

Opening Scripture: Hosea 4:5–7 **Introduction: It's human nature to want a messiah to come in and fix all of our leadership problems. Messiahs have come in all shapes and sizes throughout Israel's history,** each deliverer uniquely suited for their time and circumstance. Moses led the Jews into the Sinai Peninsula but couldn't enter the promised land due to his temper. During the Judges era, God delivered the people from Canaanite oppression through often flawed and sometimes tragic saviors. About 170 years before Jesus, Judas "Makabet" led a priestly revolution, gaining independence from Greek tyranny. Tragically, the Maccabees later succumbed to the same Greek compromises they had fought against.

**Transition:** No matter how many would-be messiahs arise, they just can't live up to the billing. The text in 1 Samuel 2 we're looking at today introduces us to God's solution to Israel's leadership problem. At one end is Hannah's song is, verse 10 1 Samuel 2:10, "He will give power to his king (Heb. *melech*); he will lift up the horn of his anointed (Heb. *meshiac*)." Hannah's prayer is more significant than she realizes at this moment. Under the inspiration of the Spirit, she foreshadows God's resolution to the problem of perpetually corrupt and imperfect leadership. God is going to empower an anointed Messiah-King.

At the other end is verse 35 1 Samuel 2:35 "Then I will raise up a **faithful priest** for myself. He will do whatever is in my heart and mind. I will establish a lasting dynasty for him, and he will walk before my **anointed one** (*meshiac*) for all time." Now, this is what the story today is about...

**Main Idea:** God addresses the problem of corrupt and flawed leadership by promising to raise up a messianic-priestly leader; a promise set into motion through Samuel and David. Samuel as prophet and priest will select David. David is anointed as King, he reestablishes tabernacle worship in Jerusalem where he makes the priestly sacrifices while wearing the Ephod (2 Samuel 6:12–20), David's sons become priests in the tabernacle (2 Samuel 8:18), and David is inspired by the Spirit to compose large portions of the Psalms—the hymn book of Israel which contains numerous prophecies about a future priestly messiah-king.

Let's pick up in verse 12 of chapter 2.

1 Samuel 2:12–17 "Eli's sons were wicked men; they did not respect the Lord <sup>13</sup> or the priests' share of the sacrifices from the people. When anyone offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged meat fork while the meat was boiling <sup>14</sup> and plunge it into the container, kettle, cauldron, or cooking pot. The priest would claim for himself whatever the meat fork brought up. This is the way they treated all the Israelites who came there to Shiloh. <sup>15</sup> Even before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the one who was sacrificing, 'Give the priest some meat to roast, because he won't accept boiled meat from you—only raw.' <sup>16</sup> If that person said to him, "The fat must be burned first; then you can take whatever

you want for yourself,” the servant would reply, “No, I insist that you hand it over right now. If you don’t, I’ll take it by force! <sup>17</sup> So the servants’ sin was very severe in the presence of the Lord, because the men treated the Lord’s offering with contempt.”  
What is going on with these mafia dons masquerading as priests in God’s house?

**1. Eli's sons were corrupt.** So, we learned last week that Eli is the high priest serving in Shiloh at the tent of meeting, or tabernacle, or the temple. The text makes it clear that his sons were dishonoring and disrespecting God.

**How were they corrupt?**

- **They were ignorant of God's kindness and severity.** v.12b "They did not respect the LORD." The NASB and ESV I think, more accurately translate the Hebrew "they did not **know** (Heb. *yoduh*) the LORD." That exact word appears in Deuteronomy 8:5 where Moses reminds Israel of all that God has done for them and then urges them to live according to his commands. Verse 5 states, "**Know** (Heb. *yoduh*) then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you." I suspect that Hophni and Phineas forgot this: they were unaware of the God to whom they would be accountable—His kindness but also His severity. The priests, who are Israel's teachers in the faith, do not know the God whom they serve.

