

3. The Tips for Self-Destruction

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One of the old TV series that turned into a major motion picture is "Mission Impossible." With the distinctive theme music in the background, the leading character Ethan Hunt opened up a package that contains a recorder inside. The recorder starts to explain his next mission. When it is done, the voice says, "This message will be self-destroyed in five seconds."

Self-destruction, it is not a kind of words we'd like to happen to any one of us. However, as Christians, we always have the potential to self-destroy ourselves.

We find Eli's sons and Eli did self-destruction by ignoring and disobeying the Lord.

A. WHAT NO PUNISHMENT?

1 Samuel 2:22-26 Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. 23 So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. 24 No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the Lord's people transgress. 25 If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?" Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the Lord desired to kill them. 26 And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the Lord and men.

Please give me your interpretation, guys.

Eli heard everything, yet didn't do a thing. That sin is worse than not knowing. There are two types of sins: "sin of commission" that means a sin, we take action to commit, whether in thought, word, or deed. A sin of commission can be intentional or unintentional. But "sin of omission" which is a sin that is the result of not doing something God's Word teaches that we should do.

A Chinese proverb says, "By the end of the day, whip your child. You may not know why, but the child knows why." I am not saying that parents should punish a child without any guidance. I am absolutely against physical abuse against children.

If we want our children to like us and that is our primary goal to raise our children, we won't like what our children become. I've known way too many parents or grandparents let their children do whatever they want and end up having monsters who could care less about anyone else except themselves, like these two sons of Eli. Firm discipline to your own child with love is very much biblical and important for that child's future and the people around him or her.

Proverbs 13:24 He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

It is an ancient version of modern "preacher sex scandal." It is possible that the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle were in some way workers at the house of the Lord. Exodus 38:8 refers them as "*the serving women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.*"

Godly people told Eli about his sons' sins, and Eli spoke to the sons about their misconduct, but it did no good. Since he wasn't much of a godly father or spiritual

leader, and his sons disregarded his warnings. It's tragic when a father – and a spiritual leader at that – loses his influence over his own family and can only wait for God's hand of judgment to fall. Remember Lot, Abraham's nephew in Genesis 19? He lost his influence with his family so much that when he told his family about the impending disaster from God, his sons-in-law thought that he was joking. After David sinned with Bathsheba, his influence over his sons was greatly weakened. Hophni and Phinehas had no respect for the Lord or for the office of their father the high priest, so all God could do was judge them and replace them with faithful servants.

Eli did one of those stupid mistakes that we, parents, often make – whining and lecturing with no consequence for our children's behaviors. Yes, Eli's boys did not heed the voice of their father, nor were they concerned about the God of Israel. Somehow, like those two wicked men, we sometimes tend to think that we can get by with our sins and God is going to wink at us. Never in trillion years.

In contrary to Hophni and Phinehas, Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the Lord and men – like Jesus did in Luke 2:52

B. THE FIRST WARNING FROM THE LORD TO THE HOUSE OF ELI

1 Samuel 2:27-30 Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the Lord: 'Did I not clearly reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? 28 Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod before Me? And did I not give to the house of your father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire? 29 Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling place, and honor your sons more than Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?' 30 Therefore the Lord God of Israel says: 'I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever.' But now the Lord says: 'Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.

What do you get from this portion of the Scripture?

Then a man of God: We don't know who this was; this man of God is one of the wonderful anonymous characters of the Bible.

The father referred to is Aaron, the first high priest. Eli was a descendant of Aaron, whom God chose to have minister at the tabernacle.

What can you tell me from v28?

V28 is a wonderful summary of some of the duties of the priesthood in Israel and let's see how this portion of the Scripture connects with us:

1) To be My priest:

First and foremost, the job of the High Priest was to minister unto the Lord. Before he served the people, he was a servant of God.

As a royal priesthood of God, we serve the Lord and His people.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light

2) To offer upon My altar:

The priest was to bring forth sacrifices for atonement and worship. The altar was the place where atoning blood was both shed and applied, blood that would cleanse from sin.

As a royal priesthood of God, we offer up ourselves as living sacrifices.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

3) To burn incense:

The burning of incense was always a picture of prayer, because the smoke and the scent of the incense would ascend up to the heavens. The priest was to lead the nation in prayer, and to pray for the nation.

As a royal priesthood of God, we are the fragrance of Christ to our Lord and we ought to pray without ceasing.

2 Corinthians 2:15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 pray without ceasing

4) To wear an ephod before Me:

The priest was clothed in specific garments, for glory and for beauty in Exodus 28.

He was to represent the majesty, dignity, glory, and beauty of God to the people.

As a royal priesthood of God, we ought to put on the holiness and righteousness of God.

Ephesians 4:24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Jesus tells us in the Book of Matthew 10:

Matthew 10:37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of me."

