



'Honing in on the Heart!' Sermon Series

Sermon #5:

'The Worthlessness of Wrong Motives in Worship!'

Wednesday, January 31st, 2024

Last Wednesday Night in 1st Samuel:

- Last Wednesday night we looked at 1st Samuel 2:1-11 as I preached a message entitled 'A Prayer of Praise!'.
 - I asked the question: *How does Hannah give us a great example of what our prayer life should look like and exemplify?*
 - **Point 1: Exalting the Lord. (V. 1-3)**
 - **Point 2: Expansiveness of the Lord. (V. 4-8)**
 - **Point 3: Excellence of the Lord. (V. 9-11)**
- Based on last week's message, how is your prayer life changing?
 - Are you exalting the Lord?
 - Seeing His expansiveness in all areas?
 - Even His excellence in your own life?

'The Worthlessness of Wrong Motives in Worship!'

1st Samuel 2:12-26

Sermon in a Sentence:

We can see the Worthlessness of Wrong Motives in Worship when we see that the sons of Eli were not saved, they were stealing, Samuel's ministry starts, the son's reputation spreads, and Samuel's walk with God is strengthened.

Intro:

- I've said before, I'd rather have someone serving in the Church who was less talented but had the right motives in their heart, then the most talented person in the world with the wrong motives in their heart.
 - *A major theme all throughout 1st Samuel is the heart.*
 - **Hence why I've entitled this series 'Honing in on the Heart!'**
 - *God looks and cares about the Human heart, while most humans just focus on what's on the outside.*
 - *In this text tonight we will see just how much God really does care about the heart as the leader of Israel's children were not leading with the right motives.*
 - In this passage we see the downfall of Eli's sons, but we will also the start the Samuel has as he begins to grow up in the temple of the Lord.

- *Tonight I think it's very important that we realize it doesn't matter WHAT we do for God if our motives are not in the proper place.*
 - Our motives matter to God!
- *And unlike human beings, God sees the heart and He knows the truth of the motives that are in your heart.*

Read 1st Samuel 2:12-26

Question to Ask:

How does this passage show us that Eli's sons were going through the motions of worship as a job and not a calling?

Point 1: *The sons were not Saved.* (V. 12)

- 'Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the LORD.' 1st Samuel 2:12
 - *The main reason that God rejected their service in the temple is because they were not saved by the Lord. They did not know Him.*
 - *The writer of 1st Samuel puts this verse at the beginning of this narrative that we are about to read, to set the tone for everything that is about to occur.*
 - If someone is not saved and doesn't have a personal relationship with Him there is not way that person can have good motives in worship.
 - *How can you have 'good motives' in serving someone that you don't even believe in if you aren't saved?*
 - In the english, this verse seems simple and straightforward.

- *But in the Hebrew text, we are able to see the severity of Eli's Sons.*

- We are first introduced to them earlier in Samuel when we are told that the sons of Eli ministered at Shiloh in 1st Samuel 1:3.
 - Let's look at the Hebrew text to see how severe their 'worthlessness' to God really was.
- ***Word Study***
 - The phrase 'Worthless men' comes from the Hebrew word **Belial** which literally means wickedness, death, and rebellion.
- ***This is not the first time that 'Belial' appears in the book of 1st Samuel.***
 - Back in 1st Samuel 1:16, we find that Hannah asks Eli to '*not regard your servant as a worthless woman.*'
- ***The fact that this same word is used in regards to two different people shows the power of compare and contrast.***
 - John Woodhouse said '*The description of Hophni and Phinehas as 'sons of Belial' sets them in utter contrast to Hannah who was not a 'daughter of belial'.*
- ***This Hebrew phrase 'Belial' can be found in Deuteronomy 13:13, Judges 19:22, 1st Samuel 25:25 and Proverbs 16:27.***

- What is interesting about this phrase, is the fact that the Apostle Paul will use this same phrase as a synonym for satan.
 - ‘What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?’ 2nd Corinthians 6:15
- ***So why does the writer of 1st Samuel call these sons the sons of Belial?***
 - I think one reason is to show that they do not take after their father, but rather satan. Wickedness, death, and destruction.
 - If you are not a child of God, then you are a child of satan and there is no inbetween.
 - ***The main reason that the sons of Eli were called worthless is because they did not know the Lord.***
- ***Even men who serve in Godly vocations can not know the Lord.***
 - A personal relationship with the Lord is key in serving Him for the right reasons and for His Glory.
- ***While verse 12 does not shock us because we’ve all seen, read and witnessed men who served in Godly vocations that acted like sons***

of Belial, we need to see that for the original readers this was meant to be shocking.

