

# Worthless, Good for Nothing Sons

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[ 0 : 00 ] Take your Bibles tonight, would you?

1 Samuel, that's where we're going to be tonight, and for however long it takes as we kind of! It is full of stories that are familiar to most of us, some of them we have heard as children, some of them are still told in Sunday school classes, you know, some of them are not told because of their content, necessarily, but still they ought to be.

And so tonight we want to look at chapter 2, starting with verse 12. Actually, in a moment I'm going to read, starting with verse 11, but our text really is 12 through 36.

I don't want to read it yet, we'll get to it in just a minute, but I decided I would talk a little bit about the title of my sermon tonight from this text before we actually begin to read it.

So there's kind of a little bit of a build-up or mystery there, and I've entitled this Worthless Good-for-Nothing Sons. That's a title, isn't that a good title?

[ 1 : 26 ] Now, you know, I have to admit that it sounds a little ugly, doesn't it? I mean, there's not anything really uplifting about that title. Worthless Good-for-Nothing Sons.

I hope that when you were young and your father didn't call you that, or mother, hopefully no one has felt that way about you. Sons or men out there, I certainly have never felt that way about my sons, just want to go on record there very quickly.

But it does, you know, all right, the title is a little bit ugly, and you know, to call anyone worthless or good-for-nothing, pretty harsh. And judgmental, really, to make that kind of judgment call, to say that someone is worthless or good-for-nothing.

And I just don't, you know, I think it would be wrong for me to call anyone that, really. I'm not joking. I really, really, really mean that. And if I've ever said anything like that to one of my sons, please forgive me.

But I've never felt that way about them. So it'd be wrong to say that, but it's not wrong for God to make that judgment. And as a matter of fact, God did make that judgment in the passage for tonight out of 1 Samuel chapter 2.

[ 2 : 49 ] And the King James Version, how many of you have a King James Version? Well, a lot more of you than I thought. I'm shocked. I love the King James.

Okay, I kind of drifted to the new King James because I was convinced that a lot of people still had the King James, but I've been doubting that lately. But apparently, many of you do.

And if you have grown up with the King James, then you're going to remember, even if you haven't looked at it already in your Bibles, that the King James translates verse 1 this way, now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial.

Belial. That makes a lot of sense to us, doesn't it? I've just always been kind of wondering, you know, before we had some of these modern translations, what did people understand about that word?

They were sons of Belial. Well, I thought their father was named Eli, not Belial. And so maybe you have wondered what that means. And if you've not looked at any other translation or version of the Bible, maybe you're still wondering.

[ 4 : 01 ] And so, you know, I just want to throw this out to you. Just before we really get into the text, that the word Belial comes straight out of the Hebrew text.

Comes straight out of the Hebrew. It's the Hebrew word. It's pronounced Bel-a-ya-al. That would be kind of the slow way of saying it. But, or Belial.

Belial. That is exactly how you would pronounce the Hebrew word if you were reading the Hebrew text, which none of us will be doing that. I'm not.

I can't. And I don't know. Maybe we have a Hebrew scholar out there. Any Hebrew scholars out there. Maybe there'll be someone who listens to it on the website who knows Hebrew. But that is the Hebrew word. I looked it up just to make sure. And so the King James, what do they do? They make no attempt to substitute an English word there for it.

[ 5 : 01 ] I don't know why. Unless it was just such a common knowledge of the day that everybody knew what Belial meant. Now, all of our other translations have, of course, substituted English words that are, that bear or convey the meaning of the Hebrew word Belial.

But in the King James, it's a transliteration. It just comes straight from the Hebrew. Now, if some of you have a more modern version, like the New American Standard or ESV, and even the New King James version, then you're going to see that there is a word that is used there.

Different words, depending on the text you're looking at. But most of the modern versions, the more literal versions, will use the word worthless.

All right? New King James uses the word corrupt. Corrupt, which, by the way, is not really the best of translations. The word can refer to someone who is corrupt, and certainly in this case, in this usage of the word, here in 1 Samuel chapter 2, certainly is the case with these sons of Eli.

But the word really means worthless. I looked it up in the Hebrew lexicon. All right? And here's what the Hebrew lexicon says.

[ 6 : 36 ] Worthless. A few other words, too, possibilities. Worthless is one of them. And actually, good for nothing is right there in the Hebrew lexicon or dictionary.

