



‘Honing in on the Heart!’ Sermon Series

Sermon #9:

‘The Pitfalls of a Patriarchal Priest!’

Wednesday, April 3rd, 2024

Last Wednesday Night in 1st Samuel:

- The last time we were in our ‘Honing in on the Heart!’ series, was february 21st.
 - *As many of you know, we took a break in our series through 1-2 Samuel to look at and study the 7 sayings of Jesus on the Cross.*
- But before we did so, we had 8 sermons in 1-2 Samuel, with the one on February 21st being entitled ***‘The Capture of the Ark of the Covenant!’*** from *1st Samuel 4:12-22*.
 - I asked the question that night: *How does this passage of scripture show us the significance of the Ark of the Covenant being taken by the Philistines?*

- Point 1: ***Despair in Losing. (V. 1-4)***
- Point 2: ***Distinct Loudness. (V. 5)***
- Point 3: ***Dumbfounded Leaders. (V. 6-9)***
- Point 4: ***Disappointment Lingerin. (V. 10-11)***

- Based on that message, we see that the taking of the Ark of the Covenant was a really big deal to the people of Israel. As we will study tonight, it was still a big deal to them and affected them in several different ways.

‘The Pitfalls of a Patriarchal Priest!’

1 Samuel 4:12-22

Sermon in a Sentence:

The Pitfalls of a Patriarchal Priest, Eli, that can be pulled right from the text are the Disheveled Priorities, Dead Parents, and the Dissolving Presence of God due to the absence of the Ark of the Covenant.

Intro:

- I’ve heard it said many times by other Pastors I listen to and too many of my mentors ***‘Don’t sacrifice your family on the altar of ministry’***
 - ***And what this means is simple. Don’t make your ministry so high of a priority, that you neglect the ministry that God has given you in the home.***

- In our scripture text tonight, we are going to see that Eli is going to die because he's upset the Ark of the Covenant is gone, and due to his poor spiritual leadership skills, his sons and many other people's sons will die as a result.

- ***What we find in our text tonight are the results of a ministry that was built on unhealthy and unsustainable ministry habits over a long period of time.***

- All Christians are called to serve Christ in ministry, but we are not called to make ministry an idol.

- ***Although we don't know all the specifics, due to the results we find in this passage, we see that the spiritual decisions that were made over a period of time, would be detrimental to Israel.***

- Now that we live under the New Covenant through Christ Jesus, we no longer go through priests and the old covenant.
- ***So while we may not be priests, we still have a ministry.***

- And whether you are a Pastor, SS teacher, Deacon, on any committee, we all must make healthy choices when it comes to our family or we will end up like Eli and his family, that we read about in this text.

****Read 1 Samuel 4:12-22****

Question to Ask:

What were the pitfalls that led to the downfall of the entire family of the Elide priestly line?

Point 1: *Disheveled Priorities. (V. 12-18)*

- 'A man of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes torn and with dirt on his head. **13** When he arrived, Eli was sitting on his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city and told the news, all the city cried out. **14** When Eli heard the sound of the outcry, he said, "What is this uproar?" Then the man hurried and came and told Eli. **15** Now Eli was ninety-eight years old and his eyes were set so that he could not see. **16** And the man said to Eli, "I am he who has come from the battle; I fled from the battle today." And he said, "How did it go, my son?" **17** He who brought the news answered and said, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has also been a great defeat among the people. Your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured."**18** As soon as he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell over backward from his seat by the side of the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years.'

- ***The reason that Israel was in battle that day, Eli was sitting by the road, and the ark of the***

covenant was gone, was because Eli had kept disheveled priorities for years.

- Disheveled can be defined as *disorderly, unity, or disarranged.*
 - *When we choose not to keep the write priorities in life by doing our own thing separate from what the Lord expects of us, we will reap the results of that.*
- I think scholar Robert D. Bergen summarized this section of Samuel 4 well when he said *‘The prophetically announced curse against the house of Eli proceeds here, as two additional generations are now touched by it. Not only does the elderly Eli die in the tragic section, but Eli’s grandson Ichabod is made an orphan, deprived not only of his father but now his mother as well.’*
 - What we find in verses 12-18, are the initial results of the pitfalls that Eli fell into. The results of Disheveled Priorities.
- ***A Messenger Arrives. (V. 12)***
 - ‘A man of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes torn and with dirt on his head.’
 - *It’s important to know that even without phones, email, or mass communication technology, that word did travel fast.*

- The battlefield where Israel was fighting that day was approximately 22 miles away from Shiloh.

