1 Samuel 2:12-36

THE SIN OF ELI'S SONS
or
If You Don't Deal With Sin, God Will

By Chris Losey

INTRODUCTION
Have you ever observed people doing sinful things and getting away with it? The bully at school who picks on others, the dishonest businessman who cheats his customers, the person with no regard for the law who always speeds... Sometimes it seems like there is no justice! It is bad enough when non-Christians sin blatantly but it seems almost intolerable when people who claim to know God, sin and don't seem to be bothered by it. Where is God during this process? Doesn't He care that innocent people are getting hurt? Wouldn't people trust Him more if they saw sinners getting their just desserts and those trying to live righteously get blessed?

Today we will focus on the subject of sin and see how God does care and eventually take care of the sin problem. This message is entitled, "THE SIN OF ELI'S SONS, or If You Don't Deal With Sin, God Will.

OVERVIEW
Before beginning, here is an overview of the 1 Samuel 2:12-36. The sons of Eli were priests and identified as worthless men because they did not know the Lord. They took advantage of their position and perverted the sacrificial system for their own advantage. Eli knew about their sin and verbally confronted them but to no avail. In the mean time Samuel, who now worked at the tabernacle was growing in stature and in favor with God and man. Because of the sin in Eli's family, God pronounced a judgment upon them and said that He would replace them with a faithful priest who would do what was right.

As the topic of sin is looked at, three areas will be investigated:

I. THE PERVERSE AND PRESUMPTUOUS NATURE OF SIN
II. SOME PRINCIPLES REGARDING SIN
III. THE PRICE OF SIN

I. THE PERVERSE AND PRESUMPTUOUS NATURE OF SIN
As we begin, let me ask you a question. Of all of the characters in this chapter; Eli's sons, the people who sacrificed, Elkanah, Hannah, Samuel, Eli, and the man of God, how many were sinners? All of them! The Bible says that "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," romans 3:23. Although it is clear that every person who ever lived, besides Christ, is a sinner, God makes a distinction here. He does not focus on the sin of Hannah, Elkanah, Samuel or the man of God. He only focuses on Eli and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas. God calls Hophni and Phinehas worthless men or sons of Belial. Although a derivation of the word Belial is used in the New Testament in 2 Cor 6:15 to refer to Satan, in the Old Testament the word does simply means worthless. It is derived from two words; without and to profit, hence the meaning of worthless. When a person was described as the son of Belial it meant that he sinned in the most perverse ways. Such was true of Eli's sons. They purposely, repeatedly and openly
violated the clear teaching of the law. They also slept around with the women who worked at the doorway of the tent of meeting. How perverse! The very people who were appointed in the ministry to help their fellow countrymen make sacrifices for sin, were themselves openly and blatantly sinning. By doing this they were not only perverse, they presumed upon God's grace. It was like they were daring God to do something about it. Do you remember the words of David in Psalm 19:13,14,

v13 Also keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me; Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be acquitted of great transgression. v14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer.

We would do well to remember the perverse and presumptuous nature of sin. There is no doubt that Eli's sons exhibited the perverseness of sin by presuming upon God's grace. Every time we knowingly sin in thought, word or deed, we are presuming upon God's grace.

II. THE PRINCIPLES OF SIN
There are a number of clear principles regarding the subject of sin taught in this passage:

1. SIN IS POWERFUL
Sin is powerful and can get a grip on us. It is possible to grow up in a Christian environment and not know God (v12). It is possible to even serve in ministry and not know God. Eli's sons grew up in the home of a priest and even became priests, yet they did not know God. How can that be? Becoming a believer doesn't happen by osmosis. Each person must make his or her own decision to reject sin and receive Christ or to reject Christ and receive sin. Eli's sons chose to reject God and receive sin.

2. THE HEART OF SIN IS REBELLION AGAINST GOD
Notice how Eli's sons perverted the tradition of God and rebelled against Him. It is clear from Leviticus 7:28-34 that the priests were to get part of the offering that people made to the Lord. The fat of the animal would be burned and part of the meat became the priests. This was how their needs were met since they ministered to the Lord rather than tending flocks or running businesses. But Eli's sons perverted this tradition and wanted their portion before God had gotten His. In other words, they took God's provision for them and perverted it for their own gain. This is rebellion of the worst kind. Any time we violate God's clear teaching we are rebelling. Many people, even Christians are rebelling today. God's Word teaches that we are to tithe but many people don't. We are to obey the government but many people only obey the laws if it is convenient for them. Driving within the speed limit is a good example. Sure all of us violate it now and then but there are those who don't even try to stay within it. That is rebellion. God makes it clear that all Christians are to serve in the body of Christ but some people never get involved or only serve when it is convenient. This leaves others to do an unfair amount of the work. Eli's sons despised the offering of the Lord v17. Indeed, sin is rebellion against God.

3. UNCHECKED SIN GETS AGGRESSIVE
Notice how bold Eli's sons had become aggressive in their sin. They threatened worshippers. verses 15-16 state,

"Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, 'Give the priest meat for roasting, as he will not take boiled meat from you, only raw. v16 And if the man said to him, "They must surely burn the fat first, and then take as much as you desire,' then he would say, 'No but you shall give it to me now; and if not, I will take it by force."
What is even more said, Eli's sons didn't even threaten the worshippers in regard to godly things. They threatened them with selfish greedy demands. It would have been one thing if they had said, "If you're not in worship, we're going to come to your tent to get you!" Actually, that is not a bad idea. We could start the church limo service that came looking for you if you were more than 10 minutes late. We could have remedial worship... The threats that Eli's sons made were selfish greedy threats for their own gain. It would be like me standing up and saying, "If you don't give to my vacation fund, I'll lock the doors and no one will go home." Could I get away with that? Actually I don't have a vacation fund.