So there's, there's, now you understand my title. My sermon title. That's important that you understand the title. Right? So really, titles are not all that important, actually, for sermons.

So here's the point. Eli had two worthless, good for nothing sons. I didn't make that judgment. After reading the text and saying, well, you know, I just think these guys are worthless.

God made that judgment as he inspired the author of 1 Samuel to use that word. God says they are worthless. And so they were.

They were. All right. So let's read the entire passage then, even though I'm going to read quite a bit of it as we go along here. And we're going to go all the way to the end of the chapter.

[ 7 : 37 ] As a matter of fact, I mentioned a moment ago that I want to start with verse 11 instead of verse 12. And there's a reason for that. And not only that, but I want to finish on verse 1 of chapter 3.

So, in a sense, that will be our text. And I'll make it clear at the end of the sermon why I want to include those two verses on each end. All right. Starting with verse 11. Then Elkanah went to his house at Ramah, but the child ministered to the Lord before Eli the priest.

That child, of course, being Samuel. Now, the sons of Eli were corrupt. That's how it's translated in the New King James. Corrupt or worthless. Good for nothing.

They did not know the Lord. And the priest's custom with the people was that when any man offered a sacrifice, and this, by the way, is a reference to the fellowship kind of sacrifice, not one that was done in the temple itself or tabernacle, but a certain kind of sacrifice where they would cook meat and such, and a portion would be given to the Lord as an offering, and the rest would be eaten by the family.

And so this is the kind of sacrifice he's talking about here. The priest's servant would come. So when this sacrifice is being done, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged flesh hook in his hand while the meat was boiling.

[ 9 : 05 ] Then he would thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot, and the priest would take for himself all that the flesh hook brought up.

So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servants 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.

And if the man said to him, They should really burn the fat first. Then you may take as much as your heart desires. If he says that, then he would then answer him, No, but you must give it now.

And if not, I will take it by force. Therefore, the sin of the young men, sons of Eli, was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord.

But Samuel ministered before the Lord, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod. And moreover, his mother used to make him a little robe and bring it to him year by year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

[ 10 : 26 ] And Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say, The Lord give you descendants from this woman for the loan that was given to the Lord. That is the loan of your firstborn son, Samuel.

Then they would go to their house. And the Lord visited Hannah so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the child Samuel grew before the Lord.

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.

This would be ladies who had jobs and worked and cleaned and different things inside the temple. And so he said to them, Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people.

No, my sons, for it is not a good report that I hear. You make the Lord's people transgress. If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?

[ 11 : 31 ] Nevertheless, they did not heed the voice of their father because the Lord desired to kill them. And the child Samuel grew in stature and in favor both with the Lord and men.

Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, Thus says the Lord, Did I not clearly reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house?

Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon my altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod before me?

And did I not give to the house of your father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire?

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?

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.

[ 12 : 38 ] For those who honor me, I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. 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, 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.

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.

Now this shall be a sign to you that will come upon you, your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas, in one day they shall die, both of them.

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.

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.

[ 13 : 57 ] Now the boy Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli. We'll just stop right there. All right, so that kind of takes us a little bit, starting with the last verse we looked at last week, and ends with at least half of a verse that we will begin to look at next time.

Not next week, but next time. And so I want to put all that together, and hopefully it'll all be clear by the time we finish here tonight. Now, I think you would agree, after having read the passage, that after the kind of inspiring prayer psalm of Hannah, remember we studied that last, not last Sunday night, Sunday night before, after that song of Hannah in the first 10 verses of this chapter, that now the chapter turns pretty sour.

I mean, just almost suddenly. From an uplifting and inspiring prayer that Hannah prays, not really for herself as much as praying to convey the truth and the majesty and the greatness of God.

So after that, now we get to this part of the chapter, man, it just goes downhill really fast. It's about wickedness taking place in the very house of God.

It is wickedness where it is not supposed to be found, actually, right? In the priesthood. In the ministry. And yet, we might be thinking, well, okay, what's new?

[ 15 : 41 ] Right? I mean, it wasn't new. There's nothing new about that. And we hear about that kind of stuff all the time. You know, sexual scandals that are taking place in the, quote, church, end quote, okay?

Roman Catholic priests molesting young boys. We keep hearing about that kind of thing. Evangelical preachers having affairs with women in their churches. Or high-profile religious leaders getting caught going out with prostitutes.