As a matter of fact, it sounds like Jesus was contradicting His own word, because He teaches us to love our neighbor as ourselves, or respect our parents. It means that we are supposed to love our God so much that our love for our own family members is like hatred toward them. Eli tried to be in favor of his sons and wanted to be popular with them that he ignored the love for God. Many parents still make the same mistake.

When I talk to some Christians regarding Halloween, I tell them to ignore it. But they tell me that they are concerned that their children might miss out a lot of fun doing tricks and treats from their neighbors. Whom are they trying to please? Their children or their God?

Eric Liddell was one of Britain's great athletes, and later he gave his life for Jesus on the mission field. In 1924 he was to run for Britain in the Olympic Games, when it was discovered that the preliminary heats of his best event, the 100 meters, would be run on a Sunday. Quietly but firmly, Liddell refused to run. The day of a 400 meters race came, and as Liddell went to the starting blocks. An unknown man slipped a piece of paper in his hand with a quotation from 1 Samuel 2:30: "Those who honor Me I will honor." That day Eric Liddell set a world's record in the 400 meters.

1 Samuel 2:31-36 Behold, the days are coming that I will cut off your arm and the arm of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house. 32 And you will see an enemy in My dwelling place, despite all the good which God does for Israel. And there shall not be an old man in your house forever. 33 But any of your men whom I do not cut off from My altar shall consume your eyes and grieve your heart. And all the descendants of your house shall die in the flower of their age. 34 Now this shall be a sign to you that will come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall die, both of them. 35 Then I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in My heart and in My mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before My anointed forever. 36 And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left in your house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and say, "Please, put me in one of the priestly positions, that I may eat a piece of bread.""

What do you get out of this?

Not literally God is going to cut the arms of Eli, this was saying that the house of Eli would be left powerless and without strength.

God was dealing with Eli for his neglect to his sons. If his sons were soldiers, or farmers, it wouldn't be such a big issue. But they were priests of God, they should have known better. A man can be a medical doctor and sleeps around with anyone walking around. But he doesn't have to lose his job as a doctor. A woman who has a promiscuous lifestyle in the military may not get respect from her peers, but she can still hold her rank. But if a man of God, especially pastors or priests, does that kind of thing, he is out of the ministry and he should be out the door. Even though the world embrace their own immoral lives, but they put high standards against Christians.

We have a tendency to reject God's whisper to our hearts. We'd rather listen to our own justification with lousy lame excuses to sin against Him. We know when God speaks to us if we have been in the Lord long enough. He starts with a gentle whisper in our hearts. If we continuously ignore Him, He will do whatever He had to do to get our attention. It is better to come and fall upon the Rock that is Jesus than the Rock falls upon us and crushes us.

God gives us warnings against our sins.

They have double purposes:

1) To warn us what would happen if we don't repent.

2) Make us think about the situation and turn away from sins and repent. Then God will forgive us from our sins.

It brings us to the point where we have to decide which direction we should go: to repent from our sins and turn to God and receive His forgiveness or face the consequences of our action.

Who is the faithful priest predicted in v35?

He was a great priest, because he did according to what is in God's heart and in God's mind. He was a blessed priest, because God said:

1) This promise was partially fulfilled in Samuel, because he functioned as a godly priest, effectively replacing the ungodly sons of Eli.

2) The promise was partially fulfilled in Zadok, in the days of Solomon, because he replaced Eli's family line in the priesthood.

3) The promise was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, because He is a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek in Hebrews 7:12-17.

Isn't this an awful picture to face? Once they were the priests of God Almighty, but now their descendants are going to beg for a morsel of bread.

C. WARNINGS AND APPLICATIONS

There are 4 "S"s that are used by satan to destroy men and women of God.

Here is the list of the tips for self-destruction:

1) Self – v25 God hates our pride. Man's pride is the one that causes the man to fall from paradise.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

It is on the top of the list of God despises in Proverbs 6:17

2) Silver – v15 Some ministers have wealth of thought, but some ministers, like these two guys, only have thoughts of wealth.

1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

3) Sex – v22 So many men and women of God think too lightly about handling situations with the opposite sex. It always starts with innocent contacts. To prevent any possibilities of off-track cases, here in Calvary Chapel of Sahuarita, your pastor or counselors are not going to have any counseling for the opposite sex without someone else present.

4) Sloth –v29 Eli ignored the God's warning that was delivered by a prophet of God. Eli and his two sons were in the place of deep mud or mire, state of moral degradation and spiritual dejection.

Unfortunately, Eli was warned not just once, but twice by God here and chapter 3. When God repeats His warnings twice, we'd better take heed. It can be rather hazardous for our physical and spiritual health.

Here are a couple of sure ways to cure self-destructiveness.

2 Corinthians 10:5 (1) We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and (2) we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.