

When Evil is Not Restrained

1 Samuel 2:12-36

¹² Eli's sons were scoundrels; they had no regard for the LORD. ¹³ Now it was the practice of the priests that, whenever any of the people offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand while the meat was being boiled ¹⁴ and would plunge the fork into the pan or kettle or caldron or pot. Whatever the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh. ¹⁵ But even before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the person who was sacrificing, "Give the priest some meat to roast; he won't accept boiled meat from you, but only raw."

¹⁶ If the person said to him, "Let the fat be burned first, and then take whatever you want," the servant would answer, "No, hand it over now; if you don't, I'll take it by force."

¹⁷ This sin of the young men was very great in the LORD'S sight, for they were treating the LORD'S offering with contempt.

¹⁸ But Samuel was ministering before the LORD—a boy wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁹ Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. ²⁰ Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, "May the LORD give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the LORD." Then they would go home. ²¹ And the LORD was gracious to Hannah; she gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.

²² Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting. ²³ So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours. ²⁴ No, my sons; the report I hear spreading among the LORD'S people is not good. ²⁵ If one person sins against another, God may mediate for the offender; but if anyone sins against the LORD, who will intercede for them?" His sons, however, did not listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the LORD'S will to put them to death.

²⁶ And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favour with the LORD and with people.

²⁷ Now a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "This is what the LORD says: 'Did I not clearly reveal myself to your ancestor's family when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh? ²⁸ I chose your ancestor out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod in my presence. I also gave your ancestor's family all the food offerings presented by the Israelites. ²⁹ Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?'

³⁰ "Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: 'I promised that members of your family would minister before me forever.' But now the LORD declares: 'Far be it from me! Those who honour me I will honour, but those who despise me will be disdained. ³¹ The time is coming when I will cut short your strength and the strength of your priestly house, so that no one in it will reach old age, ³² and you will see distress in my dwelling. Although good will be done to Israel, no one in your family line will ever reach old age. ³³ Every one of you that I do not cut off from serving at my altar I will spare only to destroy your sight and sap your

strength, and all your descendants will die in the prime of life.

³⁴ “‘And what happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign to you—they will both die on the same day.’ ³⁵ I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his priestly house, and they will minister before my anointed one always. ³⁶ Then everyone left in your family line will come and bow down before him for a piece of silver and a loaf of bread and plead, ‘Appoint me to some priestly office so I can have food to eat.’”

The Sons of Eli

1. Verse 12 gives us a brief yet revealing introduction to the sons of Eli. They were scoundrels or vile people. The shocking part of this introduction is that they were priest, individuals who were chosen and anointed by God to represent the people before His presence and to represent His character before the people. The sons of Eli have profaned God and His ordained worship and sacrifices. They have used their position (power) to indulge themselves without any fear of God. Below are the sins of Eli’s son as stated in the passage:

1 Samuel 2:15-17

But even before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the person who was sacrificing, “Give the priest some meat to roast; he won't accept boiled meat from you, but only raw.” ¹⁶ If the person said to him, “Let the fat be burned first, and then take whatever you want,” the servant would answer, “No, hand it over now; if you don't, I'll take it by force.”

¹⁷ This sin of the young men was very great in the LORD'S sight, for they were treating the LORD'S offering with contempt.

1 Samuel 2:22

Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

2. How did Eli’s sons treat God? How did they treat the people who came to worship God? How did they treat the women who were there to serve God? The place of worship represents God’s presence with His people. The sons of Eli have desecrated what is holy and determined to make it as vile as they are.

We often hear stories of people in power abusing their position to indulge themselves. The three pitfalls often mentioned are money, sex and power. Many wrongs have been done when people pursued these three things. It is sad that such behaviour is not only found in the world but also in the church. There are so many stories where church leaders have abused their power that they may indulge in carnal pleasures and selfish pursuits. Many people have been hurt and abused because of this. It is also sad that there are also instances where the church has chosen to hide their misdoings, rather than expose it in order to protect their interest. The lack of brokenness and willingness to take responsibility by admitting our mistakes and our failure to act appropriately have caused more people to distrust the church. God must not be treated in such a manner.