Or popular Christian artists who are coming out of the closet, you know, with their homosexuality. And that's just to name a few of some of the broad kind of categories of things that we have heard about in recent times as well.

So what is new? Well, that's what we find in our passage. Sexual scandals. And not just sexual scandals or moral impurity, but we also see the corruption of God's house.

Of God's house and the corruption of the ministry itself. So Eli's sons are corrupt. They have corrupted the work of the ministry. Eli's sons have corrupted the moral purity of their ministry and the people that they're ministering to.

[17:05] And on and on it goes. So let's get to the text. And I want you to see four things in this passage. Four things.

Three of them are dark. Dark features or elements of the story. Three are very dark. But I reserve one last one, the fourth one, that is a feature of the story that is a bright spot.

It's a bright feature in this otherwise sad and dismal and dark story. This bright spot. All right, so here's number one as we kind of get on into it.

What I want to call a woeful character. A woeful character or the woeful character of the two sons of Eli. I don't know if you remember, but way back when we first started looking at Samuel, 1 Samuel, we were introduced to these two guys near the beginning of the book.

In fact, it's in the third verse of chapter one where the Bible says, this man, that's Elkanah, went up from his city yearly to worship and sacrifice to the Lord of the hosts in Shiloh.

[18:20] That was, of course, the center of worship in Israel at the time. And then it adds this little, kind of little blurb. Also, the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord were there.

And so there's just this mention of them. And they're just mentioned by name. Nothing is said about them. No reference to them. But you know that when you read it, that this is just an introduction to something that's going to come later.

And so in the drama that is unfolding in the story of 1 Samuel, and it's masterfully written, whoever the author was, I have to ask Tom if he knows who the author was of 1 Samuel.

But it's masterfully written. And so in this drama, Hophni and Phinehas are kind of just simply waiting in the wings, sort of, here at the beginning. Now, they're not really.

They're very active during this time. We're just not told about it yet. And so we're not going to hear about them again. I mean, first they're introduced to us and then we're going to hear about them again as their kind of part of the story comes into play.

[19:33] And so as we read this verse, we've, we, you know, this verse in verse 3 of chapter 1, we have some clue that they're going to play this big part.

And so here we are now in chapter 2 and verse 12 and we're, here's Phinehas, Hophni and Phinehas. And a whole lot is said about them.

A whole lot. More than we want to know. And what is said about them actually sets the stage for a number of events that are going to take place throughout the book of Samuel, 1 Samuel.

So it's not just what's going to happen here in chapter 2, because really here in chapter 2 we are just given kind of foresight, a prophecy of things to come and things that are going to take place later.

And so they're going to kind of set the stage for all of that. Now, at the very beginning we learn something about each one's character.

[20:40] So there, here's where I want to talk a little bit about their woeful character. And we're told something about it here, even though the word character doesn't appear in the text anywhere.

And what are we told about their character? Well, in verse 12 it says they were corrupt, or again, worthless, sons of Belial. That is, they had no worth at all.

Now, you know, you think, well, surely they did something good. Surely they had some value. And that's kind of the way we want to think. You know, we have that kind of mindset.

You know, nobody is completely worthless. Well, God said these two guys were. And so they had no worth at all. How could that be? Well, because worth is defined by God.

It's defined by Him. And so verse 12 then clearly explains the basis from God's perspective, the basis of worth.

[ 21 : 39 ] and therefore the basis for their worthlessness. And what is it? Well, it says they did not know the Lord. They did not know the Lord.

Now, that's quite an economy of words to describe a depth of character flaw in these two guys. They did not know the Lord. What do you mean they didn't know Him?

They didn't know about Him? Well, certainly they knew about Him. They would not be priests and they would not be doing some of the functions of the priests. They certainly knew about Him. They had been taught about Him. They knew of His existence.

So we're not talking about an intellectual knowledge of God. They didn't know God intimately, personally. In fact, I really like the NIV. And I'm always guarded when I say that because I'm not a big fan of the NIV.

But I think they get it more right. They did not regard God. They didn't care about Him. They didn't consult Him. They didn't really, in their minds, serve Him.

[ 22 : 42 ] They didn't care about Him. They didn't honor Him. They had no real relationship with Him, no intimacy with Him, no communion with Him. They didn't pray to Him. They didn't care about Him.

