

1 Samuel 2:27-36: The Lord's Provision for the Priesthood

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[0 : 00] This reading is taken from the book of 1st Samuel, chapter 2, verses 27 through 36. And that is on page 215 of the Pew Bibles.

Again, that's 1st Samuel 2, 27 through 36, on page 215. Please stand for the reading of God's word. And there came a man of God to Eli and said to him, Thus the Lord has said, Did I indeed reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt, subject to the house of Pharaoh?

Did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? I gave to the house of your father all my offerings by fire from the people of Israel.

Why then do you scorn my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded, and honor your sons above me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel?

Therefore the Lord God of Israel declares, I promise that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before me forever. But now the Lord declares, Far be it from me.

[1 : 28] For those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me I shall, or those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house.

Then in distress you will look with envious eye on all the prosperity that shall be bestowed on Israel, and there shall not be an old man in your house forever. The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep his eyes out to grieve his heart, and all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword of men.

And this that shall come upon your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall be the sign to you. Both of them shall die on the same day.

And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever.

And everyone who is left in your house shall come to implore him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread, and shall say, Please put me in one of the priest's places, that I may eat a morsel of bread.

[2 : 48] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Good afternoon.

Our men on the ground in Kenya have a few more days before they're back with us. So let's continue our prayers as they begin to look toward home.

And I don't think I heard Josh mention this, but there is ice cream after service. So stick around. If you don't stay for the service, you don't get any ice cream, okay?

Let's pray. Lord, we love you. Thank you for the opportunity to stand before you, as well as your people on this afternoon. Pray that you would speak to us.

Pray that your word would correct us. Pray that it would sanctify us and do your own work, Lord, in us individually as well as corporately.

[3 : 49] You know what the will of your word is for us today. We humble ourselves before it and commit ourselves to you in Christ's name. Amen.

1 Samuel chapter 2, This is the third message from this particular chapter. As we come to these final verses on this afternoon, there is a clear difference in the way the chapter began versus the way that it is going to end.

You may recall Hannah's song, verses 1 through 10. What we had there was a prayerful, prophetic celebration.

This was the celebration of a woman's prayers that had been heard. And in those prayers, she sang, as it were, of the Almighty God.

The Almighty God who was in the business of flip-flopping things in the world, reversing things, reversing fortunes in the world.

[5 : 04] Her song, if you look at verse 10, ends with what we see written there. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces.

Against them he will thunder in heaven. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to his king and exalt the power of his anointed.

Particularly, keep the first part of that verse in mind, even as we look at our verses on this afternoon. In today's text, we hear in verse 27, not the voice of a woman, but we hear the voice of an unnamed man of God.

He's a prophet. His song is not about the Lord, but it is a message from the Lord. It's a message of judgment.

And on the heels of the leadership crisis that we saw in our text from last week, this message of judgment is understandable because of the need that was in Shiloh of that day.

[6 : 19] We saw the gross abuses of those who occupied the place of God's servants in God's house, as it were, and their actions called from judgment from God.

Look at verse 27 and 28. There we see what we could call the Lord's appointment of the priesthood or the office of priest.

In the first part of the message, the Lord recused his kindness to Eli's ancestors, the priestly family of Aaron. Look at verse 27. And there came a man of God to Eli and said to him, Thus saith, thus the Lord says, I'm reverting to King James, I apologize.

Did I indeed reveal myself to the house of your father when they came, when they were in Egypt, subject to the house of Pharaoh? What he's doing, he's highlighting his covenant relationship with the people of God.

And the priests were those, you might say, they were the men in the middle. They were between God and God's covenant people, and they mediated, you might say, God's relationship with this people through the covenant.

[7 : 45] Through their ministry, their sacred service, sinful people could then approach the holy God. You may recall the establishment of the priesthood in Exodus, the erecting of the tabernacle.

This, and where, where God's presence came, Exodus chapter 40. But then, how is it that holy man is going to approach, I mean, unholy man is going to approach holy God?

Leviticus. It's through the sacrificial system. Through the sacrificial system. And it was the priest then that, and the Levitical team, as it were, that stood in the middle between God and his covenant people.

Centuries before, God had chosen Aaron and his sons and their descendants to serve as priests. And that's what this prophet was highlighting. He was causing them to look back in history and see the hand of God, how he had established this particular office and how he had called this particular family to fill that office.

They were the ones who had, would have the privilege of drawing near to God. Did you know what a privilege it is to draw near to God? Even today?

[9 : 03] And though, yes, we as God's people, we are a nation of, we are a priesthood of the believers and we have access, you might say, priestly access through our prayers to God.

And what a privilege it is to draw near to God. Hebrew speaks a lot about that. But these were the ones in that day that had the privilege of access to God.

They would offer sacrifices on behalf of God's people and the nation and, as remuneration for their service, they would receive portions of the offering that God's people would bring.

The priests worked for God on behalf of God's people and the place where they served was known as the tabernacle that preceded the temple. So in view of the Lord's ordaining these things, we see the questions that we do in verse 27 and 28 and those questions are in order.

They're rhetorical, they're to make Eli think, but they're a given nonetheless. Look at verse 28. How it reads, Did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me?