- *Verse 12 tells us that he physically ran. So, this young man traveled 22 miles on foot to share the devastating news.*

- Now, other than the fact that this man was from the tribe of Benjamin, we are not told much about him.

- ***But there is something in verse 12 that should be of importance to us...***

- ***His appearance.***

- The bible tells us ***‘with his clothes torn and with dirt on his head’***

- In OT times, when someone had tore their clothes and put dirt on their head, it was a sign of reacted to grief and horror.

- While Eli was blind, when folks saw him entire into town, they new that the news was certainly not good.

- John Woodhouse says *‘One look at him, and it was plain that he brought bad news. I picture him with tears streaming down his face. Look at him, and you dread what he is about to say.’*

- ***The Man Anticipates. (V. 13a)***

- ‘When he arrived, Eli was sitting on his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God.’
- Previous verses that we’ve studied in 1st Samuel, told us that the priest Eli was blind by this point in his life.
 - ***So, he was not able to see these things happening, but he was able to sense them by what he heard.***
- *I find it interesting that Eli was sitting on the side of the road, waiting for news to arrive.*
 - I believe this shows that he is anticipating the news.
- *I’m sure that his heart was broken before the Lord that the Ark had even been lost, so he is anticipating the news that maybe, just maybe, the Israelites had won the battle and the ark would be returned home.*
 - But, as verse 13 continues, we know this wasn’t the case.
- ***Don’t forget, that according to 1 Samuel 2:34, 3:11-12, 18, that Eli was promised that his sons would die on the same day.***
 - Eli was terrified for the Ark, and that his two sons would die carrying the ark.
- ***The Messenger Announces. (V. 13b)***
 - ‘And when the man came into the city and told the news, all the city cried out.’
- The way that verse 13 is written, it seems that the man of Benjamin runs past Eli and tells the whole city.
 - ***But due to the details of verse 12, we know that he did not have to hardly speak. For everyone knew what had occurred based on his appearance.***
- Verse 13 tells us that the city cried out at this news.
 - ***Remember just earlier in 1 Samuel 4:5, that there was a mighty shout from all of Israel when the ark came down from Shiloh down to the camp at Ebenezer.***
 - ***My, how circumstances had changed vastly in a short amount of time.***
- Be careful, for what you prioritize today may take you down tomorrow.
- ***A Mess Appears. (V. 14-17)***
 - ‘When Eli heard the sound of the outcry, he said, “What is this uproar?” Then the man hurried and came and told Eli. **15** Now Eli was ninety-eight years old and his eyes were set so that he could not see. **16** And the man said to Eli, “I am he who has come from the battle; I fled from the battle today.” And he said, “How did it go, my son?” **17** He who brought the news answered and said, “Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has also been a great

defeat among the people. Your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured.”

○ ***Eli Questions. (V. 14)***

- Obviously, Eli heard what was going on so and though he was bound, he asked what was happening.
- It’s strange to look at 1 Samuel 4:6, and the same way that Eli responds here, is how the Philistines reacted when they heard the uproar in the camp of the Israelites.
 - ‘And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, “What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean?” 1st Samuel 4:6

■ ***Eli wanted to know what was going on, so he was about to find out.***

○ ***Eli’s Physical Condition. (V. 15)***

- Verse 15 tells us that Eli was 98 and that he was blind.
- 1st Samuel 3:2 is the first time where we were told by the writer that Eli’s sight was failing him.
 - ***Now he was completely blind. In all reality he wasn’t the road as we were told in verse 13, he was listening for what was going on.***

■ John Woodhouse said ***‘Weak, blind, trembling old Eli-Israel’s leader-needed to ask what the uproar meant.’***

- He was old, but his heart was no doubt heavy due to the decisions he had made over the course of his life.

○ ***Eli Receives the news. (V. 16-17)***

■ It’s highly possible and most likely that this messenger knew who Eli was, so he knew what kind of magnitude his words would have on him.

■ ***If the vocal tone of the messenger didn’t give him away, I feel certain that his words in verse 16 ‘I fled’ from the battle today, most certainly did.***

- Eli then asks him what happens and the young man brings the news of the results of the battle.

■ Two big blows that this messenger reveals:

- ***Eli’s two sons are dead, and the ark of God has been captured by the philistines.***

■ ***In the Hebrew text, the phrase ‘there has also been a great defeat among the people’ would be better translated as a great ‘slaughter’, which is how it is translated in 2nd Samuel 17:19.***

- John Woodhouse describes the benjamites news as *'This was not a minor setback in the ongoing conflict with the Philistines. This was a disaster of huge proportions. Many, many were dead.'*
- The words of God through the prophet Samuel from back in 1 Samuel 2:34 came to pass here with the news that is given.
 - *When God says something, it will come to pass. No matter how shocking it may be to us as the hearers.*
- *A Monarch Affected. (V. 18)*
 - 'As soon as he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell over backward from his seat by the side of the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years.'
 - *I find verse 18 very interesting, because we see that just over the mention of the ark of God, Eli fell and died.*
 - It was not the news that the ark had been taken, just the mere mention of it.
 - *I do believe this goes back to the trembling heart that Eli had for*

the ark of God when he was sitting by the road in verse 13.