They didn't regard God. They did not know the Lord. And really, that's amazing. I mean, it really ought to be amazing. I mean, we just read in chapter 1, verse 3, that Hophni and Phinehas were what?

Priests. They're priests of the Lord. We're crying out loud. They're ministers. They're priests. And yet, they do not even know the Lord.

They don't know Him. They are performing the sacrifices, the worship of Israel, because worship in Israel, that day, was all wrapped up in and consisted of the sacrificial system that God had given to them through Moses, which, by the way, for us, was just a foreshadowing of Jesus, who would come later.

So it was very important. And so they administered the sacrifices and all of the duties of the priest that were designed to bring atonement and forgiveness of sins and to restore fellowship and relationship between God's people and himself.

[ 23 : 59 ] and they were responsible for all of that and doing that, at least going through the motions of it, and yet they didn't even know the Lord. Didn't even know Him. Now, I'm kind of presenting this like it should shock us in some way.

But I guess we've been kind of conditioned halfway over the years that we see this kind of thing all the time and hear about it all the time. People who are standing behind pulpits, men who are preaching, thus saith the Lord, and yet they're cheating on their wives or they're stealing from their church or they're doing something else.

And it's apparent that in their actual life and personal life and the way they're conducting their life, it's apparent they don't even know the Lord personally. And yet here these guys are.

They are preaching the word. They are ministering to the needs of the people. temple. They are performing all the rituals of the temple. And yet they do not even know the Lord.

But now, no matter who you are, I'm focusing on these guys who are priests, these guys who are ministers, and they don't even know the Lord.

[ 25 : 11 ] But it really doesn't matter who you are. With God, your worth is first defined by who you know. Now that doesn't work in real life and in society, your worth is not defined by who you know, even though many people think that is the case.

But with God, it is true. And he's not talking about just knowing anybody, it's knowing him. So your worth, your character is first defined, from God's perspective, defined by who you know.

And so with God, your knowledge of him, your intimacy with him, that's really what we're talking about here. Again, not just a head knowledge of him, your intimacy with him, your spiritual communion with him, and knowledge of him, and walking with him.

That's what we're talking about here. That defines your worth from God's perspective. It defines your true character. And so, therefore, it defines, that helps us define how worthless these two guys were.

They did not even know the Lord. We don't have to say anything else about them. We don't even have to know anything else about them. Their woeful character. Second, not only a woeful

character here in the story, but a willful corruption.

[ 26 : 32 ] And one leads to the other. A woeful character is the basis upon which they were corrupt, or the basis of their willful corruption.

And it manifested itself in two areas of ministry conduct here in our story. Two areas. And so, we're privy to those two things.

The first one, kind of sectioned off there in the text in chapter two, they have corrupted their ministerial duty. And the things that God had called them to do.

And the way in which God had instructed them to do it. They had corrupted all of that. And then secondly, how they corrupted their personal purity.

And not only that, but the purity of the people. In fact, in both cases where they were willfully corrupt in the administration of their duties as ministers, and also in their personal life of moral impurity, in both cases it affected the people of God.

[ 27 : 38 ] And it always does. It always does. When God's people fall and fail morally, whether it is in dishonesty and corruption in that way, or moral impurity, when God's people fail, it always affects other people.

The people around them. And depending on where you are in God's place of leadership, the more people are affected by it.

And so what Hophni and Phinehas did through the corruption of their ministries, and the corruption through moral impurity and failure, it affected all the people of God.

And so God's judgment was quite severe. So let's just take the first one there. We've already read it, but I want to kind of look through it again. And that is the corruption of their ministerial duty.

So looking again there, starting with verse 13, and we'll try to make some sense of this because it's kind of unusual to us. I mean, this whole thing about sacrifices and the boiling of meat and the fat and the offerings to the Lord, it's all kind of strange to us.

[ 28 : 52 ] And so let's kind of walk through this. Verse 13, and the priests' custom with the people was, which priests, by the way? So this is their kind of modus operandi with the people was that when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged flesh hook in his hand while the meat was boiling.

All right, so he's got this flesh hook. What's he going to do with it? Well, in fact, I kind of picture this. You know, here is a man and his wife or his family and they've brought the meat for the sacrifice and some of it is going to be offered to the Lord and the rest of it is going to be, they're going to be able to eat it for themselves and so forth.

