

ELI: The Complacent Heart Becomes a Compromised Heart¹
1 Samuel 2:12-36

Review:

Everyone lives for some kind of treasure.

Whatever you treasure will control your heart.

Whatever controls your heart will control your behavior.

If lasting change is going to take place, it must take place through the heart.

How are you guarding/keeping your heart?

Introductory questions:

When was the last time you were convicted by the Holy Spirit or another believer about a sin? How did you react? Did you become defensive and justify?

The Crimes: The hardened hearts of Eli's sons. 1 Samuel 2:12-17

1. Correct worship is extremely important to God. This was no minor offense. Everyone who came to the temple knew it was wrong. Eli's sons despised the offering of the LORD.
2. God will judge them by giving them what they want. They do not want to be in His presence...He will remove them from His presence.
3. It was God's will to judge them, so they did not listen (v. 25). He will withhold His grace from them, grace that they had forfeited. God does harden hearts (heart of Pharaoh, Romans 1:18-21). They were allowed to despise God; it was what they wanted.

The Complacent heart of Eli

1. Eli is a living parable. He is fat and going blind.
 - He became fat off the improper sacrificial procedures of his sons and thus was complicit with their sin (v. 29). (Irony – weighty /glory)
 - Eli's blind spot was his children. Eli loved his sons more than God (vs. 29).
 - We can become desensitized to sin. When everyone else's sin around you is great, it makes yours seem insignificant.

¹ I am indebted to my friend and mentor Phil Smuland for much of this material.

2. Eli did nothing. That was his sin.
 - Eli stands in contrast to Hannah's radical action with her child.
 - There is also irony that he accused her of being drunk.
 - Even when Eli rebukes his sons (v. 23-24), it is unclear whether he is more concerned about what the people think, or concerned about God's glory.
 - After his sons ignore his rebuke he does nothing to protect God's glory, the office of prophet and the worship of God's people.
 - Denial, complacency, and indifference are just another way to describe running from the Lord. There is no spiritual neutrality.

The Consequences

1. You get the curse of your own choices.
 - You are a tapestry of your heart decisions. God does not eliminate the competition. He calls you to choose.
 - Think of your choices related to your children. What is important to you? Their clothes? How they appear to others? Their grades? Their success in sports, music, dance? Their relationship with God?
2. We often think we can cut corners with God but we cannot. It always affects our lives when we do.

The Conclusions

1. Eli failed to understand the heart of God (v. 25).
 - God is faithful to His promises and to His nature (v. 35).
 - What Eli valued and what God valued did not line up.
 - Do not despise God's heart. Repent
2. The author wants us to see the contrast between Eli's sons and Hannah's son Samuel (2:11, 26).
3. We are to look toward a priest greater than Samuel, who will faithfully and fully serve the Lord and His people. (2:35; Luke 2:52; Hebrews 4:14 ff., 7:1-8:13)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WEEK 3

Review Romans 8:28-30 with one another.

Reflecting on last week's lesson on a desperate and dependent heart, did this week reveal any area in your life that you are desperate about? What have you done with that sense of desperation? Have you taken it to God or are you merely trying to manage your life?

How do you think the prophet Eli ended up fat and blind with a complacent and compromised heart?

When you search your own heart, are there areas in your life where you are fat and blind like Eli?

Have you become desensitized to any sin in your life?

How can the Gospel speak to your complacent and compromised heart?

Close in prayer as a group.

Personal Reflection:

Take some time this week to work through the questions below. I also recommend setting up a time to get together with someone from your group to talk about your personal reflections and pray with and for one another.

Can you identify any areas in your life that you *know* that God wants from you, but you are compromising? (sexual sin, gossip, taxes, tithing, little white lies, grumbling, coveting, etc.)

What would you say are the five most important things in your life right now? Does the amount of time you spend thinking about or investing in these things support or contradict them being on your list? Explain.

Do you think God is pleased with your list?

Are there any things that need to be added or subtracted from this list in order to make your life more pleasing to God?