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BIB 102 NO-Old Testament Literature

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The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of Eli

Focusing on the life of Eli, we see that he was a Jewish priest living in the day of Judges. Eli served God, at the tabernacles in Shiloh, a city near the hill country of Ephraim. Eli is known for blessing Hannah, Samuel's mother, not once but twice. Eli was also known for having two wicked and evil sons, who served in the tabernacle but did not know the Lord. They violated the Law by keeping and eating meat from the sacrifices that were not allocated to them. They also had sex with the women who served at the doorway to the tent meeting.

So, what good has Eli done? The first good thing he did was to bless Hannah. We see in 1 Sam. 1:10; that Hannah was in deep anguish and cried bitterly because she could not bear children. As she prayed to the Lord, Eli saw her and saw her lips moving but was not hearing any words coming out of her mouth, so he thought that she was drunk. But Hannah defended herself and said no, I'm not drunk, but crying out to the Lord, because she wanted a child. Eli then did something good which was blessing Hannah according to her prayer and God has answered her prayer and she conceived a boy and named him Samuel. When Hannah dedicated Samuel back to the Lord a couple of years than Eli blessed Hannah to have more children. He also received Samuel from Hannah and trained and taught him how to serve the Lord and Samuel became a priest and a prophet favored by God and men.

The bad that Eli has done is, he past judgment on Hannah, when he thought she was drunk while she was praying in anguish and crying out to the Lord. Instead, he should have past

judgment and condemnation upon his two sons, who were doing wickedness to God. Eli needed to discipline his children and not Hannah. I believe Eli was behaving like this because he had his children first in his heart and not God. This is why overall Eli's character was not good or bad, he just did not discipline his sons who he cares more than caring what God has called him to do.

The ugliness of this story is that when we live a life of disobedience like the children of Eli who disrespected God, ordinances of priestly duties will be punished for it. We see in this story that God has sent a prophet and also God has spoken to Samuel what was going to happen to Eli and his sons. It was told that Eli and his two sons will be a curse because the Levites depended on the priesthood for their living. A short time after that, the Philistines came against Israel to attack them. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phineas, went to battle, and both of them were killed in the battle. When Eli heard the news about his sons, he fell off his seat, and his neck was broken and he also died.

The lessons that I can learn and apply in my Christian walk daily is, not to jump the gun. Eli passed judgment to Hannah without investigating what was going on with her. What I learn in this story is when I see people, I should not jump the gun in judgement and condemn them. Only God can see their hearts and knows what they are going through. My first response should be, the love and compassion of God. The other thing I can apply is the truth of the word of God, and not to have fear in telling people the truth. We should always tell people the truth because the truth will set them free. We should never sugarcoat the word of God. We are all called to serve and to love God with all our hearts, mind, soul, and strength, (Luke 10:22). If Eli would love the Lord with all of his heart, mind, soul, and strength his priesthood will not be cursed and end in a tragic way.