Many years later, the prophet Jeremiah will address this perpetual tendency toward corruption in human leaders: Jeremiah 2:8 "The **priests** did not say, 'Where is the Lord?' Those who **handle the law did not know** (*yoduh*) **me**; the **shepherds** transgressed against me; the **prophets** prophesied by Baal and went after things that do not profit." Notice all three branches of Israel's leadership are indicted here for their failure, godlessness, and venality. And notice what the problem is—those who serve as the Priests and scribes (who handle the law and teach the law) do not know God.

Paul reminds the Romans...

Romans 2:4 "Or do you **despise** the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not **recognizing** that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?"

Romans 11:22 "Therefore, **consider** God's kindness and severity: severity toward those who have fallen but God's kindness toward you." We consider, contemplate, and meditate on God's kindness and his severity.

**We cannot consider God's kindness without also reflecting on his severity in judgment.**

**The stuff with the sacrifices is not insignificant, but it is symptomatic of a deeper, more pressing heart issue.** They didn't respect the LORD; they didn't fear the LORD because they didn't *know the LORD*.

**Application:** When you see a weak, anemic, dying church that doesn't have shepherds who are on fire for God's truth. Who are passionate worshipers and followers of God—they don't have a spiritual fervor to pass on to their people.

The second problem we see with Eli's two sons is...

- **They were ruled by their appetites** (1 Samuel 2:13, 22). "Eli's sons were wicked men; they did not know the Lord ...or the priests' share of the sacrifices from the people (Deut 18:3; Lev 7:31)...<sup>22</sup> they were *sleeping with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting*. What is going on with all this?

**Deuteronomy 18:3 dictates the priest's portion** of animals like oxen, sheep, and goats as the shoulder, jawbones, and gut.

**Leviticus 3, and 7:31 regulates the burning of fat to the LORD first.**

Two issues here that Hophni and Phineas don't seem to know about: **(1) taking meat before offering it to the LORD**, prioritizing themselves over God and the people, and **(2) taking unauthorized portions against Moses' law**. This deprives God of the sacrifice and denies people access to leftover meat for their families, as seen with Elkanah in Chapter 1.

Look at what Paul says to the Romans,

Romans 16:17–18 "Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who create divisions and obstacles contrary to the teaching that you learned. Avoid them, <sup>18</sup> because *such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites*." It's entirely conceivable to believe that we are dedicated to Christ while, in reality, we are worshiping at the altar of our own sinful and self-indulgent cravings.

Hophni and Phineas would have been fine in this respect if they had prioritized sacrificing to God, generosity towards God's people, and serving their own needs last.

Few things are more tragic than witnessing a minister of the gospel who has become poisoned by greed and material gain. Once greed takes root within, it has a corrupting effect on the harvest of righteousness that Christ desires to produce in us.

Now listen, if you want a better job, so you can make more money, so you can provide, save, and serve—that *is not greed, that is just wise stewardship*. But if you want all that with no thought of putting God first in your giving, spending, and service to Christ—then it is possible that greed for material gain has overtaken you.

**Illustration:** One of my ongoing, lifelong struggles has been my craving for sweets. I love sugary snacks. But we've been really good this summer about not having any junk food in our home. But usually, we have a bag of chocolate chips in the pantry (for the occasional baking project), and on occasion, I've been known to scoop a few chips out. Overwhelmed with

cravings for something sweet, I went into the pantry and could not find that bag anywhere. I was frustrated, but my mission had to remain clandestine as no one could know that I'd been doing that.

**Then I saw it. It was a plastic container with powdered sugar that we hardly ever use.** And so I closed the door behind me, reached in with the scoop, and just downed a little powdered sugar. But I didn't realize that I had spilled it on the floor below. I wiped the powdered sugar off that spilled on my shirt and came out of the pantry headed across the room to go downstairs.

Kerri, who was sweeping in the kitchen, blurted out, **"Hey! Hey! What were you doing in there?"** I turned around and there were powdered footprints across the kitchen floor, and I had handprints all over my clothes. I confessed my sin and was forgiven and cleansed of all unrighteousness.