Eli

1. Last week we looked at Eli. As much as he was able to represent God well, he is also capable of responding badly. The same pattern of behaviour is seen here.

1 Samuel 2:22-25

² Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting. ²³ So he said to them, “Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours. ²⁴ No, my sons; the report I hear spreading among the LORD'S people is not good. ²⁵ If one person sins against another, God may mediate for the offender; but if anyone sins against the LORD, who will intercede for them?” His sons, however, did not listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the LORD's will to put them to death.

2. Eli rebukes his sons for their behaviour. He warns them not to continue in their sin. Yet this is as far as Eli goes. He then receives a warning from a man of God and sadly he still does not do anything. He does not act as his priestly office requires of him. He has allowed this situation to fester for far too long and now he is content to let God do as He pleases.

The phrase ‘what to do’ is quite popular among Malaysians. It is a phrase that expresses resignation or being unable to do anything to rectify a given situation. If we take such an attitude in life, things will spiral downwards very quickly. We, the church, have been called and anointed to represent God. We are called to be both light and salt. We must take this task seriously, believing that if we faithfully represent God, He will do the work of transformation. If we are not diligent in the things of God, we may acknowledge His existence but not His ways, power, and influence. The church will eventually become lifeless and powerless; unable to help or heal anyone.

Samuel

1 Samuel 2:11

¹¹ Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy ministered before the LORD under Eli the priest.

1 Samuel 2:18

⁸ But Samuel was ministering before the LORD—a boy wearing a linen ephod.

1 Samuel 2:26

²⁶ And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favour with the LORD and with people.

As the writer tells us the story of Eli's sons and their evil deed, he weaves the story of Samuel in between. He tells us that while there is great evil and there will be judgment, God is also doing His restorative work. He is raising a prophet and priest who will be faithful and true to Him. God's eyes were on a feeble child, who was an answer to Hannah's desperate prayer. A child that was dedicated to God by his mother.

1. God is always at work. He will raise people for Himself. The people He chooses may be small and feeble to the eyes of others, but the Lord sees the heart.
2. The manner in which the Lord raises ministers is amazing. This story begins with a broken and barren woman confronting the Lord, which eventually leads to a child that is dedicated to the Lord (and so many other amazing things). God is thorough and amazing in His ways. Our past matters to Him in amazing ways.
3. "Samuel was ministering before God": Samuel found a place in God that will not be taken away from him. This is the secret of being effective and faithful in ministry. It must begin in the secret place, where we stand before God's presence, grateful and in awe of His glory.

Prayer Items

1. We will respond to God's call to reverence and holiness
2. We will be diligent and faithful in honouring God's name
3. We will have the courage and wisdom to do what is right
4. God will help us to trust Him as He shapes our lives for His work
5. Church
 - Guidance and wisdom in restarting services
 - Renovation
 - Open doors for us to reach out to our new community
 - Salvation: opportunities & courage to be God's witnesses
 - Empowerment to confidently lead in the workplace
 - Ministries: Life Explorers, Redeeming Roses, Destiny Kids & Teens, Worship, Sunday School, Lifeline Youth
 - Si Yun & Ee Khai (Jayden's parents): Si Yun – colon cancer
 - Francis: Atrial Fibrillation surgery on 15th August
 - Binil: Vertigo
 - Asmita's mom & neighbours: Covid-19 test
6. Covid-19 pandemic
 - Deliverance & protection
 - Those infected & their family: healing, comfort & strength
 - Every person: rid of our selfishness, to be considerate and responsible
 - Leaders (government and companies): wisdom, compassion & integrity
 - Grace and favour upon the foreigners, poor and vulnerable
7. Malaysia