

Message #8

I Samuel 2:27-36

When you see a police officer pull into your driveway and get out of his car and head toward your front door, it is rarely good news. Usually this unexpected visit is not for the purpose of the officer stopping by to let you know everything is good and you are well-liked. Usually when an officer stops by, something is drastically wrong.

When we study the Bible, what we discover is whenever a “man of God” shows up for apparently no reason in the Old Testament, the news is not typically good. What happens here is a “man of God” shows up to confront Eli to inform him that God is going to kill both of his sons because of their sin.

Eli’s sons had been involved in evil things for years. Eli challenged his sons about that (2:23), but he did not take disciplinary action and just let the sin continue. As a result, God said, “I am going to put a stop to it right now.”

What we clearly see here is this:

WHEN LEADERS PERSIST IN SIN AND REFUSE TO REPENT, THERE WILL COME A POINT WHEN GOD WILL SOVEREIGNLY REMOVE THAT LEADER WITH LOSS OF OFFICE AND LOSS OF LIFE.

There are times when God says, “I have had enough.” There are times when God says, “You have fooled around in sin long enough and I am putting a stop to it.” That is what happens here.

Now there are four simple parts to this:

PART #1 – God sent a messenger to Eli. **2:27a**

We may notice that **verse 27** begins with the adverb “then,” which connects us back to the preceding context. Samuel was growing in favor with God, but Eli’s sons weren’t. They were worthless religious leaders. They did not know God. They stole offerings that did not belong to them. They did not care about the Word of God. They were involved in immorality at the Tabernacle. They were worthless, useless, good-for-nothing religious leaders.

The text says, “a man of God came to Eli.” We do not exactly know who this man of God was because he was not named, but typically the phrase “man of God” meant a very special messenger of God such as a prophet of God. We know it is not Samuel because Samuel is just a boy. **So God sent an unnamed prophet to Eli to warn him that God was going to send a horrible judgment against him and his family and his descendants.**

Often prophets, including Samuel, were referred to as “a man of God” (I Sam. 9:6, 7, 8, 10). This term was used for Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha and others.

In fact, Robert Bergen said that the term “man of God” is used as a term for a prophet 71 times in the Old Testament (*I & II Samuel*, p. 82).

In Judges, an angel is called “man of God” (Judges 13:6, 8). In the New Testament, Timothy is called a man of God (I Tim. 6:11; II Tim. 3:17).

What we conclude by this is that “a man of God” is not simply a title of a godly man, but rather one who has been specifically singled out by God to actually communicate God’s Word and God’s will to others.

Now carefully notice how the prophet began “thus says the LORD.” That is the job. The job of a man of God is to accurately communicate the Word of God. This is his responsibility.

In this specific case, God sent a man of God, an unnamed prophet, to Eli to inform him of the negative things He was about to do.

In this Grace Age dispensation, the Holy Spirit convicts a person of sin. I am convinced that God’s Spirit convicts a believer of something long before He steps in and does something about it. In I Corinthians 11, God says in the context of dealing with things, if you judge yourself you will not be judged. Obviously, the Holy Spirit convicts someone of something and God gives the person time to get it resolved. However, there does come a point when God says, “I have had enough of you and I have had enough of your sin.” That is what happened here.

Even in the worst moments of decay in religion and society, God still has His messengers who communicate His truth.

PART #2 – God’s messenger reminds Eli of God’s priestly election and provisions. **2:27b-28**

The man of God prefaces the heart of the message by saying that God had chosen the priest. The phrase “the house of your father” refers to the selection of the whole house of Aaron to be involved in priestly matters (Ex. 4:14-16; 28:1). What a privilege it was to hold such a prestigious position. We don’t even know how Eli got into this position except by selection of God.

In **verse 28**, when this man of God asks Eli a question about this selection of him and his family, he is doing so to prick his conscience. Eli was a descendant of Ithamar, Aaron’s fourth son (14:3).

Eli and his family had the special privilege of being chosen by God to be the priestly ministers. **He had permitted them to earn their living working at the tabernacle.** He allowed them to wear a priestly ephod, a sleeveless vest that extended down below the waist (Ex. 28:1-6). He allowed them to burn the incense and have all of the provisions of the altar.

God had specifically seen to it that these priests were well-compensated by these offerings. The sacrificial meat portions were given to the priests from all the offerings (Lev. 7:34; 10:14).

God had wonderfully chosen Eli and his family and given them this great privilege and great provisions. But for his sons, it was not good enough.

PART #3 – God’s messenger rebukes Eli for his neglect. 2:29

This man of God brought two specific rebukes and charges to Eli, concerning him and his sons:

Rebuke #1 - Eli is rebuked for allowing worship to be taken lightly. 2:29a

God’s sacrifices are sacred to Him. They were part of sacred worship. Those sacrifices were being treated disrespectfully. God had given very specific instructions as to how they were to be handled and this was not being followed. Notice God says it is “My sacrifice” and “My offering.” By their conduct, they treated the offerings disrespectfully. God viewed what they were doing as disrespectfully kicking His offerings.

The choice parts of the offering were to be burned in the fire as an offering to God (Lev. 7:25). These priests were eating that portion for themselves. Sacred worship was not sacred and the Word of God meant little to nothing to this priestly family.

It is no light matter in God’s mind to treat sacred things lightly. The leaders of a church who permit preaching and prayer to be taken lightly will face serious judgment. Those church leaders who are permitting God’s sacred sanctuary to be turned into a make people feel good night club place of entertainment will one day face a Holy God and face serious judgment.

