

The Descendants of Eli

A family has great impact in the church. The way we lead our families finally produces fruit for the church where God has placed us. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ said, ***“Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.”*** (Matthew 12:33) Each family should be a tree of righteousness that bears good fruit to the LORD. ***“They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.”*** (Isaiah 61:3b) It is in our hands and jurisdiction to make our families become trees producing good fruit. If we discipline our children today, our church will be secure and will continue its mission to the next generation. In this chapter, few real stories that happened in the Bible would be discussed to depict the impact of each family to the ministry of the Lord or to the Church.

Eli was the priest serving in the Tent of the Lord during latter time of Judges. ¹² ***Eli’s sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the LORD.*** ¹³ ***Now it was the practice of the priests with the people that whenever anyone offered a sacrifice and while the meat was being boiled, the servant of the priest would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand.*** ¹⁴ ***He would plunge it into the pan or kettle or caldron or pot, and the priest would take for himself whatever the fork brought up. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh.*** ¹⁵ ***But even before the fat was burned, the servant of the priest would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, “Give the priest some meat to roast; he won’t accept boiled meat from you, but only raw.”*** ¹⁶ ***If the man said to him, “Let the fat be burned up first, and then take whatever you want,” the servant would then 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.”*** (1Samuel 2:12-17) The sons of the priest Eli were wicked. They involved themselves in corruption using God’s service to make money and for their selfish gain. They also took advantage doing immoralities and having sexual relations with the women involved in God’s service: 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.”*** (1Samuel 2:22)

First, Eli, the priest was not aware of what his sons had been doing but all the people around them already knew about their issue. Later Eli heard about it but he did not take any disciplinary action to stop them. 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; it is not a good report that I hear spreading among the LORD’s people.*** (1Samuel 2:23-24) The people who knew about the wickedness of the priest’s sons also showed no concern to correct or stop them in defiling the tent of meeting. They were insensitive to sin because they no longer practiced the command of the Lord: ***“If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.”*** (Leviticus 20:10) Priest Eli was concerned about his sons’ wicked doings but he showed no commitment to discipline them according to the Word of God: ¹⁸ ***If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him,*** ¹⁹ ***his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town.*** ²⁰ ***They shall say to the elders, “This son of ours is***

stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a profligate and a drunkard.” ²¹ ***Then all the men of his town shall stone him to death. You must purge the evil from among you. All Israel will hear of it and be afraid.”*** (Deuteronomy 21:18-21) Definitely Eli did not discipline his sons as he ought to have because he loved them, but such act also showed that he loved his children more than God’s Word, God’s Sanctuary, and God’s people. Likewise, the people were complacent and tolerant to sin because the priest, who was leading them was compromising and tolerating the sins of his children. Priest Eli was not a good example as a priest of God and he did not do right in raising up his children in the fear of the Lord. He denied the power of God’s law and so the Lord took away his family from ministering at the tent of meeting.

1- 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 honor me I will honor, 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.”*** (1Samuel 2:27-36) The Lord God sent a man to rebuke priest Eli. His sin was clearly defined as he honored his sons more than God, and ate with them the best portions of the people’s offerings. Eli was the head of the priestly family but he disrespected the sacrifices and offerings for God because he condoned the sins of his sons. As a consequence of Eli’s sin and complacency, the life span in his family line was cut short. His descendants would die in the prime of life, and those left in his family line would beg for some priestly office in order to have food to eat. God also told him that his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, would die in one day. But in spite of God’s rebuke to the priest, Eli did not take the opportunity to repent and to correct his stand toward his children. So God spoke to Samuel who from boyhood had been serving the Lord.

2- ⁴⁰ ***The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!”*** ***Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”*** ¹¹ ***And the LORD said to Samuel: “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears***

about it tingle. ¹² At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end. ¹³ For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons blasphemed God, and he failed to restrain them. ¹⁴ Therefore I swore to the house of Eli, ‘The guilt of Eli’s house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering. ¹⁵ Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the LORD. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, ¹⁶ but Eli called him and said, “Samuel, my son.” Samuel answered, “Here I am.” ¹⁷ “What was it he said to you?” Eli asked. “Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you.” ¹⁸ So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, “He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes.” (1Samuel 3:10-18) The Lord’s judgment for Eli’s family was foretold because of the sin he knew about; his sons blasphemed God, and he failed to discipline them. Yet Eli’s complacency remained. Eli said, “He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes.”

The Lord God is eternal, and He is a righteous God. Those who honor Him, He will honor, but those who despise Him will be despised. God’s Words do not change, and God knows His people. Many parents nowadays do not show concern about the foolishness of their growing children. They seem like Eli who just said, “It is bad,” but they do not make a move to correct their children. God brought judgment on the family of Eli, and the same will happen to the family of parents who do not do their duties as royal priests to discipline and nurture their children in the fear of the LORD.

- A- The parents who are not mindful of the ways of their children and show tolerance to the sins they are doing, they themselves are bringing destruction not only on their children but to the life of the whole church. 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. (1Samuel 2:31-32a)*
- B- The parents who love their children more than God will be rejected by God, and their family will not have enough strength needed to do God’s work. Parents who follow their emotions towards their children are unable to discipline their children, and they will not have the wisdom and the strength to deal properly with their children’s sins. 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?” (1Samuel 2:29)*
- C- When parents fail to discipline their children and restrain them, their children and their descendants will become wayward in life and conduct, and they will become bad testimony to others. Moreover, not only they themselves will die in their sins, but also other children will be harmed and affected by the consequence of their sin. The whole family and the whole church will be in turmoil, horror and great danger. 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. (1Samuel 2:33-34)*

- D- The ministers of God who fail or are not willing to discipline their children and their workers in the ministry, the outcome of their family and ministry is rejection by the LORD and their ministry will not last forever. ¹³ *For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons blasphemed God, and he failed to restrain them. (1Samuel 3:13)*
- E- The descendants of the ministers who fail to execute discipline will be like the descendants of Eli who were rejected by the Lord. They became the beggars inside the body of Christ begging for ministry in order to live. 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.” (1Samuel 2:35-36)* Nowadays, we find pastors or ministers who use the ministry as a way to make money and earn for living. They depend on the church or they would start a ministry in order to have food to eat. But they would fall short of the promise of God in *Psalm 37:25, “I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.”*
- F- When sin inside the church is taking place and no one is taking disciplinary action, the wrath of God is never atoned. No church activities or praise and worship offerings can cover the sin of the church ministers and workers. Likewise, without discipline in the church, the people of God become wild, sins become so rampant and common to all, and finally the whole community of believers becomes insensitive to sin, up to the point that those obedient who deal diligently with sin inside the body of Christ would be called “odd” by the opinion of those who tolerate sin. ¹⁴ *Therefore I swore to the house of Eli, ‘The guilt of Eli’s house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering. (1Samuel 3:14)*

The outcome of the life of our family and our children has great impact in the life and the future of God’s Church. Accordingly, God is gracious and loving, giving chances and reminders for His people to repent of their sins. This message could be a warning to take heed and to apply carefully in our families. If we do not repent, God will bring judgment to the next generation and to our church. So let us consider and choose to carefully apply the required discipline to our children, to our ministry workers, and to the people under our care. God cannot be mocked, and we reap what we sow as seeds. If we sow righteousness in the hearts of our children and ministry workers, God’s Church will continue to receive the blessings, and we enjoy being His priests. If we ignore foolishness and sin, then curses will come upon our descendants and to the church.