■ ***At this time Shiloh was the place where God’s holy tabernacle was set up. This is where the dwelling place of God was for this time.***

- So the fact that these young priests were not doing what they were supposed to do, would have been appalling to the people of Israel.

Point 2: *The sons were Stealing. (V. 13-17)*

- ***In order for you and I to get an accurate picture of the severity of the ‘stealing’ that Hophni and Phineas were guilty of, it would benefit us in our own time to go back and read Leviticus 10:1-11 to see how serious God takes the misconduct of the priest in the Old Covenant.***
 - What Hophni and Phineas were guilty of was hot water to be in for sure. We are reminded here that God does not take sin lightly.
- ‘The custom of the priests with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest’s servant would come, while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand, **14** and he would thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot. All that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is what they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. **15** Moreover, before the fat was burned, the

priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give meat for the priest to roast, for he will not accept boiled meat from you but only raw." **16** And if the man said to him, "Let them burn the fat first, and then take as much as you wish," he would say, "No, you must give it now, and if not, I will take it by force." **17** Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the LORD, for the men treated the offering of the LORD with contempt.' 1st Samuel 2:13-17

- **What the sons of Eli were leading at Shiloh was an evil act that dishonored God.**
- **What we find happening in verses 13-17 that was describing what was occurring at Shiloh, is not found anywhere else in the OT and is not what was prescribed in the Torah according to Leviticus 10:14-15, Numbers 18:18.**
 - **Robert D. Bergen said 'The writer described the strange traditions of the Shiloh priests in detail to clarify the need to destroy the Elide line and remove the central Israelites worship site from Shiloh.'**
- Now, don't get me wrong. The OT is clear that the priests were able to have certain benefits from their work in the tabernacle according to Leviticus 7:28-38.
 - **But what we find in these verses describing their methods, is taking**

advantage and stealing from God's people. Which ultimately, was stealing from God.

- Notice that Hophni and Phineas were not the ones actually committing these acts, but they were the orchestrators.
 - **Verse 13 reveals 'the priest's servant would come'**
 - **If people were to question what the priest were doing based on the instructions prescribed in the Torah, verse 16 shows that they would take it by force.**
- **Surely these sons of Eli had begun to be feared by those in Israel for what they were doing.**
- Verses 15-16 give us a more specific view as the exact acts they were committing against God.
 - 'Moreover, before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give meat for the priest to roast, for he will not accept boiled meat from you but only raw." **16** And if the man said to him, "Let them burn the fat first, and then take as much as you wish," he would say, "No, you must give it now, and if not, I will take it by force.'
- **To explain, either Hophni or Phineas or their 'servant' would take their share of the offerings before the fat was burned.**

- *This means before the Lord had been given His portion has was prescribed in Leviticus 3:3-5 and Leviticus 7:30.*

- This also would indicate that the priests were eating fat from sacrificed animals that they were *not allowed to do according to Leviticus 7:22-26.*

- *Not only did the sons of Eli steal from God and Israel, they also stole the innocence and free will of women.*

- Verse 22 is clear that the sons of Eli were seducing women in the temple, another thing that they were not supposed to be doing.
 - ‘and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting.’ 1st Samuel 2:22
- *It’s obvious that the motives of the sons of Eli were to not give God Glory, but to steal from Him and take everything for themselves.*
 - God forgive us when we are guilty of the same crime!

Point 3: *Samuel’s ministry Starts.* (V. 18-21)

- *Right here in the middle of a very serious description concerning the sons of Eli, we find a sprinkle of Samuel in this text.*
 - Right in the middle of the turmoil that was going on at Shiloh, there was a young man beginning his ministry that God intended to use greatly one day.