- *This news undoubtedly overwhelmed the old man, that he died.*
- **Word Study**
 - The word 'heavy' in the English, comes from the Hebrew word *'Kabed'*.
 - In the Hebrew text, there is a literal play on words.
 - *In the Hebrew this word meant heavy, literally as in the sense of weight, but also meant 'honored' in other times of its 116 occurrences. 45 of the times 'Kabed' appears in OT, it is translated to Heavy.*
 - *39% of the time Kabed occurs, it is translated to Heavey.*
- His old age, weight, but his broken heart over this news greatly affected this Monarch.
 - *But it is very important to see that his disheveled priorities caused issues for him, his sons, and as we will see, his grandson would grow up an orphan.*
- *The writer of 1st Samuel gives us the short obituary column of Eli, 'He had judged Israel forty years.'*
 - Scholar John L. Mackay said *'Eli had been more than high priest, exercising leadership similar to that of one of the*

minor judges. There is no note here of any military deliverance won by Eli, so evidently he had not been a military leader. He had, however, guided the affairs of the nation and adjudicated its disputes.'

- *Robert D. Bergen said 'Finally, as a result of the sins he permitted in his own life and household, Eli was a burden that weighed down and ultimately brought disaster upon Israel.'*

- We see the disheveled priorities.

Point 2: *Dead Parents. (V. 19-20)*

- 'Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, about to give birth. And when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed and gave birth, for her pains came upon her. **20** And about the time of her death the women attending her said to her, "Do not be afraid, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer or pay attention.'
- *Death continues to touch this family.*
 - Phinehas's wife was pregnant, and due to the news, she goes into a premature birth, and due to the difficulty, she will die.
- *She was given a three fold blow of bad news.*
 - The Ark of the Covenant was gone.

- Her husband was dead.
- Her father in law and brother in law were also dead.

- *In 1st Samuel 4:21, she shows that her main concern is that the Ark is gone, by the way that she chooses to name her son.*

- *The devastating thing that we find here with Eli's reaction and Phineas's wife reaction, is that they are concerned with God when He was gone, but were not concerned of the sins of those closest to them while He was present.*

- I believe there are 2 things we need to consider with the fact that there are Dead parents for this young child.

● *Shock. (V. 19)*

- 'Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, about to give birth. And when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed and gave birth, for her pains came upon her.'
- **Word Study**
 - The english word bowed here, is translated from the hebrew word **'Kara'** which literally means to crouch down.
 - Most scholars and theologians all agree that it was this threefold

news, especially the ark, that caused her to go into labor prematurely.

- ***What a sad story. Where there should be excitement with the announcement of life, there is doom and gloom due to the death of the Mother, and now, this child is left as an infant.***
- ***Solace. (V. 20)***
 - ‘And about the time of her death the women attending her said to her, “Do not be afraid, for you have borne a son.” But she did not answer or pay attention.’
 - Even in her dark situation, these women (plural) that were there sought to comfort her.
 - ***But she ignored them due to her anxieties over the fact that the ark had been lost.***
 - By this point her mind and anxiety over the recent news had already taken over.
 - ***I'm sure that these women meant well, but their solace would not ease the pain, and she would die.***
 - Her grief has already suck in, and she is not able to enjoy the news that she had just had a son.
 - Tonight we've been able to see the Disheveled Priorities, and the Dead Parents, lastly, I think

we can see the Dissolving Presence of God from Israel.

Point 3: *Dissolving Presence. (V. 21-22)*

- ‘And she named the child Ichabod, saying, “The glory has departed[b] from Israel!” because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. 22 And she said, “The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.”’
 - ***In her dying words, she releases more theology from her lips in her last words, than Phineas probably did in his entire lifetime.***
 - By naming her son what she did, she showed evidence that she knew what had occurred in Israel and she knew what the ramifications of that would be.
 - ***The presence of God had dissolved from Israel.***
 - There are 2 important things to point out concerning the dissolving presence of God from Israel at this time.
- ***The Name. (V. 21)***
 - ‘And she named the child Ichabod, saying, “The glory has departed[b] from Israel!” because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband.
 - She names her son Ichabod, which in the Hebrew, means ‘***Where is the Glory?***’
 - This is so powerful.