And that's kind of the way it worked. And so there they are doing this for the Lord and they look over there and here comes the priest's assistance and he's swinging that flesh hook and they know what's about to happen.

And so here he comes. What's he going to do with it? Then he would thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot and the priest would take for himself all that the flesh hook brought up.

So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. All right, so he pokes that down in there, snags whatever he can get, whatever he can bring out, it's his.

[ 30 : 20 ] Now, the idea here is that he kept doing it till he got what he wanted. You know, you can imagine maybe there's a chicken boiling down in there.

And so he puts that flesh hook down in there and comes up and all he's got is a little puny wing.

Well, you can't much have a wing. And so he puts it down in there again, keeps doing it until he gets all that he wants.

That's the idea conveyed here. And it was a terrible burden, but it even got worse than that. Also, before they burned the fat.

By the way, you can go back and look at Leviticus 3, 7 and 10, I believe, verses all throughout that area. They give the instructions on on this.

Indeed, the priests were allowed to have a portion of the meat that was sacrificed to the Lord. And there were there was a prescribed procedure for that. And this is not it. And also it prohibited, strictly prohibited, taking the meat before it was cooked, before the fat was cooked, because that was to be given to the Lord.

[ 31 : 31 ] You know, and so here he is saying, well, I didn't get all I wanted out of that flesh pot. Besides, you know, I think I'd like to have some meat that's not cooked yet.

So this is what he's saying. 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.

So give me some meat raw so that I can take it home and cook it when I want to. You know, something like that. And this was strictly forbidden. And if a man said to him, all right, so there would be maybe some objection here.

Because, you know, those who are sacrificing, they know what the law is, and this is not right. And so there might be an objection. Maybe the objection would go something like this.

They should really burn the fat first. I mean, that's what God has commanded. Then you may take us as much as your heart desires. All right, so you take what you want, but let's not break the law here.

[ 32 : 35 ] He would then answer him, no, but you must give it now, and if not, I will take it by force. So this is just totally corrupting the prescribed duties, procedures, for the priests in regard to the fellowship sacrifices and we're to assume all other sacrifices.

And they were getting more than what God had allowed for them to take, and they were taking it by force. And so it ends with this statement, verse 17, therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord.

Now, you know, I think most of us might be a little bit tempted to say, well, what's the big deal anyway? Just, I mean, all right, so they are stealing a few spare ribs, you know, getting a few extra thighs and breasts, and, you know, maybe they're taking a little bit too much meat.

All right, so what's the big deal? I mean, it says here that their sin was very great before the Lord. Why? Because they took a little extra meat? That would be our mindset.

We're thinking, well, you know, this is not that big a deal. And yet, it was a huge deal. I mean, at the very least, they were stealing from God's people.

[ 34 : 04 ] And as we notice here in verse 17, making the whole sacrifice, the whole process of sacrifice and really worship to be a burden to them, something that they despised even.

Or so, at the very least, they're greedy. Greedy and they are stealing from God's people. But that's only part of it.

The worst part of it is they were revealing a total disregard for God's laws concerning the priestly duties in worship.

Totally disregarding it. You can't do that with God. You can't do that. And they had corrupted their ministry, and they were doing it in the name of the Lord.

Presumably. And so, again, the Bible says there in verse 17, the men abhorred. That's the New King James Version. Might be that way in the King James.

[ 35 : 09 ] I don't remember. Abhorred or despised the offering of the Lord. They just dreaded doing it because along would come the priest's servant and take most of their meat, even the uncooked meat.

And actually, you know, this word abhorred or despised actually is even stronger than that. It means to have contempt.

To have contempt, even to spurn the offering of the Lord. That translates over. And they didn't even want to worship God anymore in the prescribed way because of what Hophni and Phinehas had done to worship the Lord.

The second thing is probably clearer to us and more, I guess, we could agree strongly that God would be pretty angry about this.

But really, it's not any worse than the first thing. And that is the corruption of their personal purity. Their purity before the Lord and the purity of the people. So look again at verse 22.

[ 36 : 20 ] 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.

So he said to them, why do you do such things? This father scolding his sons. Why do you do such? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people.

Now, get this. He's not just referring to this deal about the flesh hook and the stealing of their meats and taking more than is allowed by God and even taking what is not allowed by God.

