

1/15/23 - 1 Sam. 2:12-36 - "A Warning Against Minimizing Sin"

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles, turn to 1 Samuel, chapter 2. We'll be starting at verse 12.

Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the Lord. The custom of the priest with the people was that when any man offers sacrifice, the priest's servant would come while the meat was boiling with a three-pound fork in his hand.

And he would thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot. All that the fork brought up, the priest would take for himself. This is what they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there.

Moreover, before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, give meat for the priest to roast, for he will not accept boiled meat, but from you, from you, but only raw.

And if the man said to him, let them burn the fat first and then take as much as you wish, he would say, no, you give it now.

[1 : 22] You must give it now. If not, I will take it by force. Thus the sin of the young man was very great in the sight of the Lord, for the men treated the offering of the Lord with contempt.

But Samuel was ministering before the Lord, a boy clothed with a linen hip pod. And his mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year when she went up with her husband to offer her the yearly sacrifice.

Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say, May the Lord give you children by this woman for the petition she asked of the Lord.

So they would return to their home. And indeed, the Lord visited Hannah, and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew in the presence of the Lord.

Now Eli was very old, and he kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel and how they would lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

[2 : 21] And he said to them, Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all these people. Know my sons, and it is no good report. I hear the people of the Lord spreading abroad.

If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him. But if someone sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him? But they would not listen to the voice of their father.

For it was the will of the Lord to put them to death. Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and also with men. And there came a man of the Lord to Eli and said to him, Thus says the Lord, Did I indeed reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt subject to the house of Pharaoh?

Then did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me. I gave to the house of your father all my offerings by fire from the people of Israel.

Why then do you scorn my sacrifice and my offering that I commanded for my dwelling, and honor your sons above me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel?

[3 : 41] Therefore the Lord God of Israel declares, I promise that your house and the house of your fathers should go in and out before me. But now the Lord declares, Far be it from me.

For those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house.

Then in distress you will look with envious eyes on all the prosperity that shall be bestowed on Israel, and there shall not be an old man in your house forever. The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep his eyes out, to grieve his heart, and all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword.

And then this that shall come upon your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall be a sign to you. Both of them shall die on the same day. And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever.

[4 : 57] And everyone who is left in your house shall come to implore him for a piece of silver, for a loaf of bread, and shall say, Please put me in one of those, one of the priests' places, that I may eat a morsel of bread.

This is the word of the Lord. Amen. Amen. Well, we're continuing in 1 Samuel today, and I think one of the things that is challenging with 1 Samuel and diving into a historical narrative like this in the Old Testament is larger portions of Scripture as we look at narratives unfolding and to allow Scripture to reveal the emphasis to us so that we would be changed by God's Word.

And so it is challenging because in our culture today, we get kind of bored after one minute of scrolling on TikTok or Instagram reels, and sitting and reading the Word has become sort of like a lost art in our short attention span culture.

So I would encourage us to all, especially leading into next week, let's kind of change our perspective, let's say, on looking at large portions of Scripture.

And as we do that, we know that it is a benefit to our souls. And so looking at this passage, obviously things are getting really interesting regarding what's going on at Shiloh.

[6 : 36] And it causes me as a pastor to think about this in different realms. I'll reference like the pulpit, meaning pastoral ministry, but then the pew, meaning congregational ministry throughout this message.

But I believe that behind many fallen pastors from the pastorate, there are Christians that surround their lives who allow sin to go unaddressed in their life.

They kind of sweep things under the rug for the sake of keeping church growth numbers, keep things headed for the up and up, right? We live in a culture that breeds and needs just all these multiplication numbers in their congregations.

So when sin comes in, they kind of sweep it under the rug and allow it to just go, you know, unnoticed, out of sight, out of mind.

I mean, it's much more pleasant to do that, right, than to cause a hemorrhage within the fellowship or stifle any momentum that could be occurring within a church.