Now, I did that because I had this overwhelming craving that I gave in to.

**Have you ever experienced a craving so strong that you feel like you couldn't say no?**

**Truth:** The more we engage it, the more we enlarge our appetite for it. When a cheat meal becomes a cheat day. And a cheat day becomes a cheat...summer.

**On a much more serious note, Paul says...**

1 Timothy 6:10 "For the **love of money** is a root of all kinds of evil, and by **craving** it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

The love of money sends down deep, sprawling roots in my heart—nurturing a craving for more with no thought of giving, serving, and furthering God's Kingdom. And notice its effect—*by giving in to the cravings for it, I just want more of it*, and it diverts my attention from Christ and his work, ultimately leading me away from Jesus as I chase after the cares of this life.

**Hophni and Phineas are the poster children for leaders with out-of-control appetites.** The more they give in to gluttony, greed, and sexual sin, the more they want.

Application Principle: Greed, gluttony, and lust diminish us and deprive us of the qualities of godliness, compassion, and liberty. **Why would giving in to these things diminish us?** Because we were made for so much more.

**Why those words?** Because godliness is about my vertical relationship with God. Compassion (redeeming generosity) is about my horizontal relationships with others. And liberty is about my own internal well-being, to live genuinely free.

**Listen, you can possess things, but don't let anything possess you.** You can have desires, but never let your desires have you. You can serve God *with* money, but you can't serve God *and* money.

Hophni and Phineas don't understand that...

- The people belong to God.
- The sacrifices belong to God.
- The women who serve belong to God.
- And these scoundrels have taken what belongs to God.

**2. Eli failed his sons.** The boys were failures because Eli was a terrible parent. 1 Samuel 2:22 “Now *Eli was very old*. He heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they were *sleeping with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting*. (Eli mistook Hannah for a temple servant) <sup>23</sup> He said to them, “Why are you doing these things? I have heard about your evil actions from all these people. <sup>24</sup> No, my sons, the news I hear the Lord’s people spreading is not good. <sup>25</sup> If one person sins against another, God can intercede for him, but if a person sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?” But they would not listen to their father since the Lord intended to kill them.” At first, my reaction to his response is, “Way to go. Give them what for Eli.” But, this is actually an indication that some of the blame is laid squarely at the feet of the father. How so?

- **Eli failed to instruct them.** The account doesn’t accuse Eli of his son’s sins. No doubt, he expected them to follow his example. But that expectation, so far as we know, was never voiced. Eli’s story is a cautionary tale about setting a good example and thinking your children will just absorb it. “More is caught than taught” is true, but teaching has a way of crystalizing vital principles in formative years. Eli failed to teach his children about God. They don’t know the God of the Bible or the Bible. When you are gone from their lives, the teaching will still be there.
- **Eli rebuked them too late in life.** The Scripture says that he confronted them when “Eli was very old”—Too little too late.

As a result,

- **Eli’s influence is negligible at best.** Notice their response in verse 25, *But they would not listen to their father since the Lord intended to kill them*. Of course, they wouldn’t take heed—their character is already set. By this time, they have become so hardened against the truth that God now gives them over to it. And they can’t respond otherwise.

Application Principle: Delayed correction leads to diminished influence. The longer you wait to confront foolish or ungodly behavior in a child, the less weight your words will carry. The more immediate the action, the greater the impact. **Experts tell us that a child’s character is usually set by age 4, and the patterns and beliefs that will govern them as adults are set by age 13.** Children need instruction and discipline until that discipline becomes internalized, transforming into an operating system running in the background.

His next mistake is that...

- **Eli put his kids before God.** An unnamed prophet comes to deliver the bad news—While God originally gave Aaron’s family the promise of being priests, he now rescinds and terminates that agreement. He warns Eli that his house will be devastated. Here’s how the prophet sums up this judgment.