- Dale Ralph Davis said *‘Yet in the middle of this liturgical and moral morass at Shiloh a careful reader can detect a hint of hope. There are these short notes about little Samuel scattered through the text and standing in quiet contrast to the deeds of Hophni and Phinehas. THEY are silent witnesses of Yahweh’s provision.’*

- ‘Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy clothed with a linen ephod. **19** And his mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. **20** Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, “May the LORD give you children by this woman for the petition she asked of the LORD.” So then they would return to their home. Indeed the LORD visited Hannah, and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew in the presence of the LORD.’

- *The first thing that we find in verse 18 that sticks out to me, is this phrase ‘Samuel was Ministering before the Lord’*

- Still we can see the contrast between this young man Samuel, and Eli’s Sons.

- **Word Study**

- The phrase ‘*was ministering*’ comes from the Hebrew phrase *‘Haya Mesaret’ which literally means an ongoing activity, and Robert D.*

Bergen points out 'something ingrained in Samuel's lifestyle'

- Even from the start of Samuel's ministry I believe we can see that his focus was on God.
- It was ingrained in Him but He was also before the Lord, ministering in His presence.
 - ***It would not have been possible for Hophni and Phineas to have been ministering in the presence of the Lord because their was sin in their life.***
- ***The 'Linen Ephod' that is mentioned in verse 18 was a simple garment that was to be worn by the priests in the temple.***
 - Even with the fact that the writer mentions that Samuel was wearing a linen Ephod, we can still see the contrast.
 - ***A linen Ephod is what the priests were supposed to wear. Even as a young man Samuel was doing what he was supposed to be doing, while the sons of Eli were not.***
- ***Verses 19-21 make tears come to my eyes, for this reason Samuel's family supported his ministry and work for the Lord.***
 - Verse 19 reveals that Hannah brought Samuel a robe. Which in Hebrew is the word **Meil** and was a long outer garment that was worn by members of the Levitical tribe that involved priestly service according to **Leviticus 8:7**.
- Even this small gift that Hannah gave her son shows us that even though he wasn't physically present in her life, he was still in her heart.
 - ***Yet again, I think even in the fact that we see Samuel's family supporting his ministry, I think we see that Eli did not in the way he should have.***
 - ***When it comes to Eli's sons, Eli verbally reprimanded them but did not give the discipline that they needed.***
 - A true parent shows true love for their child when they discipline them.
- ***Notice that verse 19 reveals that Hannah made this Robe each year on the yearly journey to Shiloh.***
 - Each year the robe got a little bigger, but the journey to Shiloh for Hannah was much easier now, than it was in the previous years.

- *Verses 20-21 seem clear that it was Eli who dealt with Elkanah and Hannah and not Eli's sons.*
 - 'The petition she asked of the Lord' is a reference to her request for Samuel, her son.
 - But Eli blesses both of them in the fact that Hannah will now be able to have children, for the closing of her womb was temporary.
- *So far tonight we've seen that the sons were not saved, the sons were stealing, Samuel's ministry starts, and now we will see...*

Point 4: *The son's reputation Spreads.* (V. 22-25)

- *Now the narrative flips back to look at Eli's sons again and the reputation that had begun to precede them.*
 - 'Now Eli was very old, and he kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting. **23** And he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all these people. **24** No, my sons; it is no good report that I hear the people of the LORD spreading abroad. **25** If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?" But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the

will of the LORD to put them to death.' 1st Samuel 2:22-25

- *First thing that I think we need to notice here is this:*
- *Their Dad knows. (V. 22)*
 - 'Now Eli was very old, and he kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting.'
 - *So the sons of Eli were obviously so bad, that it did get back to Eli what was going on.*
 - *This reminds me of when I was younger, and my Grandad would say 'If you do something bad, I'm gonna hear about it before you get home so you better not do anything bad.'*
 - Word got back to Eli that his sons were not doing what they were supposed to be doing, but we can't miss the detail in the text that '*Eli was very old*'
 - I think we can safely infer in the text that due to Eli's old age, he probably wasn't aware of what all was happening at Shiloh and the severity of what was happening.
 - *But now, he knows.*
 - He's aware of his sons forcing people to do the wrong things with their offerings