He's not just referring to that. He's talking about their knowing and sleeping with these women.

Women in the temple. All the people knew it.

And I think we're to understand the implication being that they didn't even hide it. They had actually turned the house of God into a place of prostitution.

[ 37 : 22 ] For their own satisfaction and gratification. Fulfill their own little fleshly lusts. And they didn't care. Remember, why should they?

They don't know God. They don't regard God. So why should they care what the people think? And so here is I, Eli. He's telling them, you know, why do you do these things?

And all the people know about it. He says in verse 24, know, my sons, for it is not a good report that I hear. You make the Lord's people transgress. So again, the idea that what they're doing is actually causing the people to fall.

Despise worship. Despise worship. And even, perhaps, even allow moral impurity to come into their lives. I mean, their priests are doing it. Why shouldn't I?

I mean, we can kind of see parallels to this kind of thing in our day. And every day. And so Eli is not really being very strong in his rebuke.

[ 38 : 25 ] That's part of the problem, big part of the problem. But this is what he says. He says, if one man sins against another, God will judge him. All right. So if you've got two people involved, one is sinned against another, and they go to God's court, and there's judgment according to his word, his law, then, you know, one or the other will be acquitted, you know, so forth, or found innocent, one guilty.

I mean, there's a chance in the court of law that you'll make it. All right. But he says, if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?

Who will intercede for him? That is, there will be no exoneration when you have sinned against the Lord, because there's no case to make there for yourself.

God has perfect knowledge. You can't make a plea bargain with him. There's no hope. And they have sinned against the Lord.

No one can intercede for that. Their condemnation is sure. By the way, there are some, and I would agree, that there is a glimpse here of the cross.

[ 39 : 45 ] Even though Eli is not certainly speaking about that, that's not even entered into his mind any kind of sacrifice like that, or any kind of provision for our sins. But in effect, that is what happened at the cross, or what was accomplished at the cross.

It was God acquitting us because someone interceded for us. We've sinned against the Lord. And Eli says, who can intercede for you? And the implication is no one can.

You're done. And so aren't you glad that we've sinned against the Lord, but we're not done. We're not condemned because we did have someone intercede for us.

So there may be a glimpse here of the cross and of the sacrifice of our Lord. And he's talking to his sons. And so, you know, their condemnation is sure.

That's really what he's saying. And he's right about that. There's not going to be any acquittal, no exoneration. They've sinned against God. No one can intercede for them. They're done. They're toast.

[ 40 : 49 ] He's actually saying to them. I don't know if Eli really believed that. And yet he did say that. And then we have this troubling statement in verse 25.

Nevertheless, they did not heed the voice of their father. So the father has counseled them. They did not listen to him.

But the disturbing part is why they didn't. Because the Lord desired to kill him. I don't know about you, but that's pretty troubling, isn't it?

I mean, how do you explain? Well, you know, we need to know a couple of things here. And we do know at least, well, we know both of these things.

But let's think about this. First of all, God is sovereign and he can do what he pleases. And if he desired to kill these two guys, then he can do that.

[ 41 : 50 ] He's holy God. He's sovereign. And if that's not enough for us, then, well, it's got to be enough. Not everything can be explained.

And you can read throughout the Old Testament much of what God commanded to be done.

Unexplainable. Troubling. In fact, it is so troubling that it's led some scholars to even surmise that the Old Testament is a different God than the God of the New Testament.

That the Old Testament God is a God of judgment. And yet it's the same God. All right. All right. So we need to know that he's sovereign.

This is a statement to his sovereignty, of course. They didn't heed their father. Because God desired to kill.

He destroyed them. The second thing we ought to know about God is that he desires justice. Always desires justice. Justice is going to be served.

[ 42 : 53 ] Justice really is at the... Is one of those central traits in God's character. Justice. And so divine justice, when it is acted out, when it is accomplished, divine justice always brings God's satisfaction.

Because justice is a central trait. And so here are these two guys. And they don't know him. Know God. And they are performing their duties and corrupting those duties and corrupting the very house of God. Turning it into a place of prostitution, really.

And God is going to serve justice. And so at this point, he's not going to allow them to listen to their father and repent. Because he's going to judge them.

And indeed he will. All right. So that leads then to the third thing. And that is a wrathful condemnation. A wrathful condemnation.