[8 : 01] That's the pulpit. But in the pew, behind many fallen Christians, exists fellowship that was not involved at a deep level for the sake of just keeping friends, right?

Not having hard conversations with one another when sin comes and lurks its eerie head in our lives. And it's like we avoid any sort of tension like the plague.

And after all, right, we're sinners saved by grace. And who am I to call out someone else's sin and so on and so forth that we would justify refraining from such a conversation?

Better to keep things peaceable, right? When sin comes knocking at the door of the pulpit and the pew. This is unfortunately what I will label as a Christian facade.

It's a facade of the Christian life. It doesn't hit the depths of our hearts. It doesn't help anyone to just ignore sin and reject any sign of having difficult conversations.

[9 : 19] And it is a facade. It's the mask that we wear. We all probably heard that reel of everything's fine. Everything's good.

Everything's good and good and fine, right? Nothing's wrong. I'm feeling great. Everything's good and good and nice, right?

Does anybody know what I'm talking about? Okay. I've seen a few reels. So, this is a Christian facade. And we can't blame folks for not wanting to have an uncomfortable conversation with others.

We can't blame people for not wanting to dig in to other people's lives to say, hey, you said this or you did this and I believe you are in sin. How about that for starting a conversation?

It's a lost art and a Christian facade. However, the text today, I believe, will remind us that it is better for us to drop this facade.

[10:25] The facade can only go on for so long before God intervenes and in a more severe manner. Now, if you're new with us, welcome.

Welcome. We're in 1 Samuel. We're talking about some heavy stuff today. And if you don't like the message today, try next week.

But it is dark days in Israel where they are yearning for a king. And we see what happens when man takes the steering wheel.

This is an expositional series. What we do is in expositional preaching, the structure of the passage as the author made it is the structure of the sermon.

So, it's most helpful to have your Bible open as we go through that structure together. And so, the shape and the emphasis of the text is the shape and emphasis of the sermon.

[11:22] And so, we don't take away from the text. We don't add anything to the text. We preach the text. And here we sit under God's Word in 1 Samuel. And based upon that, I believe by the end of our time today, we will confidently be able to wear our sin on our sleeve.

I believe that God has called us to be able to wear sin on our sleeve.

To drop the Christian facade. And knowing that, diving into the relational health of sanctification that is involved in this corporate life is very vital to our making progress in sanctification.

Of continual repentance and restoration. And so, let's pray before we get into the text. The sermon is titled, A Warning Against Minimizing Sin.

And a warning it is. And so, let's pray as we surely need God's help as we go through this passage.

[12:37] Let's do that now and pray. Lord, we are humbled at the authority of Your Word. Father, help us to see you through the lens of Scripture.

Help us to see our relationships through the lens of Scripture. Father, most of all, by the end of our time, help us see you through the lens of Scripture as you have revealed.

And if we see you, we see Jesus Christ. And God, we give you this time. Help us to understand the text. And we praise in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. So, I'm going to break this narrative up into three different sections as I see the contrasting unveiling.

And we see the first section of worship encompassed in dysfunction. It's kind of the theme of verses 12 through 17.

[14:00] We get to know the sons of Eli a little bit better than just their first names that we saw last week in the passage. We get to know specifically a little bit deeper behind the name.

We get to know their hearts. And especially their first love, which is themselves. Eli's sons were labeled worthless.

Imagine having that title. They were worthless men. Another usage of this adjective for these men is found in Judges back in Gibeah, where the Levite's concubine was gang-raped and killed.

Judges 19:22. The author is trying to indicate something that while our English translations might say worthless men, it might not hit really good, but they were as good as gang-rapers.

And there's a lot of contrasts in this passage specifically.

[15:15] We'll pick up on those as we go through. But one contrast is immediate. Because we just got out of Hannah praying to the Lord diligently for His provision, for who He is, for what He does.

And if Hannah had any sort of priority that we just spoke on last week, these sons were the emulated opposite of Hannah.

They simply did not know the Lord. They were unregenerate men. And we see their worship being broadcasted here in verse 13. Their worship was corrupt.

