

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

A Contrast of Ministry

I Samuel 2:12-36

Intro: Let's read Hannah's prayer again (2:1-10) it clearly describes YHWH's work in Israel. Now let's read 2:12-26.

As believers today, we should expect some level of opposition from society around us & the world at large, but what do we do when the creeping corruption of sin leaches into the church, especially when her human leadership is indifferent in faith & unholy in living? It's a very dark hour indeed when the *light of the world* is **part of the darkness**. This is an accurate characterization of the ministry of Hophni & Phinehas in the tabernacle. In her prayer, Hannah talks about the arrogant (3), the mighty (4), the wicked (9) & those who stand against YHWH (10) & here they are! Not Canaanites or Philistines as we would expect but the very priests of Israel!

Sadly, worship at Shiloh was a farce! The Law already provided a portion of the peace offering 2 the priest (shoulder & right leg - Lev 7) but it seems 2 have become the custom of the priest 2 "take" more (more of what they wanted). When a worshipper cooked his portion of the peace offering that he & his family would enjoy together, the "fork-man" of Shiloh would appear, plunge it into the pot /kettle & then cart whatever he brought up off 2 the priest's quarters. If that wasn't bad enough, they would even take raw meat from the worshippers. The Law specified that the fat was 2/b offered 2 the Lord & was forbidden 4 anyone 2 eat it. The fat was thought 2/b the best, most luxurious part of an animal & so was given 2 the Lord. The idea was that God should always get the best & God should get His portion 1st but Eli's sons took their portion b/4 the fat was burned. Of course, **they** didn't do it, they were 2 important! No, they'd send 1 of their lackeys 2 demand the raw meat. If the worshipper happened 2 protest (as they should) the young cleric would go from theologian 2 thug in a flash, threatening sure violence against any resistance or reticence. This liturgical offense was bad enough but there was much more rotten in Shiloh, there was a great moral offense.

Hophni & Phinehas not only showed disrespect 4 the sacrifices on the altar, they also had absolutely no regard 4 the spiritual condition of the women who served at the door of the tabernacle. Instead of encouraging them in their spiritual walks, the 2 would seduce them. They were committing sexual immorality w/ the women who tended 2 the worship center & everyone knew about it. How was such sheer disregard 4 the revealed Word of God possible?

12-1) corrupt (sons of Belial) occurs 9Xs in 1 & 2 Sam; always= 1 who's rebellious, wicked & deserving death. Often describes worthless people who openly practice lawlessness. Thus, we shouldn't be surprised when we read the statement in vs25 "the Lord desired 2 kill them" or the prophecy & fulfillment of their deaths on the same day.

2) know- what a terrible thing 2 say about men who are in the ministry of God! Unfortunately, it's an all-too-common reality. **Hosea 4:1-2** describes the actions of people who have no knowledge of God. Knowledge of God isn't some intellectual exercise or just knowing certain facts about God. In Scripture, **know** expresses intimate relationship – "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, & she conceived & bore Cain" (Gen 4:1). Knowing God = having an intimate relationship w/ God & it's this particular relationship that leads a person 2 live obediently. God's precepts & principles are no longer a burden b/c they represent the character & nature of God & thus, you want 2 live & act as God does. This includes treating others the way God treats them. But, Hosea says a lack of knowledge of God = a lack of truth & mercy = a society in chaos, people who don't keep the law: swearing, lying, killing, stealing, committing adultery. This fits H & P 2 a "T." They steal the sacrifices, threaten people w/ violence & seduce women who come 2 serve. Add covetousness & disrespect of parents, they're guilty of 5 of the big 10, 6 b/c they worship themselves over God!

13-17- abhorred- on top of all of that, their greatest sin was found in this – thru their greed, violence, intimidation & sexual immorality, they made others not want 2 come & bring sacrifices 2 the Lord! They discouraged Israel from coming 2 worship YHWH! What they were doing was bad enough but their greatest sin was in how they hurt others. **Trapp**, "A wicked priest is the worst creature upon the earth. Who are devils, but they which were once angels of light?" The actions of H & P were turning Israel away from worshipping her God. The seriousness of this sin is made clear in **Matt 18:6-7** – self-destructive sins are bad enough but it's even worse when we destroy someone else. Yet, in the midst of all this religious & moral darkness in Israel, we can detect a slight glimmer of hope in the passage...

18- But Samuel- standing in quiet contrast 2 the actions of H & P are these brief notes about little Samuel, scattered thru the text (11, 18, 26). As bad as Eli's sons were, Samuel was different. In fact, this is why God raised up Samuel, b/c of the corruption of H & P. God knew how they were so He sovereignly guided the whole series of events that led 2 Samuel coming 2 serve at the tabernacle. If Eli's sons would not be worthy successors, then God would raise up someone else! So, these short Samuel notes are important b/c they tells us that God is already at work providing 4 new, godly leadership 4 His people. Ultimately, corrupt ministers do not stop or even hinder the work of God. It may look like it but every time there are men like H & P, God raises up a Samuel. God's work does not stop when God's ministers become corrupt so we shouldn't be 2 discouraged by the H & P's we see today b/c God has His Samuels 2

19-21- robe- even as a child, Samuel was serving the Lord better & in a greater way than Eli's sons were. Tho his services may have seemed small or insignificant 2 human eyes, they were well pleasing 2 God b/c they were done in

faithful obedience. What man looks at in the service of God is often **not** what the Lord looks at. H & P's ministry was all religion w/o heart, service w/o faith while Samuel ministered in faithful consistency out of love 4 the Lord.

visited- Tho Hannah had given her little boy 2 the service of the Lord, she hadn't stopped loving him. She would see him every year & would bring him new clothes 2 wear while he was doing the work of the ministry. Hannah didn't forget Samuel & clearly, **YHWH** didn't forget Hannah! 3 more sons & 2 daughters= God w/b a debtor 2 no one! Hannah had given, now she receives grace upon grace. No sacrifice ever seems 2 impoverish those that serve God.

