

God's Expectation and Judgment Eli's Household **(Slide 1)**

Reading: 1 Samuel 4:12-18

Last week we discussed the sin and the fate of Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas. Their sin caused their judgment, which was death in battle. Among their sins was to allow the Ark of the Covenant to be taken from the house of worship and to be carried into battle. This gave the Israelites a false sense of power. That God was with them.

1 Samuel 4:5 **(Slide 2)**

Though the Philistines were frightened at first because of the battle cry of the Israelites, their fear was soon replaced with courage because of the threat of being placed under Hebrew captivity.

Hophni and Phinehas died by the sword **(Slide 3)** in this great battle and the Ark of the Covenant was taken by the Philistines. I can only imagine God's anger because of these events.

The hostility of a few men toward righteousness had driven God's favor from the children of Israel. Judgment followed just as it will for all of humanity who simply don't know God.

But what of Eli? Why was God so angry with Eli? I ask these questions and wonder about Eli's relationship with his sons.

Last week we read of his rebuke to his sons.

1 Samuel 2:22-25 **(Slide 4)**

22 Now Eli was very old; and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting. **23** He said to them, "Why do you do such things, the evil things that I hear from all these people? **(Slide 5)** **24** No, my sons; for the report is not good which I hear the Lord's people circulating. **25** If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?" But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the Lord desired to put them to death.

I want you to take note of a few things in his rebuke. First Eli was very old. **(Slide 6)** I know one thing for sure, you can't wait until you are old to train your children. They need to gain your respect when they are young and it needs to be balanced with love.

Proverbs 13:24 **(Slide 7)**

He who withholds his rod hates his son,

But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.

More commonly stated; “Spare the Rod, Spoil the Child!” **(Slide 8)** and this training is carried out consistently! I think that consistency is a very important element in raising children.

I believe that the Proverb incorporates more than just physical punishment when training a child. It certainly has that aspect, but from my own experience physical punishment by itself doesn’t work with every child. I also believe in a broad scope of training for a child. Parents or grandparents must teach children about consequences for negative actions.

In the discipline portion of training a child, as Solomon records, a rod was used to carry out physical punishment. **(Slide 9)** Parents who use physical punishment today typically use their hands in the form of spanking. My dad would use a belt and believe me, it wasn’t needed very often. I learned quickly! My mom’s method of discipline was even more effective, yet very much related. She would say, “I’ll get your dad on the phone!” or “wait until your dad gets home.” **(Slide 10)** That’s all we needed to hear. That was usually when my brother, Butch and I were fighting.

But not all children respond to physical punishment. Most do but if they don't, it's up to the parents to realize that another approach is necessary to train their child to understand right from wrong and that there are consequences. I believe that's why so many young people struggle today. They don't know how to respond when they are told "No!" because they haven't been taught why. **(Slide 11)**

For a child that doesn't understand physical punishment, the removal of privileges or devices can work well. **(Slide 12)**

Sometimes as they get older, to get the point across, taking their phone away or not allowing them to go or participate in certain activities works well.

I have an older grandson that after his phone privileges were taken away, seemed to understand quite well that his behavior was unacceptable. He was struggling with behavior while playing baseball. He had his head down when things didn't go his way or when he made a mistake, he wasn't acting like a teammate, he was selfish in so many ways and even talked back to the coach.

I thought the coach, his father, responded perfectly to the situation. On one occasion he was removed from the game and the next game, he sat on the bench. His mom

took his phone away and removed other privileges as well. He very quickly became a different person, altogether. I'm proud of them all. He is learning to be a good person in the face of competition.

Don't get me wrong, I am a believer in appropriate punishment when a child is young. But, just like being able to explain what we mean to others when we have conversations, it must be "seasoned" with salt. **(Slide 13)** But any form of discipline is useless if we haven't or aren't building a relationship with our children.

It seems that Eli was out of touch with his children and he had let it get out of hand. He had no idea what they were up to (or did he) because it says he had only "heard" about their misdeeds from the Lord's people. It was obvious that it was more than just rumors that were circulating because he believed what people were saying.

I suspect Eli hadn't built a relationship with his children. They were like so many, so called "Rich" kids we hear about where parents shower them with some type of wealth that builds their personal ego and self-worth. **(Slide 14)** In this case, their father's riches were his position and authority amongst the people and they took advantage of it. Many parents sort of try and buy the love of their children in some way.

That brings us to the second thing to notice, Eli didn't tell them to stop nor try to stop them. To me, that says a lot about his relationship with them. He was powerless to stop them. It was too late. He had coddled them far too long and they had no respect for him or what he said about God.

I don't know for certain, but I don't think he was necessarily trying to be their friend as is often the case with parents today. I simply think he was just absent as a true father.....which is also often the case today. Whatever the case may be, God held him accountable.

Now some might say his accountability was because he was the priest. The mediator between God and man through their sacrifices. We do expect more from those that should know better. But let's look at it from the following perspective.

I don't know how long Eli knew about his son's misdeeds but I don't believe he just found out about it and that's why it says in:

1 Samuel 3:13-14 (**Slide 15**)

13 "For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. **14** 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."

He knew and did nothing and that's why God held him accountable!

What if Eli had built a strong relationship with his children and they still rebelled? I think that is the summary of God's relationship with the children of Israel. From their rebellion before entering the promised land until the coming of Christ. It is the very reason God allowed them to go into Babylonian captivity. It is also a big part of the parable, the Prodigal Son, told by Jesus in Luke 15.

It doesn't matter whether we're an elder, deacon, or minister, or sitting in the pew, we will be held accountable. Not for what we know, but our response to what we know.

Ezekiel 3:18-20 (**Slide 16**)

18 When I say to the wicked, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.

19 Yet if you have warned the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered yourself.

(**Slide 17**) **20** Again, when a righteous man turns away

from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I place an obstacle before him, he will die; since you have not warned him, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand.

(Slide 18)

Eli's death was that of a broken man who failed in God's eyes. He was in a position to lead and govern, but chose rather to tolerate sin, without taking action, even tolerating the sin of his own children.

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 **(Slide 19)**

If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

Paul is saying; "Don't just stand there, do something, but do it in such a way as to rescue a brother!"

As a christian, we are to call out sin! If we don't, we'll be held accountable. Not for what we know, but for our lack of action.

(Slide 20)

With this lesson we have to meditate on these questions.

1. What do we do with what we know? When we see wrong do we act?
2. Do we call out sin or simply tolerate it?
3. Do we understand we'll be held accountable for our inaction?
4. Do we have the right relationship with those closest to us to rescue them from sin? Father, mother, child, friend, co-worker, classmate, Brother or Sister in Christ?
5. Do we recognize God's expectations and his ultimate judgment?

Invitation