[ 43 : 55 ] And so look at verse 27 again. Then a man of God, that would be a prophet, of course, came to Eli and said to him, Thus says the Lord.

That's what prophets did. They came and spoke for God. Thus says the Lord. Here's what God says. So everything he says from that point on is what God says.

Did I not clearly reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? First thing he says to him. And what's this reference to?

Who was Eli's father in Egypt? It would be Aaron. The first priest. And so Eli's, the suggestion here is, the implication is that Eli's lineage goes back to one of the four sons of Aaron.

And so he's referring to Aaron. Did I not promise your father when he was in Egypt that I revealed myself to him?

[ 45 : 02 ] And then he says in verse 28, Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest? Did I not promise that to them? To burn incense? To wear an ephod before me?

That is the priestly garments. So he had the priestly office. Did I not promise that to them? Give that to them? Choose them for that? And did I not give to the house of your father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire?

What's that? A portion of the meat that's sacrificed. Did I not give that to the house of your father? When I revealed myself to him in Egypt, that would be Aaron.

And that would include all of the priests that have come since, including Eli and Eli's household. Did I not promise all that to you? Verse 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. All right, so here, haven't I chosen you, called you, blessed you, used you, revealed myself to you?

[ 46 : 21 ] Why do you kick at my sacrifice, my offering, and so forth? So, you know, the point here is that Eli, if not directly complicit with his sons, he was certainly benefiting from their corruption.

Probably benefiting from the extra meat they were taking from the people. In fact, you know, a little bit later, when the Ark of the Covenant is captured by the Philistines, and Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are killed by the sword, and news comes to Eli, and when he hears about all that, he falls back in his chair and breaks his neck because it says he was fat.

It's just, again, just a little word there to tell you that what God said through his prophet was true.

Eli had been benefiting from the corruption of his sons, and he had not, he had really honored them more than he had honored the Lord.

So really, the corruption of the priesthood started with Eli, through not being the kind of parent that he should have been to his two sons.

[ 47 : 46 ] And then verse 30 says, and here's the condemnation, or the beginning of it, God's judgment. And therefore, the Lord God of Israel says, I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before me forever.

I did say that, he said. What do you mean? I did say that. But now the Lord says, Far be it from me. He's rescinding that.

In Eli's case, far be it from me. For those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. So here is the first of really a four, kind of fourfold judgment.

And kind of putting it in the imagery that's used in the passage. First of all, Aaron's arm will be cut off. Aaron's long dead.

What do you mean? His arm's going to be cut off. Well, it's a metaphor. It's figurative. His arm is going to be cut off. Look at verse 31. Again. Behold, the days are coming that I will cut off your arm, and the arm of your father's house.

[ 48 : 58 ] That is your arm and his arm, the same arm. He's talking about the lineage. It's going to be cut off. This priestly lineage.

It's, in a metaphorical sense, it's Aaron's arm through one of his four sons. Eli, a descendant of that son of Aaron.

And so, in line as a priest, after the order of Aaron. And God is saying, here's my judgment. It's going to be cut off.

It's going to be cut off. The lineage of one of the four sons of Aaron will come to an end. That's your lineage, Eli. Your family. And he says, there will not be an old man in your house.

That's just really a colorful way of saying that, you know, they're all going to die. No one's going to reach old age. I'm cutting it off. This is part of a, the first part of a fourfold judgment.

[ 50 : 02 ] The second part of the judgment, and it really goes without saying, but it's just part, it all ties together. Eli's strength will be cut off. And this is how the first part of the judgment will come true.

Eli's strength will be cut off. He says, behold, the days are coming that I will cut off your arm. The arm of your father's house. So that there will not be an old man in your house. So, that is, Eli's sons are going to be put to death.

And he's going to very plainly say that a little bit later in the next few verses. But this is kind of a gradual statement of judgment. As the lineage of Aaron, you being of the lineage of Aaron, going to be cut off.

I'm going to cut off your lineage. Your strength is going to be cut off. And Eli's sons are going to be put to death. And we're going to read about that when we get to chapter 4.

And so, wait for that. That's when the Ark of the Covenant is taken by the Philistines. And that leads to the third part of the judgment. An invasion by a foreign power that will bring about a massacre of all the priests.

[ 51 : 12 ] And that's going to happen. Eli's entire household, the household of priests, are going to be cut off. Verse 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. So, he repeats that phrase, but this time, in this sense that he's talking about the house of the priests.