22-25- Why?- is an understandable question but a needless 1. **Why** doesn't matter b/c there'll never be a justifiable reason. Since they could never hope 2 excuse their behavior, there's nothing left but 4 them 2/b responsible 4 it.

hear- Eli knows the score: he's well aware of their actions & the dreadful consequences of those actions (**transgress**). But, he's doing about the worst thing a parent can do when trying 2 correct their children – just talk! All he did was whine about their sin but he refused 2 take the necessary actions 2 correct the problem. In this, Eli is doubly guilty b/c he was both their father & their boss (High Priest). If they were now too old 4 Eli 2 discipline as children he still had the authority (responsibility) 2 remove them from serving as priests in the tabernacle but he didn't. Eli had resigned himself 2 his son's disobedience – probably b/c he was enjoying 2 much the spoils of that disobedience.

intercede- Eli finally asks a valid question. All differences between men can be settled by a proper judge but if a person sins against the Supreme Judge, God Himself, who could ever reconcile him 2 his Maker? **Job** bewailed the very same dilemma in **9:32-33**. Who can intercede 4 sinful man w/ God, who could ever hope 2 mediate that impossible separation? Fortunately, **1 John 2:1** answers both Eli's query & Job's dilemma: The 1 who can intercede between sinful man & God is God Who became man – Jesus Christ. He is our Advocate & Mediator (**1 Tim 2:5**). He alone has the power, the ability, the right & credentials 2 officiate a lasting peace between a holy God & sinful men.

not heed- H & P ignored Eli's rebuke but notice the reason why: "**b/c the Lord desired 2 kill them.**" we might like 2 believe the Lord desired 2 kill them b/c they didn't heed Eli's rebuke but the text says their resistance 2 their father wasn't the **rationale** 4 God's judgment but the **result** of it! How can this be? In Hannah's prayer, she told us (**6**) that "**the Lord kills...**" God is sovereign. If He makes alive, He also kills. Everything in Creation is under His direction & control. God not only extends mercy, He also judges wickedness= there are limits 2 divine grace & mercy. There is a day of judgment coming, a time of reckoning 4 willful disobedience. If God mercifully provides a means 4 forgiveness but it is despised & not accepted, what other means is there 4 obtaining it? None! Now, God says in **Ez 18:32** that He has "**no pleasure in the death of 1 who dies**" so, "**turn & live!**" God delights more in repentance than judgment but when repentance is rejected, He delights in ridding wickedness from His people, especially when it's destroying them **H & P** had no regard 4 the Lord or Eli's office so all God could do was judge them & replace them w/ faithful men.

26- favor- what a contrast between Samuel & **H & P!** Eli essentially fathered Samuel & he grows up 2/b a godly man!

27-28- anonymous servant brings word 2 Eli of the Lords impending judgment; focusing on the **past, present, future.**

past- prophet reminds Eli that his position as High Priest was a gift of God's grace. It was a privilege 2 minister unto the Lord & God granted that privilege 2 Aaron & his descendants. God also granted them provision from the sacrifice This was both a divine responsibility & a divine provision of sustenance but they were completely dissatisfied w/ it.

29- present- Eli is included in this declaration of judgment b/c, in being complicit in their sins he is also culpable. In refusing 2 take effective actions against his sons, which he had both the authority & responsibility 2 do, Eli becomes partnered w/ them in their sin: he prefers appeasing his sons over pleasing his God! Thus, God includes him too!

30-36- future- not too bright: the priesthood would remain in Aaron's family but God would strip away the privilege from Eli's descendents. They w/b weak & die off & there would be no more old men like Eli in the family. His "house" would be left powerless & w/o strength. God's justice is also just: Eli & sons self-sufficiency w/b eradicated by God. Where now, they're living large on stolen sacrifices, eventually they'll become beggars looking 4 their daily bread.

faithful- **YHWH**'s looking 4 a faithful priest who will follow the desires of His heart instead of his own flesh. in the same way, **YHWH** will also be looking 4 a king "**after His own heart.**" Who is this priest? It w/b partially fulfilled in Samuel, partially in Zadok (who Solomon installs as HP) but this promise was ultimately & completely fulfilled in Jesus Christ, Who alone does all that is in His Father's mind & heart; is a priest "**forever**" after the order of Melchizedek, Who alone has a sure house.

As great as that sounds, the overriding principle of the text is that God's leaders must be faithful & have a heart that desires 2 live God's way. God's servants can't just live any way they please & expect God 2 honor them b/c He won't – He can't! This point w/b made again & again: a consistently ungodly lifestyle leads 2 ineffectiveness in ministry & spiritual walk. God's patient w/ sinful, imperfect people but when selfishness & pride leads 2 wanton rebellion, God looks elsewhere 4 a heart that desires 2 serve Him. Is that your heart? Are you fully trusting & completely following?

If you could see your sin as God sees it, you'd crawl under a rock in fear. There's no need 2 go running 4 a rock 2 hide under when you can just run 2 the Rock of Christ. He's paid the price 2/b your only Advocate, your only Mediator capable of bringing you into a state of forgiveness & peace w/ the holy Creator of the universe.