They would just take what they wanted. They would demand whatever their heart desired. Forget what's written in Deuteronomy 18, verse 3, where priests were actually given a benefit from the sacrifices.

They had a certain amount that they can take from the sacrifices, but it had parameters.

Deuteronomy 18, verse 3 says that, They shall give the priest the shoulder and the two cheek and the stomach.

[16:27] These were different portions. And these sons would just do what they wanted. They would stab the fork and take what they wanted. And if that wasn't bad enough, verse 15 and 16, they would not accept anything else than compliance to their requests, even if that meant stealing the very sacrifice designated to the Lord, the fat portions.

And verse 17 kind of serves as an overarching statement of the dysfunction here. Thus the sin, verse 17, of the young men was very great in the sight of the Lord, for the men treated the offering of the Lord with contempt.

Not only did these men steal meat reserved to men, but also to God. Have we forgotten already where this is?

Who these people are? This is the nation of Israel. This is a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. Not only that, this was Shiloh, where the holy tabernacle was set up for God's dwelling place. Zero in a little bit more.

[17 : 55] These were young men of the priest. They have a solemn duty to God's law and providing an atoning sacrifice for the sins of an entire nation.

If one thing is certain within this passage so quickly for us, we have to understand that our proximity to God does not equate our devotion to God.

This is true for Eli's sons, and it is certainly true for us today. Being a pastor, this hits quite hard. Pastors are often viewed as sinless saints.

It's just, they ride on that cloud all week. They had a great week sipping their coffee, studying books and stuff.

Right? Sounds like a retirement plan for many. But don't be so ignorant. The same struggles that many of us often wrestle with throughout the week is the same, and sometimes even more severe within a pastor's life.

[19 : 15] Don't kid yourself. This hits hard in the pew as well, because if what the problem of this passage presents is actually viable, if our proximity does not always indicate devotion, then we cannot depend upon our perfect church attendance in 2023 to justify our devotion to God if our heart is not right.

We can't even use our baptism to point to that if our heart isn't right. Areas that we serve in the church, whether it's on a computer, clicking slides, or doing the soundboard, or welcoming people to the church, or serving down in the children's ministry, as wonderful as those things are, they do not clearly indicate a heart devoted to God.

It results in nothing more than a mask of those who live double lives, hiding on Sunday, and then just clinging to sin Monday through Saturday.

And one thing that we can additionally see in this passage so far is that this failure cannot be attributed to our surroundings.

We can blame a stressful week of why all of a sudden you sound like a trucker driving down the freeway with people cutting you off, swearing.

[20 : 43] You can justify away a stressful week that just caused you to peek at a little bit of porn or just dive right in. You can blame all of these things, secular workplace, the stress, your family life, or the season, but it will never justify and never hold weight of attributing to why we fail in this life.

And we'll get to more of that in just a minute. But this is certainly true as the author turns his attention, our attention, to a man, sort of like in the background.

I saw him as I'm reading the text. I see him just in the background wearing an ephod, probably just sweeping as these men are demanding, causing contempt to the Lord's offering.

In verse 18, while the whirlwind of this destruction and dysfunction is created by Eli's sons, there seems to be this breath of hope in Shiloh.

A boy, Samuel, I don't know what his age would be at this point, but knowing that his mother's still making clothes for him, I would imagine he might be, well, I guess mothers never stop doing things for their kids, no matter what age you are.

[22 : 05] But we can't really name his age, but we know something that what he's wearing, he's wearing clothes in a linen ephod.

This is a uniform that's a pastor, a priest in their day, in training. And he was ministering before the Lord.

While these sons, worthless sons, were basically looking the part, they were Eli's sons.

You know, they'd probably hold that over people's heads. They didn't play the part. But here you have a boy looking the part and playing the part.

And so we see that contrast. Verse 19, even Eli looked the part as he stewarded God's word, but his heart was disconnected. Look at that.

