

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE #3

MONDAY God continues to rebuke Eli. He tells him in these three verses that his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will both die, and that God will replace them thru another house. (That is, their own sons will not follow them in the job as would normally be the case) Eli's descendants will lament the lost of position. The search for greener pastures takes us farther away from the barn.

I Samuel 2:34-36

God takes very seriously the opportunities He gives us to serve Him. Much more so than we do. And there is accountability with God. He wanted Eli and his family to do what was in His heart and in His mind. (That wasn't as hard as it sounds because God told them what was there!) They did not do so, and they paid for it! Make no mistake about it: *whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.* Let us sow the seeds of righteousness and goodness, and not grow weary in doing so. Let us serve the Lord with gladness of heart!

TUESDAY To continue the contrast between the sons of Eli and Samuel, we read about Samuel's heart for God and his determination to serve Him by serving Eli. One night, the boy Samuel heard someone calling his voice. Three times he hears his name; three times he runs to Eli thinking it was he who had called him. Each time, Eli told the boy that the voice he heard was not his.

I Samuel 3:1-8

I imagine Samuel's reply growing stronger each time. "I think you called me." "You called me!" "I'm sure you called me!" I imagine that there was a increasing sense of frustration that Eli would again deny having done so. But my imagination is perhaps greater than the details of the story allow. The fact is, Samuel went back to Eli each time. The conclusion we draw is that Samuel was a boy dead and determined to serve the Lord in His Tabernacle by serving His priest Eli. Let us look for ways to serve the Lord by serving His people.

WEDNESDAY Eli perceives this name calling is of the Lord and he instructs Samuel what to do if it happens another time. Samuel obeys, saying, "Speak, Lord." The Lord tells the boy Samuel that He plans to bring destruction upon Eli's house because of the children's vile behavior and for Eli's sin of not restraining them.

I Samuel 3:9-14

Wow! The Lord didn't hold back in telling Samuel His plans for Eli and his Eli's family. In all likelihood, Samuel was very much aware of all the vile behavior of Eli's sons, and of Eli's failure to correct them. After all, for several years now, he had been practically a part of the family. God told Samuel that it was too late for Eli: that even offering or sacrifice (and with it, perhaps even repentance) would not influence Him. Let us remember that the Day of Opportunity is not a day without end. At some point, God calls for an accounting. In view of that, let us decide to make use of every opportunity to love God and man.

THURSDAY

After God spoke to Samuel in the night and told him what would and would not happen to Eli's family, Samuel was uncomfortable. How could he ever share such terrible news with Eli? But Eli recognized what was behind his resistance, and

insisted that Samuel tell all. Hearing it, Eli did not protest, but replied, "It is of the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to him."

I Samuel 3:15-18

Even a crooked stick can draw a straight line. When it came to being a Godly father, Eli was a crooked stick. He failed to correct or restrain his kids even when their actions brought shame and disgrace on the priesthood. But he draws a straight line with his response. He accepts what God has for him. With Job he declares, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes. Blessed be the name of the Lord!" The lesson here is not that we should be crooked sticks! It is this: that we are crooked sticks! But despite the weaknesses and failings in our lives, we can still respond to what God tells us, and obey him. Let us accept what God brings to us, recognizing always, that it is good, for it is of the Lord!

FRIDAY

Samuel was the exact opposite of Eli's sons. He kept the words of the Lord and lived by them. His good reputation was known all over the land.

I Samuel 3:19-21

The text says that Samuel "let none of His words fail." The word translated fail means literally "to fall to the ground". It was used of fruit falling to the ground before it could be picked. Fallen fruit cannot be easily sold and is often damaged in the fall. Samuel did not allow that sort of thing to take place when it came to how he responded to what God has said. He picked each word, so to speak, and God's Word was food for his soul. Let us take the Word and feast on it, as well, not allowing even one word to fail.

SATURDAY

Time goes by. Years. And Samuel is the recognized prophet of all Israel. One day, a Philistine army attacked and defeated Israel, killing about 4,000 men. The Jewish people were distressed, and discussed how to avoid a second defeat. It was decided to take the Ark of the Covenant from out of the Tabernacle and transport it to the front line of the battle, accompanied by Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas.

I Samuel 4:1-5

Exactly who started the campaign to get the Ark of the Covenant to the battle's front is not known. It may have been Hophni and Phinehas' idea. But regardless of who thought of it, all Israel seems to think it's a great idea. When we read the account here, we must surely think, "How ludicrous! As if the Ark of the Covenant would make a difference! After all, it's just a gold-covered wooden box." While seeing clearly how the Jews in Samuel's day were foolish in this way, let us not do the same thing. God is not a good luck piece who will assure success or prosperity. An angel figurine on the dash of your car will not protect you from accidents. Either will a cross necklace around your neck. And a Bible on the coffee table will not safeguard your house from fire. God is not a rabbit foot for the religious! Let us not drag God down to that level.