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BIB102: Old Testament Literature: OA

February 7, 2023

A Look Through the Life of Eli

In the first book of Samuel, there are a lot of characters that are introduced that are well known to us such as king David, king Saul, the prophet Samuel, and Solomon. Although these names ring bells and their stories are lengthy, I'm going to focus on someone that the Bible doesn't speak much about except in the first three chapters of first Samuel and his name is Eli the priest. We will be focusing on the life of Eli the Priest through chapters 1-3, and we will be focusing on four questions: 1) What does Eli do that is good? 2) What bad things does Eli do? 3) Is Eli a good or bad character in my view? 4) What lessons can you learn for application to your Christian walk today? As we look at these questions we will dig deeper into his life and his character.

As we look at Eli's character and look at what he did in those three chapters, we get to see a glimpse of the good that Eli did, and we are going to be looking at one important thing that Eli does good. It is recorded in 1Sam 3:1-10, where we see Eli the priest and a young Samuel the prophet and God calling out to Samuel, Samuel hears God's voice but he thinks it is Eli. The story goes on to say that Eli recognized that God was calling Samuel and told him that the next time the Lord calls you, say, yes Lord, your servant is listening. The good that Eli did in that situation was helping Samuel recognize God's voice. Eli, in that moment, was like a teacher/mentor to young Samuel on how to respond to God's call. At times in our life, we must take that same

position that Eli took because God is going to bring us Samuel's in our life for us to lead and guide. Eli knew the Lord and desired the young prophet to know him as well.

You would think as a priest of the Lord that Eli would do all good things in the sight of God but that is just not the case. There are two bad things that Eli does and the first one happens in 1Samuel chapter 1. While Hannah was praying to the Lord because of her distress, it says that Hannah was praying in her heart, but her lips were moving, and Eli thought she was drunk and rebuked her. (1Sam 1:12-14). Eli should not have done that, but he assumed that she was drunk. