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PRACTICAL LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF ELI

**"It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good."
– 1 Samuel 3:18.**

THROUGH Samuel the Lord had sent Eli a message indicating that disaster would come to his house. The words of our text were spoken when he heard that the calamity was intended of the Lord, and indicate therefore submission before the disaster rather than afterward. So these words represent humility on the part of Eli.

Eli had been a judge in Israel for many years; and so far as the record goes, he was thoroughly exemplary himself – just, in all his dealings. But his sons were styled "sons of Belial" – they were wicked in various ways. While, therefore, Eli's own influence was for the benefit of the nation of Israel, here was a contrary influence which grew up under his protection, under his sanction. Had these evil-doers been others than those of his own family, doubtless Eli would have dealt with them according to his authority as a judge. We have here an illustration of a man who, though godly himself, was weak as the head of his family. As the head of his household he should have trained up his children in the way they should go. He should have trained them up in righteousness; otherwise they should have ceased to be members of his household, and should have come under certain restraint, which he, as a law-giver, should have enforced. [R5297 : page 251]

THE FLAW IN ELI'S CHARACTER

From this story we may draw a lesson as to what God expects of us and our families. If a child were meddlesome, thieving, immoral or otherwise an injurious person, the Christian parent should not allow such things to go on. He is obligated to bring the matter to some kind of termination. If, however, a child has a

thought different from our own as to what constitutes reverence to God, we are not to assume that he should be brought under restraint.

We are to recall that this message came to Eli through the boy Samuel. Samuel had, after the manner of a Prophet in those days, heard the voice of the Lord calling him and speaking to him. Thinking it was Eli's voice, he had gone to him and asked, What will you have? And Eli replied that he had not called him, and directed him to lie down again. This was repeated three times, and Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child. He therefore instructed Samuel again to lie down, but that if the call was repeated he should answer, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth," indicating his readiness to do Him service. Samuel did as he was directed, and the **[R5297 : page 252]** Lord told him that because of Eli's carelessness in respect to the doings of his family, they should be cut off from the priesthood.

ELI'S BEAUTIFUL SUBMISSION

It was quite a remarkable thing that Eli should manifest no resentment against the channel the Lord had used! Eli had received Samuel into his family when the child had been consecrated by his parents. Now, finding that apparently God was passing him by and communicating with him through the child, the circumstance would have furnished sufficient cause for a proud spirit to rise up in resentment. But Eli's course proved that his own heart was tender. He answered, when Samuel explained what the Lord had told him, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good." It is the Lord's judgment. It is surely right! surely good! Let the Lord do what seemeth to Him good, even though it means disaster to my own family, even though it means the cutting off of my own family from the priesthood.

This cutting off from the priesthood would mean that the sons of Eli would die, for they were the priests in the regular lineal order of the Aaronic priesthood. This is a very beautiful example of

absolute submission. If Eli was weak in some respects, he was strong in others, as is shown in his humility and submission. Those who are meek and teachable themselves, often find great difficulty in being sufficiently positive in their dealing with others who are properly under their control. The quality of character which would tend to make them meek and submissive toward the Lord, would tend to make them kind and lenient toward others. But it is good to be able to carry out with firmness the will of the Lord in respect to others, and at the same time be meek and submissive in respect to the Lord, His providence and arrangements.

LESSONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN

As Christians we may learn valuable lessons from this incident. We should make sure as to our willingness to receive the Truth in whatever way the Lord is pleased to send it to us, whether from the mouth of a little child, or whether unlearned men, like St. Peter and St. John, may bring it.

It may have been difficult for the priests of the Apostles' day to hear those unlearned men speaking with power the Message from God; and they would say, Surely God would not speak through such stammering lips! God would surely not pass *us* by – we who have spent years in study, and who are recognized as priests of the Divine order! Being in this wrong attitude of heart and mind, they rejected not only those humble men with their Message, but also the Lord Himself.

This is also the spirit of the world. Whoever is faithful in speaking the Word of God from the Bible will have less and less attention from the worldly-wise. An ever-increasing number of people are thinking of the works of creation as having come about by processes of Evolution. More and more they are thinking that the Bible is not the Word of God; but that the Apostles were merely deluded men, deceived men; that Jesus Himself did not know what He was doing. They think that He was a good man, that doubtless

God Himself was with Him, because of the good that flowed from His teaching. And yet they think that *they* could give forth better wisdom – these great teachers who would like to make a new Bible after their own heart!

In our own day, the worldly-wise are looking from the wrong standpoint. They are looking in the wrong direction, they are not looking to see the New Dispensation now coming in. They will not recognize what is now taking place until the sunlight of Truth begins to flood the world. Then, turning about, they will perceive the real Sun of Righteousness, and begin to grasp the whole situation. We are glad that they will turn about and take a view of matters from a different standpoint. But all who are God's true children are ready to receive God's Message from whatever source it may come to them.

A specially important thought in our text is that Eli was submissive to the calamity. This was a good condition of heart for him. Thus, not striving against the Divine will, but meekly bowing to it, he showed that his trouble was merely that of weakness of the flesh. We find that there is now a similar condition existing. It is the duty of the Lord's people today to recognize that the present order of nominal church systems is passing away, and will presently be overthrown in the great time of trouble. This message naturally enough causes resentment in the hearts of a great many. They have been boasting of their great financial power, their strength, etc. And the mention of the *fall* of this would naturally awaken their opposition. We must not be surprised, therefore, that their anger is aroused against us, as we tell them of the time of trouble that is before us.

HEART LOYAL, BUT WEAK

To Eli, this message that his family would be cut off from the priesthood was a severe blow. And so our Message about the Royal Priesthood is not a palatable message to nominal Christendom. But

some of the Lord's people among them today are not in sympathy with the trend of affairs. These are the ones who will say, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good!"

This will be the attitude of the Great Company. They are weak in standing forth for the Lord, and yet submissive in the time of trouble, and loyal to the Lord's cause and the interests affiliated therewith.

Samuel would seem to represent more clearly the Little Flock class, and Eli the Great Company class – the latter being weak in some respects, but loyal at heart to the Lord. But it is the Samuel type that we should seek to copy – so fully out of sympathy are we with unrighteousness and sin, and so fully in accord with righteousness. We are ready to speak God's Message, which must necessarily be a very unpleasant one. As it is unpleasant for us now to tell forth the approaching disaster that will involve both Church and State, so to Samuel it must have been a very unpleasant duty to go to his best friend, his benefactor, bearing from the Lord a message of disaster to himself and his family.

We would do well to speak sympathetically of these things, rather than coldly, rather than exultingly. We do sympathize with them, both in the condition of things at the present time and also regarding the things we recognize to be coming upon them. More and more do we receive word of ministers, telling us that they perceive that the power of God is departing from their congregations, and that evidences are on every hand that they have been wrong doctrinally, and that the general trend of the present time is toward social unrest and upheaval.

"O! teach me, Lord, the art
With Wisdom to remove
The errors that deceive the heart,

And Truth to clearly prove.

"O! arm me with the mind,
Meek Lamb, that was in Thee;
And let my fervent zeal be joined
With grace and charity."