- (contrary to the Bible), for their own gain.
 - Verse 22 reveals to us that they were also having sexual relations with women at the temple.
- *Before we look at how Eli responded, we have to see that Hophni and Phineas reveal to us two forms of corruption that can easily take place in ministry if we are not checking our motives:*
 - #1: **Greed.**
 - The sons of Eli used their position as priests for their own personal gain.
 - #2: **Sexual Immorality.**
 - These leaders used their position of power as priest for the benefit of their own sexual pleasures.
- *Eli Confronts his sons. (V. 23-25a)*
 - ‘And he said to them, “Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all these people. **24** No, my sons; it is no good report that I hear the people of the LORD spreading abroad. **25** If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?’”

- **Unlike his sons, I believe verses 23-25 show us that Eli realizes the severity of the sin that his sons actions have caused.**
 - As we would hope any parent would, Eli gives his sons *a good talking to* based on their behavior.
- *Verse 24 shows that many if not most of the people of Israel knew what was going on.*
 - I can’t help but think of what the Apostle Paul said in Romans 14:13 when I read of the actions of Eli’s sons.
 - ‘Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.’
 - **There’s no telling how many people in Israel stumbled due to the actions of Hophni and Phineas.**
 - **When you and I have worthless motives in worship, it affects more people than just you and I.**
- *Verse 25 is where Eli reminds his sons that they have sinned against God Himself.*
 - So, this meant that no one was capable on interceding on their behalf
- *Stephen J. Andrews said ‘Since Hophni and Phineas had committed capital offenses*

(Leviticus 7:25, 22:9), they could expect the death penalty to be brought against them.'

- ***The sons Ignore. (V. 25b)***
 - 'But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the LORD to put them to death.'
 - ***This verse affirms what we found in verse 12, these sons really were the sons of Belial.***
 - Those who repeatedly ignore the Lord, like these sons ignored their father, are also sons of evil who choose not to repent and turn to the Lord.
 - Dale Ralph Davis said '***Hophni and Phinehas' resistance was not the rationale for Yahweh's judgment but the result of his judgment.'***
 - ***May we not remain in our rebellion so long that God chooses to take us out and remove us.***
 - God can do that, so we must not ignore Him.
 - ***Tonight we've seen that the sons were not saved, the sons were stealing, Samuel's ministry starts, the reputation of the sons spreads and lastly:***

Point 5: *Samuel's walk Strengthens. (V. 26)*

- While verses 27-36, that we will look at next week, will pick back up with Eli's sons and what God is going to do, for now we see the fact that Samuel is growing in the Lord.

- 'Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and also with man.'
 - ***While Hophni and Phineas were failing and going down a bad path, Samuel was growing and walking with the Lord.***
 - While the little fella was growing up, I'm sure not many at Shiloh noticed him.
 - ***But one day, God was going to use him and God was going to raise him up to be the spiritual leader in Israel.***
 - ***Never underestimate what God can do in the life of a child who is fully dedicated to Him.***
 - Even as a young boy, Samuel's walk in the Lord strengthened. Is your walk in God strengthening currently?

Conclusion:

- ***Tonight it is my prayer that we are able to see how important it truly is to have the right motives when worshiping and serving the Lord.***
 - Whether that's serving on a Wednesday night food team, as a greeter, a nursery worker, on the praise team or even in the pulpit.

- ***It's essential that we check our motives and make sure we are not worthless in the sight of the Lord.***

- We need to make sure that we are saved, not stealing from God, and that our bad reputation doesn't spread and affect others.

- ***Now we focused a good bit tonight on the worthlessness of Eli's sons, but I believe it's also important that we glean from tonight's text that Samuel is being brought up in the Lord.***
 - Although these sons of Eli failed and failed greatly, God was raising up a child who would one day be his mouthpiece for the Lord.
- Make sure your motives in Worship are not worthless.
- ***'So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.' 1st Corinthians 10:31***
 - Do it all for the Lord, and not yourselves.