Rebuke #2 - Eli is rebuked for honoring his sons more than God. 2:29b

God does not blame Eli for the horrible sins of his sons; he blames Eli for his own sin of honoring his sons above God. He feebly rebuked them but he did not put a stop to it. Here is a rebuke that is needed today in most churches because many people choose family above God. God loves to see those who choose Him and His Word above family. Eli was a priest and what he was choosing to do was to appease his family, rather than honor God.

You and I are living in a time when this happens all the time. If some family event falls on a day of worship, most people say forget worship, and let’s focus on the family. God is not pleased by this mentality. Those who honor God will be honored and those who do not won’t.

The very first of the ten commandments is that God is to be honored above everything and everyone (Ex. 20:2-3). Eli was putting his sons above God in that he was not putting a stop to what they were doing.

PART #4 – God’s messenger warns of coming judgment. 2:30-36

This is a very important text of Scripture and in it we learn a great deal about the judgment of God. There are eight lessons to learn here:

Lesson #1 - God’s judgment will highly honor those who honor Him. 2:30a

The word “honor” (kabad) is a word that means to honor something at a great, glorious and weighty level (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 381). This word speaks of having a high view of God. God promises that those who honor me at a great level, I will reciprocate and honor them at a great level.

This key point is true in any period of time. Those who honor God, God will honor. Honor God with your life, worship, time, money, work, play, and God will honor you.

Those who reverence God, honor God, love God and live for God will see God do some amazing things.

Lesson #2 - God’s judgment will lightly esteem those who did not honor Him. 2:30b

Having a position of leadership or holding an office without character that honors God will not be one God honors. The word “despise” (batsah) means to make light of something by despising it and treating it with contempt (*Ibid.*, p. 110).

Now what they were specifically doing was they were treating sacred worship as nothing more than a place to pursue their secular and sensual lusts. They had no reverence for God or His property.

God says the one who does that to me will be “lightly esteemed” by Me. That word means they are despised by God and viewed as those of little account or value (*Ibid.*, p. 733).

Lesson #3 - God’s judgment will break one who didn’t honor Him. 2:31

The idea of breaking strength is the idea of breaking down the strength and ability to function in the way God deems. The Hebrew literally means God will “chop off the arms” which is a metaphor for violently removing them from ministry. Future generations of Eli’s family would suffer penalties because they so despised God. God would not permit Eli’s descendants to live long but would actually cause them to experience untimely and premature deaths (I Sam. 22:17-19). In fact, not only would Eli’s sons be executed, but also 85 (22:18) of his descendants would be executed by King Saul (I Sam. 22:6-23).

God would literally cut short their reign and their lives. God can break down the strongest. He can chop the biggest down and bring them to nothing. He has sovereign ways to weaken even the most powerful.

Lesson #4 - God's judgment sends major distress to one who does not honor Him. **2:32**

God says you will see trouble in My sanctuary that I will cause. God can and does cause a person's world to cave in and collapse. God can send terrible distress to a relationship. God can cause a person's world to totally and completely fall apart. He can hit someone with one calamity after another.

Lesson #5 - God's judgment permits others to be elevated as rebuke to one being humiliated. **2:33**

Sometimes living to a ripe old age is not a great blessing, but in fact part of judgment. God would permit Eli to see his sons die as a judgment of God. God was going to let Eli see His judgment against His sons. But there was grace even in that because God would not kill every person in the family who could be a priest.

It appears that God fulfilled this promise with the rise of Zadok, who replaced and "displaced" Abiathar as the high priest in Israel (I Kings 2:35; I Chron. 29:22). Solomon was the one who replaced Abiathar with Zadok (I Kings 2:35). Thus this promise was fulfilled literally. God can remove and replace leadership.

Lesson #6 - God's judgment may authorize an execution and loss of life. **2:34**

The man of God said to Eli that a sign to you that all of this will happen is that God will kill both of your sons on the same day. We learn something important about signs here. **Signs of prophets were for the purpose of verifying and confirming the truth of the Word. Signs were credentials that verified a prophet or an apostle was telling the truth.** Now the specific sign that this prophet was telling the truth is that God would kill both of Eli's sons on the same day.

God does execute people. This is true in the O.T. and the N.T. (I Cor. 11:30; Rev. 2:22-23). There does come a point when God says I am going to take the person's life. In this case, God would use an unusual and negative sign. He would kill both boys on the same day.

God specifically knew what these two sons had been doing and He specifically names them as the target of His judgment. Hophni and Phinehas would be executed and die on the same day. God would cause this to happen. He literally did fulfill this promise. He took both boys' life on the same day (**I Sam. 4:11**).

Lesson #7 - God's judgment that removes corrupt leaders will replace with faithful leaders. **2:35**

God will remove those unfaithful, but He will raise up those who are faithful to replace them. One key to faithfulness is "endurance." One who is faithful to the Lord has staying power from God and those who are not faithful don't have it (Ps. 1:1-3).

God can sovereignly rise up and use any of us, but He also can accomplish anything He wants without us (Esther 4:14). That is exactly what Mordecai said to his own niece.

What is so fascinating is that I am sure that no one had any idea who it would be that God would raise up. He was a little boy working in the tabernacle and his name was Samuel. This would never have been the people's choice, but this was God's choice.

Lesson #8 - God's judgment eventually causes the unfaithful to bow before the faithful. **2:36**

How ironic this is. The gluttonous bullies who were dominating others are now beggars. God's judgment completely reverses everything.

God brought Eli's line to a point where they were no longer making their living off the ministry. They were begging for some assignment so they could just have some bread to eat.

Leaders have a responsibility to honor God as God.

Leaders have a responsibility to see to it that God's offerings and property are viewed as sacred.

Leaders have a responsibility to put a stop to anything that dishonors God and a reverence for Him.

God does choose certain men to be His leaders and it is a wonderful privilege and honor to be supported for preaching and teaching the Word of God..