[23 : 07] This is huge, because even Eli was serving the other family, Samuel's family, to bless them. But he was neglecting his own needs and his failure of stewarding his sons and stewarding the nation of Israel and just neglecting God.

Eli even looked the part, but he wasn't playing the part to its most full extent. You see, in this environment of imposters, chaos, sin, and deception, Samuel was preserved.

And what an encouraging reminder to us today, I believe. Life does not always have to be perfectly in order to follow God.

We can faithfully serve God, in other words, regardless of our harsh environments. It is truly possible. And actually, it's a call from Paul, the Apostle Paul, in Philippians 2.14.

He says, do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God, without blemish, where? In the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

[24 : 41] And so maybe that is you who are encouraged by such an appearance of a boy clothed in this ephod, knowing that you can have a deep, intimate relationship regardless of those things that surround you.

This is certainly true whether a harsh environment at your workplace, whether it's in the classroom, whether it's in your neighborhood, or whether it's maybe your own dysfunctional family.

You're assured that God is exactly where He wants you, and you can have that relationship with Him intimately. The second section that I see unfolding is this direction turn to Eli's discipline-less rebuke.

And that starts in verse 22 and leads to 26. The author has already provided insight into Eli's flaws as we saw last week, as he had that emotional mix-up with weeping and sorrowful Hannah, tried to kick her out of his presence because she was crying and speaking like she was liping her prayers, and he thought she was drunk.

So we already receive insight into Eli's flaws. But here, we now understand that it's not just a character flaw of Eli. It's a heart flaw as he seems to favor leniency over discipline.

[26 : 20] verse 22. I want you to see this. Eli hears. He hears all that's going on in his temple.

He hears everything going on. All the things that his sons are doing, stealing meat, reserved for the Lord, and they're sleeping around. We're given insight with women who are dedicated to service in the Lord's sanctuary.

And he addresses it, right? Let's take a look at his address. Let's see how he does that. You can be the judge of leniency, or does he really have a keen awareness of what is going on here?

His first rebuke is in verse 23. He's sort of annoyed at their behavior. Why do you do such things, sons? Way to go, Eli.

Sharing your heart with your sons. Verse 24, rebuke, too. Stating the obvious. It is not a good report. Right?

[27 : 32] Well done again. You hit the nail on the head. And then the third rebuke in the first part of verse 25. Offering a problem, not a solution.

Sin against man. God mediates sins against God. You're hopeless. That's how Eli handles contempt for the offering of the Lord.

I would say it's a little bit lenient. A little bit disconnected from reality. And so while Eli's words were right and true, they're pretty pathetic.

They're significantly pathetic. Being a father and a priest, Eli's actions failed not only his sons to call them to repentance, but it also failed a nation that he was representing.

Church, our inaction to address sin is a failure to all involved. When we fail to act in the presence of ongoing cyclical habitual sin, it is a failure on your part and you're failing other people.

[28 : 49] You see, having a proper view of sin, calling a spade a spade is the beginning of carrying out a proper care of people calling out a spade for a spade.

Eli knew that this was bad. Looking back in his family history back to Numbers 3, Eli knew back in the days of the Israelite priesthood, even Aaron's sons were struck dead by God for bringing unauthorized fire into the tabernacle, just kind of doing what they wanted.

it. And they were struck dead. Though Eli took no action, Eli's inaction towards men became an offense to God.

And church, we must be aware of undermining and becoming desensitized to the existence and reality of sin within our own lives and especially within the family of God.

It's actually a good thing to have hard conversations with one another regarding sin. We need to destigmatize that. We can just away our love for others to excuse us for not having to confront sin uncomfortably, but confronting sin is the most loving thing that we can do for ourselves and for others.

[30 : 20] Hebrews 10 gives a warning in the New Testament similar to what is going on with the sons. It says, He who has spurned the Son of God and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, there is no longer remaining a sacrifice for sins.