- *It is a powerful theological statement within the OT because it shows that she knew the Glory of God had left and she recognizes His power.*
 - H.L. Ellison was a polish Bible Scholar, and he said *'She was wrong. The Glory of God had indeed departed, but not because the ark of God had been captured; the ark had been captured because the glory had already departed.'*
- Eli trusted too much in his own actions and priestly ways, instead of following God by disciplining those in his own household.
 - He just let things go by the wayside, as many of us do today.
- Dale Ralph Davis said *'sometimes God must depart from us in order that we might seek Him rightly. And in the meantime we do well to ponder what a tragedy it is when the presence of God no longer abides among the people of God.'*
 - *Church, is it possible that even today that the word 'Ichabod' could be written on the signs of our Churches instead of the Church name?*
 - Where has the Glory gone in our Churches?
- God cannot keep His hand on a Church that is falling into the pitfalls of ministry, and the results that we've seen tonight, will somehow be evident and visible in that particular Church.
- *The New Nature of the Land. (V. 22)*
 - 'And she said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."
 - *The wife of Phineas describes what was happening in the land and what would continue to happen.*
 - While the Glory had been taken by the philistines in the ark of the covenant, the Glory left Israel when the prioritizing of God was replaced by religion and lackadaisical living, under Eli's leadership.
 - *I believe in 1st Samuel 4:12-22, we can see a small mini history lesson of the history of Israel as is seen throughout the OT.*
 - Eventually the nation was driven out by the Assyrians and then the Babylonians.
 - Every physical item that they possessed that represented their relationship with God, was destroyed.
 - *While in the land of Babylon, Ezekiel would become a prophet to lead the 'Remnant' to come back to the Lord.*

- Doesn't the meaning of Ichabod's name cause us to literally ask the question?
 - 'Where is the Glory of God?'
- I think the answer is at the beginning of John's Gospel:
 - ***'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son[a] from the Father, full of grace and truth.'* John 1:14**
- ***The glory of God can only be present in your life if Jesus is in your life.***
 - ***The Glory of God can only be in our Churches if Christ is at the center of our Churches and their mission.***

Conclusion:

- Tonight as we close, we've looked closely at the 'Pitfalls of a Patriarchal Priest!'.
 - ***It is my prayer this evening, that as we look at the results of the pitfalls that Eli fell into in ministry, that we can examine our own ministries tonight, and even our own households.***
- May we not forget the results of these pitfalls as we saw them in the text tonight:
 - **Point 1: *Disheveled Priorities. (V. 12-18)***
 - **Point 2: *Dead Parents. (V. 19-20)***
 - **Point 3: *Dissolving Presence. (V. 21-22)***
- As we close, I want to do so with an illustration.

- ***A.W. Tozer was an incredible Pastor, Preacher, Author, Traveling to Preach, and Mentoring young men are the main things that he did so well in his ministry.***
 - His books are incredible and still impact people today.
 - In the early 1950's after the Tozer's had moved to Toronto and their 7 children had grown up and moved out of the house, here's what biographer Dorsett said concerning the couple's marriage: ***'While Tozer had fewer responsibilities as a Pastor in Canada, he seems to devoted little if any more of his newfound freedom to his wife of 40 years. Prayer, preaching, writing, travel, and mentoring young men took up most of his hours, leaving no time to develop the marital intimacy that they had both learned to live without.'***
- ***But on Sunday morning of May 12, 1959 Tozer had chest pains.***
 - His wife went home that night, and at 12:45 AM, A.W. Toer died. He was 66 and she was 64.

- *To make the situation worse, his wife never knew anything about the family finances.*
 - Once he died she learned that her husband gave half of his salary back to the Church every month.
 - He had avoided getting a pension fund/retirement account with the Christian association he was in, and had also signed away his rights to royalties on paperback additions of his book to his christian publisher.
 - *By the time it was all said in done, she had \$5,000 in insurance and \$7,000 in savings to live on the rest of her live.*
 - A.W. Tozer did not leave her in the best of shape.
 - *Just a year later, his wife met and married a man by the name of Leonard Odam.*
 - *Here's what Tozer's wife said about him in the later years of his life:*
 - 'I have never been happier in my life. Aiden loved Jesus Christ, but Leonard Odam loves me.
 - *Yes, it's important for us to love Jesus Christ with all we have, but not so much that we neglect the one's closest to us that God has given us.*

- *As we close tonight, let's make sure that we live in such a way that our family has no doubt that we love Jesus and THEM well.*