That we, and we'll see that when we get to chapter 22. Priests will be cut off. They'll be murdered, executed, all of them actually, but one. And so, look at verse 33.

The only one of you, whom I shall not cut off from my altar, shall be spared to weep his eyes out. To grieve his heart. Now, I'm reading from the ESV because it kind of brings this out in more clear language.

So, there's going to be one of you, one of the priests, who will not be cut off. Not die. Just one's going to survive. And he's going to cry his eyes out.

[ 52 : 19 ] Grieve in his heart. And all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword of men. So, just one will remain. And he's going to tell us a little bit more about this one in verse 35 and 36.

But actually, if we look forward, and we know that it's Abiathar, the high priest. And we'll get to him much later in the book.

But the idea here is that Eli will not see his fulfillment of God's judgment. He'll not see it. He will not see it with his eyes because he will not be alive when these things take place.

When these things are fulfilled. When all the priests are cut off. And his entire family comes to an end at some point. But he will see one thing.

And that is the fourth and final kind of part of this fourfold judgment. And that is Eli will see the day when his sons are killed. This is God's judgment upon his house.

[ 53 : 20 ] That Eli will live to see his sons die. Tragic. And verse 34 says, This shall be a sign to you that will come upon your two sons on Hophni and Phinehas.

And one day they shall die, both of them. And he says, this is a sign to you. That means this is what you're going to see. And it's going to be a sign to you that everything I've said is going to happen

will happen.

This is the promise. So a willful character that leads to a willful corruption. That ends in a wrathful condemnation. Then I said that there was a bright spot in the story.

I need to get to it. We're just about done, so don't get nervous. Here's a bright spot here in the story. It's really kind of interesting. And it is woven, kind of woven throughout the story.

And it's done in the form of a contrast. It gives us a very stark contrast. I mean, so far all we've been thinking about and reading about and considering are Eli's sons.

[ 54 : 25 ] And their corruption. Their moral impurity. And all of these things. But there is a bright spot woven through all of this.

Look at verse 11 again. And that's why I started with verse 11. And the latter part of it. But the child, Samuel, did what?

Ministered to the Lord before Eli the priest. Samuel is ministering to the Lord. Look at verse 18.

Alright, so then we hear about Eli's sons. Then we get to verse 18.

We come back to Samuel. But Samuel ministered before the Lord even as a child wearing a linen ephod, the dress of a priest. Ministering to the Lord. So we have Eli ministering to the Lord while Hophni and Phinehas are corrupting the ministry.

Again, we have Samuel brought to the forefront and he's ministering to the Lord while Hophni and Phinehas are sleeping with the women in the church.

[ 55 : 36 ] And then verse 26. And the child, Samuel, grew in stature and in favor both with the Lord and men. And so Samuel ministered.

Samuel ministered. Samuel grew. He matured. In his relationship with God. And then finally, verse 1 of chapter 3.

Now this boy Samuel ministered to the Lord with Eli. It may be that that's mentioned four times.

Woven in with all of this terrible, wicked corruption that's going on in the house of God.

And yet it's not all bad. There's this bright spot. God has his man there. Regardless of how bad it gets. You see, that's what the author of Samuel is doing and reassuring us.

That even in the midst of darkness, there is the light of goodness. God's goodness. And, you know, I've been, by the way, studying feverishly the last week or so.

[ 56 : 41 ] Studying the history of Christianity. There are many times in Christian history where it got extremely dark. Dark, dark. Spiritually. In the church.

Dark, dark times in church history. But always, even in the darkest of times, God has had his people.

There have always been his people there. And always a bright spot here. Throughout even those times of darkness in the church. And in America, I think you would agree with me that many churches are going dark.

Even many in this community have been dark for a long time. And when I say dark, I mean they're not preaching God's word. The light of God's word. They're not worshiping according to scripture.

And many of them have just grown dark. But the true church is still alive. Still alive. And I'm not just talking about Highland Park. I'm talking about other churches in this community and other churches in America.

[ 57 : 47 ] In fact, it is becoming more stark. The contrast between the true church and the corrupt church in our culture.

It's becoming very much more clear. Where before, very blurry. Be able to tell the difference. But it's becoming very, very clear. The true church is still alive.

Beacon on the hill. In our culture. And may it always be with Highland Park. Baptist Church.