It is true that unchecked sin gets more and more aggressive. We can see it today in society. Justice is often neither fair nor swift and evil people thus become bolder in their sin. If people knew they would pay a stiff penalty for sin, I believe they would be much less likely to do it. But remember, in Eli's day as in our own, people did/do what was right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25), and sin has thus gotten worse and worse.

4. SIN DESTROYS A PERSON'S WITNESS AND DESTROYS THE LIVES OF OTHERS
Not only did the sin of Eli's sons make people see priests in a bad light, their sin also undoubtedly destroyed the lives of some of those women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting. Sin makes people mock God and his church. It has been said that sometimes the worst advertisement for Christianity is supposed Christians.

5. YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT
Eli heard the report from many people about how his sons were sinning. The news of sin gets around. As is stated in Numbers 32:23, "Your sin will find you out."

6. WHEN CONFRONTING SIN, TALK IS CHEAP
Eli confronted his sons with words. Notice in verses 23-24 what he said,

v23 And he said to them, "Why do you do such things, the evil things that I hear from all these people? v24 No, my sons; for the report is not good which I hear the Lord's people circulating.

I imagine this little scolding had been one of numerous talks with his children but all to no avail. In verse 25 it says, "But they would not listen to the voice of their father..." They both probably thought Eli was an old fool. And indeed he was a fool to let things get this bad. As high priest, Eli should have taken action. He could have had his sons removed from the priesthood. I imagine he was so busy with ministry that he never took time to really discipline his sons. He was now reaping what he had sown.

It is sad to think that some of the worst kids are preachers kids but its true. I know I had heard that story and seen the truth of it and vowed to myself that I would do all I could to ensure that was not true of my family. In some of our homes, we would do well to warm some disobedient behinds. Reasoning with young children doesn't work well. Their subjective thinking doesn't even kick-in until around age 12. Don't try to reason with a 3 year old like you would an adult. They don't think on the same level but they do understand pain. The rod of correction on the seat of learning goes a long way to drive rebellion and sin from children's lives so that when they get to be teenagers, they are a joy rather than a curse. When dealing with sin, don't stop with talk, take action!

7. GOD HATES SIN
We learn in verse 25 that, "...the Lord desired to put them (Eli's sons) to death. God hates sin. If we love God, we should hate sin too. I love the phrase, "Love God, Hate Evil" (Ps 97:10). Amos 5:15 states,
"Hate the evil and love the good..." If we truly hated sin we would not be so tolerant of it. I saw a bumper sticker this week which summed it up well, "I WISH PEOPLE WERE AS CONCERNED ABOUT KEEPING DRUGS OUT OF SCHOOL AS THEY WERE ABOUT KEEPING THE BIBLE OUT." Isn't that the truth. We strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. If we hate sin, we won't watch certain things, go certain places or do certain things. We need to develop some standards in regard to movies, television, magazines, books, etc. It is true that today it is almost impossible to watch a movie that doesn't have some profanity but all of us could be much more discriminating. I remember on man who became convicted in this area, went home and erased all his collection of R-rated movies. Not a bad idea. It is time for us to hate sin and love God. Remember the words of Phil 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.

This could well mean unplugging things like HBO, Cinemax, Showtime, etc. For every ounce of good story line in many of the movies shown on those channels, there is a pound of crud. This imbalance just feeds our minds on things that break God's heart. Is cleaning out our homes of these things legalism? I don't think so. Use the time and money you save to do something edifying like going to a museum or playing football for your son or taking a walk with your daughter, husband or wife.

8. IT IS POSSIBLE TO LIVE FOR GOD IN A SINFUL WORLD

Notice what verse 26 states, "Now the boy Samuel was growing in stature and in favor both with the Lord and with men." Who does this sound like? Similar words were shared about Jesus in Luke 2:52, "And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."

Even though Samuel was not yet a believer (1 Sam 3:7), God was working in his life and bringing him to Himself.

Some people today are discouraged and feel that it is impossible to live for God in a sin-filled world. It is impossible in our own power but not in the power of Christ living in us. With Him all things are possible. Are you seeking to live for Him? I hope so. Don't give up. Don't give in. Keep walking by faith and God will bless you.

III. THE PRICE OF SIN

Although sin has its pleasures for a season (Heb 11:26) the price of sin is high; a ruined life, a broken family, a tainted reputation. Those involved in sin best beware. There may come a time when God will blow the whistle and say, "That's it. I've had enough. The party is over." That is precisely what happened to Eli and his sons. A man of God came to Eli and said that God would remove Eli and his sons from the priesthood. The sign would be that on the same day both of Eli's sons would die. God would replace them with a priest who would do His will.

SIN WILL NULLIFY A MINISTRY

Although Eli had failed with his family, he had some positive impact in his ministry. For one, he encouraged Hannah. Secondly, he raised Samuel. But because of his sin, all of this would be nullified.

CONCLUSION

None of us is above the law. None of us is irreplaceable. It is like the story of the hand in the bucket. If we remain faithful, God will use us. If not, He may choose to replace us. We must be sure that we are
not presuming upon God's grace. If there is sin in our lives, we need to confess it and turn from it and seek to get back into the center of God's perfect will for our lives.