[10 : 16] I gave to the house of your father all my offerings by fire from the people of Israel. That's the way the system that God had ordained in that day.

The God-ordained system, his gracious provision through that system had been disrespected by the very ones who occupied those particular roles.

The text says that they scorned or King James they kicked at. But again, the whole idea of disrespect and even abuse, and thus we have the questions from the lips of God's messenger to Eli in that day.

But see, not only do we have God's provision or appointment of the priesthood, there was the problem with the priesthood that's highlighted in verse 29. The problem was the unfaithfulness of those who occupied the position, Eli and his sons.

While Eli and his sons were from the right family, they had Aaronic pedigree, they were Aaron's descendants, they lacked, friends, the character, the spiritual and the moral qualifications that were really essential for those in the positions that they occupied.

[11 : 37] Let me ask you a question. And though you on this afternoon, you wear the name even of Christian, you have the name.

and you may have the appearance that you're in the family. Do you measure up to the description of those who really have the spiritual and the moral qualifications that go along with the name?

I mean, it would be like me if I came here on this afternoon with a Chicago Bulls jersey. I mean, you can buy those things and you can, you know, have all of the appearance, but I don't have the skills that are necessary to earn me the name as being a part of the team.

You know, you're wearing the name. But friends, there is a real character that goes along with the name of being a Christian, a part of God's family.

Spiritually and morally ill-prepared leadership. They failed the first test of leadership. The first test of leadership is self-leadership.

[12 : 51] The leadership of self. And I wonder, perhaps, did Paul have Eli and his sons in mind when he wrote both to Timothy and to Titus as far as the characteristics of a spiritual leader?

Above reproach. Husband of one wife, self-controlled. Not a lover of money. He must manage his own household wealth. He must be thought of well by outsiders.

Could he have had this priestly, minister, ministerial family in mind when he wrote those things in the New Testament? The first application of leadership is self-leadership.

Here we had leaders who were unprepared or ill-prepared to lead God's people. More often than not, leadership failure is not because of the lack of intelligence.

It's not because they are not that smart. Sheila was not in the shape that it was in because Eli and his household were dumb, so to speak. Theirs was not a lack of intelligence.

[14 : 02] It was a lack of integrity. Think of President Bill Clinton, one of the brightest of our present era kind of presidents.

But his legacy includes the likes of the Monica Lewinsky matter. Recently, former Congressman Anthony Weiner resigned over posting lewd pictures of himself on Twitter.

Theirs is not a problem of intelligence. often the failure of leadership is a failure of integrity. Not measuring up to the morals and for spiritual leaders, spiritual standards that go along with those who we are the position.

But let me say this, friends, it's not simply, I mean, even if you look at that list in Timothy and Titus, those things are not simply good for spiritual leaders. those things are right and proper and honorable for all of God's people.

We could go on, but Sheol was in the shape that it was in because of those who were leading. It was because of the abuse of the office that was entrusted to them that change was in order.

[15 : 26] And that's why God had dispatched this unnamed prophet to speak to Eli about the transgressions of the priesthood.

This priestly family, friends, was ripe for rebuke, ripe for replacement that would be a part of their punishment. And so, if you, to Eli and his family, look back at verse 10.

The principle is there, but the first application of the principle that we see at the first of verse 10. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces.

Against them, he will thunder in heaven. The first application was to this leadership family, this priestly family that we see here.

Notice verses 30 through 34. There we see the punishment for the priesthood. Look at verse 30. Therefore, the Lord, the God of Israel declares, I promise that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before me forever or for the duration.

[16 : 45] But now the Lord declares, be it far from me for those, and this is a critical verse here, for those who honor me, I will honor, and those who despise me will be or shall be lightly esteemed.

This verse is very powerful, and it is applicable for people of all ages. The Lord honors those who honor him and treats lightly those who disregard or ignore him.

This would apply to Eli and his sons. Later, it would apply to Saul and his household. And later, it would apply to David, the greatest king.

Even he would not escape God's judgment when he disrespected or dishonored the Lord. And neither can we.

Great treasures need to be treated accordingly. Honor, respect, and recognition of God's grand and glorious worth should be, friends, at the very core, at the center of our lives.

[18 : 00] We sing about it, don't we? Lord, you are more precious than silver. Lord, you are more costly than gold.

Lord, you are more beautiful than diamonds. Nothing I desire compares with you. God is weighty, he's heavy, he is worthy of honor, and thus it's idolatry, pure, and simple for the Lord to be displaced in our lives, in our affections, by anything that you and I desire.

Idolatry, pure, and simple. who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

The understood answer is there is none like him, and as the exalted God of the universe, there should be no one honored in our lives, in our affections, greater than him.

The Lord's messenger then spoke of a day when Eli's householder's family would be punished because of their failure to exalt God, to honor God in the way that he was worthy of.

[19 : 32] This priestly family forfeited the right to lead and to be supported through the office of the priesthood. the rule for generations of Eli's family would be that there would not be any who would reap the ripe old age.

Look at verse 31. Behold, the days are coming when I'll cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house so that there will not be an old man in your house or in your family.