1 Samuel 2:29 “Why, then, do all of you despise my sacrifices and offerings that I require at the place of worship? You have **honored your sons more than me** by making yourselves fat with the best part of all of the offerings of my people Israel.”

Parents face this temptation as their children get older, and the teen or adult child begins to make choices that run contrary to our model and teaching. They choose to affirm this LGBTQ nonsense, decide to have an abortion, become alcoholics or abuse drugs, or abandon the faith of their youth and become practical if not philosophical, atheists.

Be advised this happens to parents who both modeled and taught their children and to those who fail to one or another. What, then, do we do as a parent?

Application Principle: Emulate God’s kindness and patience, stand fast for the truth, and address difficult subjects as the opportunity arises. And if no opportunities arise, begin to pray that God will plan those moments and give you the grace and wisdom you need.

We’re witnessing a catastrophic failure of priestly leadership, Eli and his house.



How does God respond?

**3. God replaces Aaron's line.** Watch what the enigmatic prophet announces to Eli next. 1 Samuel 2:30–36 “Therefore, this is the declaration of the LORD, the God of Israel: ‘I did say that ***your family and your forefather's family*** would walk before me forever. But now,’ this is the LORD’s declaration, ‘no longer! For those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disgraced. <sup>31</sup> Look, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of ***your forefather's*** family so that none in your family will reach old age. <sup>32</sup> You will see distress in the place of worship, in spite of all that is good in Israel, and no one in your family will ever again reach old age. <sup>33</sup> Any man from your family I do not cut off from my altar will bring grief and sadness to you. All your descendants will die violently.<sup>34</sup> This will be the sign that will come to you concerning your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: both of them will die on the same day. <sup>35</sup> “‘Then ***I will raise up a faithful priest*** for myself (not from Aaron’s line). He will do whatever is in my heart and mind (he will be perfectly obedient). I will establish a lasting dynasty for him (this priest will rule God’s people), and he will walk before (tabernacle in the midst) my anointed one for all time. <sup>36</sup> Anyone who is left in your family will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread. He will say: Please appoint me to some priestly office so I can have a piece of bread to eat.’”

- Even though Eli isn’t personally responsible for the sins of his kids, he is held responsible for it.
- God terminates his promise to Eli’s family replacing him with a faithful priest who will obey the LORD’s word without fault.
- God’s new priest will have an everlasting dynasty and will dwell/tabernacle in the midst of God’s messiah forever.

Hebrews 9:10–12 With respect to OT sacrifices in Moses’ system, “They are physical regulations and only deal with food, drink, and various washings imposed until the time of the new order.<sup>11</sup> But **Christ has appeared as a high priest** of the good things that have come. In the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (that is, not of this creation), <sup>12</sup> he entered the most holy place **once for all time**, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, having **obtained eternal redemption**.” Who is God’s new chosen priest? Christ.

Luke 1:32 “He [Jesus] will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David.”

Here we have a perfectly obedience servant—the true priest and king of God’s new world.

**Conclusion:** The priests failed because they were ignorant of God's kindness and severity. They didn't know God nor his Word. So our charge today is that we must seek to know God and his truth—what he commands and what he teaches.

Greed, gluttony, and lust **diminish** us and **deprive** us of the qualities of godliness, redeeming generosity and compassion toward others, and true personal liberty. There is no freedom in sin. And we cannot hold on to these things and also walk with God.

Delayed correction leads to diminished influence. Don't wait too long to confront false beliefs and godless behavior. The longer we wait the more diminished our impact.

And in the meantime we imitate God's kindness and patience toward us, stand firm and immovable on the truth, and address difficult subjects as the opportunity arises—praying that God will open those doors of opportunity.

Lastly, we look to Jesus, the author/pioneer and finisher/perfector of our faith—who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising its shame, bearing our sins, taking the punishment that would have otherwise been ours. His sacrifice atones for our sins and he is the faithful, flawless High Priest of the Church whose sacrifice is acceptable and pleasing to a holy God.