I kind of butchered that in Hebrews 10. Let me repeat that. It says, He who has spurned the Son of God and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified.

There no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. This isn't just an Old Testament thing, church. Same God. This is a transcendent reality which brings in a call.

Being a church, we practice church membership, church discipline at this congregation and that is not for the sake of being an authority-bearing figure over people's lives.

This is the most loving thing that we as a church called to shepherd you can do. And majority of church discipline processes that you see in Matthew 18 and Titus and 1 Corinthians, most of that happens within the pew, not the pulpit.

[31 : 40] And so this is a call. This is a call for all of us to participate in. Church discipline is filled with instances of sin corrupting the gospel message and all throughout the New Testament, sin is addressed, it's confronted, and people, an assembly of believers are called to restore fellowship.

This was designed by God long before the New Testament, long before Jesus Christ was incarnated. on this earth. And this is good news because we see a contrast, a glimpse of election of God's grace between Eli's sons and Samuel, that even though there was disobedience on the part of Eli's sons, still God was in control.

This is a clear statement of God's sovereignty in verse 25 and 26 over his sovereignty over the destiny of the wicked. It doesn't diminish people's responsibility, does it?

It doesn't diminish the responsibility for Eli's sons to actually repent. This is where God's election and free will meet. And believe it or not, this has little to do with parenting.

I'm sure probably some of us have heard a sermon on 1 Samuel that was the five ways to become godly parents and lead your family. But however, there's something larger happening in this passage.

[33 : 15] It's not just about giving you pointers to be a good parent. The matter at hand is rejecting God's authority, rejecting His holiness. And this takes on many shapes and sizes.

Parenting is one of the many. But man, the truth is those of us who habitually minimize our sin become opponents to God.

That hits all spheres of life, not just parenting. It's a hard reality and it's a call for us, church, to inventory our hearts. We must take sin seriously.

Because if we don't, we mock the cross of Jesus Christ. Or have we forgotten that faith without works is dead? May our faith be alive at Steel Valley Church in how we discipline, how we address, have hard conversations with one another, how we parent our families if you want me to say it. We have to take sin seriously in our lives individually and corporately in our lives. And we are instructed to take initiative before God takes initiative.

[34 : 29] And we see that plain and clear in this last section in verse 27 leading to the end of this chapter. And God's disciplining rebuke in contrast to Eli's disciplineless rebuke.

Just as unrepentant sin mocks God's deliverance through Jesus Christ, so too does unrepentant sin mock God's deliverance through Moses.

Verse 27, God gives them a history lesson through the words of an unknown man but a known speaker.

It says, I revealed myself to the house of your father. Verse 28, did I choose him out of all the tribes to be my priest?

Verse 28 again, I gave to the house of your fathers all my offerings. I revealed, I chose, I gave.

[35 : 42] I did all of this, and God is saying. God's revealing himself, and God's revelation to us isn't just for the sake of information.

Like, high five, high five God, thanks for all you've done, right? He's making himself known, and in so doing, he's making his will known.

And this is important, because God's revelation to Eli's ancestors, Aaron and Moses, began his great act of redemption all the way back in Exodus 19, and this is similarly identified in the revelation of God's son, Jesus Christ.

Christ. It's like, he's saying, how could you forget? How could you behave in this manner, offer contempt in this temple with sacrifices?

How could you do this? How could you forget? God revealed himself through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the exact imprint of his nature, and therefore, God's will is made known through his son more clearly than it was at this point in redemptive history.

[36 : 55] His will in Jesus Christ is observed in Luke 19, for the son of man came to seek and to save the lost. John 14, Jesus said to him, I am the way, I am the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.

Ephesians 2, but now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Romans 10, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Why would those with such awareness of God's grace reject it? Moreover, that's them.

Let's talk about us. Is our awareness of God's grace continually rejected today in the same way.

We have to know the importance of remembering. To remember the grace that bought us is to remember the sin that bound us.

[38 : 10] Remember the sin that bound us. Consider verse 29, why do Christians at times say one thing and do another? Well, leaders don't lead.

