serve God.

There is nothing more detestable in God's sight than for a minister to get the testimony of one who is an immoral womanizer. That is as evil as it gets. A minister should have a reputation that he loves God and the Word of God and does his best to obey it.

That is not the way it was for Eli's sons. May their testimony never be ours.