The descendants of those whose prosperity was at the expense of Israel now then would in the future look with envious eye on the prosperity of Israel and not be able to partake of it and further severe judgment.

Look at verse 33. The only one who I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep his eyes out to grieve his heart and all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword of men.

What judgment? that comes down from the corridors of heaven. And then how would you know that it would be true? Look at verse 34. Eli's two sons would die on the same day.

[20 : 49] Here we go. This was the first application of the principle of replacement and displacement that we hear in Hannah's song.

The reversal spoken of in verses 1 through 10. Here's a case, friends, of judgment beginning at the house of God. Peter wrote about it, didn't he?

For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God. And if it begins with us, what will the outcome of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Judgment with God's people. Let's turn our attention to the final verses now. the Lord's provision for his priesthood.

Notice verse 34, and this that shall come upon you, well, verse 35, and I will raise up for myself a faithful priest who will do according to all what is in my heart and in my mind.

[21 : 53] And I will build him a sure house and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever. and everyone who is left in your house should come to implore him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and shall say, please put me in one of the priest's places that I may eat a morsel of bread.

Huh? In view of the failure of Eli and his sons to fully honor God, the Lord would raise up or appoint a person who would live and minister according to God's will, a faithful priest, one who would be true to the Lord and serve honorably.

Now, first of all, and perhaps can be defended contextually, the most likely person is Samuel.

And given the leadership void in Israel, it seems like the Lord's immediate provision for the priesthood with Samuel. Now, title-wise, Samuel was what?

Prophet, judge, kingmaker. And officially, he did not serve as a priest in name, but functionally, Samuel also served as priest.

[23 : 13] Now, we must understand there was a leadership transition, and there were voids at this particular time in the life of Israel. Samuel, from the tribe of Levi, but not a son of Aaron, yet what we see in the context here and even going forward, he did serve in the capacity of a priest.

The Lord would provide at least minimally, temporarily, though it might be, for his priesthood. Not from Aaron's family.

God in his faithfulness would do that. Now, Samuel, the Lord's immediate provision, solution, but yet in the long term, you even might say intermediate solution, based on what we see in the prophecy in this text, it would be Zadok, so to speak.

He was a priest that came in right after David. He and Himelek served together during David's reign, or at least a portion thereof, but when Solomon came, and you can see this in 1 Kings chapter 2, Zadok, who was in the Aaronic line, but of a different branch of the Aaronic line than Eli's family.

When Solomon assumed the kingship in Israel, one named Zadok was appointed priest in the place of Abiathar. So Solomon, 1 Kings chapter 2, verse 27, expelled Abiathar from being priest to the Lord, thus fulfilling the word of the Lord that he spoke concerning the house of Eli and Sheloh.

[24 : 49] But, ultimately speaking, who was the faithful priest? The greater fulfillment than the immediate or the intermediate is the ultimate fulfillment through the Lord Jesus Christ.

He himself would come as the perfect sacrifice, offering himself up, and enter after offering himself up to God as a sacrifice for our sins, then he enters into the perfect sanctuary, the very sanctuary of heaven for ongoing priestly service.

All who trust in him are saved through the sacrifice of himself and sustained through his intercession. Listen, intercession, therefore he had to be made like unto his brothers in every respect speaking with Christ, so that he might become, listen, a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Another thing, look at the text with me, look at the last part of verse 10, and then look at verse 35, because Hannah's song and the unnamed man of God's prophecy, in a sense, they land on the same note because both of them speak about the Lord's anointing.

You see that in verse 10, and you also see that in verse 35, God's designated appointed ruler, one of the roles of the faithful priest was serving the king, but such was the relationship between kings and priests, but it's a good reason to think that ultimately, the work of the priest and the anointed one combined in one person, that person being the Lord Jesus Christ, who was from, not the erotic line, but the Bible speaks of one called Melchizedek, who, as far as we see in the Bible, no beginning of days, no end of life, and that was, he was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[26 : 54] There's more to say, but I need to wrap up. So what are our takeaways on this afternoon? From the New Testament's perspective, our faithful high priest is the Lord Jesus Christ, and from the New Testament perspective, those of us who are part of the church, we are, a holy priesthood that serves under him.

That's all believers, huh? To offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. And may you and I today be found faithful as we offer him our gospel service and gospel living as spiritual sacrifices to him, huh?

Or under him. we must not fail to be faithful in our service to the faithful one. And our faithfulness in following Christ, following God like Samuel can begin in childhood and it can extend for the rest of our lives.

Failure to honor God as we see in the lives of Eli's family can be fruitless and even fatal, huh? Those who honor God can expect God to expect honor from God and this friends of course is seen supremely in the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ who honored God perfectly and has been exalted to the right hand of God and there he appears in the presence of God for you and me today.

Shall we pray? Lord, we bless you and we honor you this day and we give you praise and honor and worship and pray that we as a holy priesthood today would be found faithful before you and may we not simply wear the name of Christian but may we faithfully, spiritually, morally, following your example, serve you and serve in this world well.

[29 : 04] We thank you that you indeed are our high priest, standing in the very presence of God and we praise you for that today. Bless your name. Amen and amen.

Stand with me as we sing our final song.