Followers don't follow. You see, we're habitually forgetful people. Habitually forgetful. Similar to Eli's sons, constant proximity within that tabernacle was filled in sin, so too.

A church should be free of gossip, should be free of drama and offense. grace, but the church becomes full of it.

Verse 30 through 36 and to the end, if I could just summarize it with a phrase, is that hard times will prevail for fickle followers.

Hard times will prevail over fickle followers. An assembly of God's people who habitually disregard having the hard conversations in the name of peace will violate God.

[39 : 24] And that's a period in the matter. It's not up to my opinion or yours. We have to deal with the reality and the severity of such a text.

It happens today when men prove to be morally and spiritually unfit for ministry, but they're retained for pastoral office. We'll see the silver lining in it.

While a congregation may not be responsible for their actions specifically, they are responsible for passivity in addressing sin. It happens when we emphasize one sin over another and justify a few peeks at risqué material on Instagram.

You might not categorize it as porn, but it's risqué. It's material half-naked people on Instagram, or maybe you just graduate from that and just go right into porn altogether.

This happens when we find ourselves hoarding that which God has called us to sacrifice, playing God with our finances, playing God and hoarding our talents from worshiping Him, or even our time, saying, I don't have time for God, I'm just way too busy.

[40 : 38] Worship becomes viable upon our parameters, and in so doing, we become God. This happens constantly in our day-to-day.

We see in verse 30, God's original agreement was to bless Eli's house. Isn't that so sad? God's original agreement in verse 30 was to bless Eli's house, but now they will be lightly esteemed.

A conditional promise. In other words, those who despise the Lord will be despised. It is a hard reality. And look at the end result of it.

There's a prophecy of judgment in verse 31 to 33. I will cut off in distress you will look and all will die. Verse 33, if anyone lives, they're going to live just so they can mourn over the destruction.

Imagine being that person appointed to that. Verse 34 and 36, God will replace. There is no escaping the call to repent in discipline.

[42 : 01] There is no escape. We can justify away. Adam could not blame Eve for the sin in Genesis 3. Eli could not blame his sons, nor can we blame our stress, our workplace, classroom, or our family.

We will be held responsible for what we do with our sin. So I want us to heed that warning, church. It is better for us to run to Him before He makes us run to Him.

Are you awake this morning? Listen to me. It is better for us to run to Him before He makes us run to Him in our distress.

You want some good news? I mean, it's a pretty heavy text, I'm not going to lie. Thomas Watson gives a little bit of hope in what a quote came to my head.

Until sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet. Don't try to impress God or man with your half-hearted lip service.

[43 : 23] Devotion to God takes substantive action. God gave a tremendous promise to the church, to us, and all those who are in Jesus Christ and is often contingent upon our continued loyalty and obedience and followership.

He's called us, faith without works is dead. There is a crucial element that we're not just judicially pardoned from our sin. He's pardoning and He's saying, come, follow me.

Right? And that comes in many different shapes and sizes and with many different challenges. But I want you to remember these three things for us to heed. The first is may we renounce ungodliness in worldly passions to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, as Titus 2, 12 states.

Second, knowing that we will fail, it's not a matter of your objection or anything, we will fail at this, I will fail.

But when we do, may we work together in progress and never become comfortable with sin.

Because we know Hebrews 10 is true, if we go on sinning after receiving knowledge of the truth, we profane the blood of Jesus Christ.

[44 : 55] And the third thing, may we always remember that our minimization of sin minimizes the cross of Jesus Christ.

May we remember these three things as we dwell on this passage this week. Don't trade God's abundant grace with cheap grace. grace.

It was all but cheap, as He purchased each and every one of you being bought with a price. Don't treat His abundant grace as cheap grace.

In our aim of being a church worthy of displaying the gospel, let us strive together in repentance and restoration, because here at Steel Valley Church, Christ is.

Sweet. Amen. Let's pray.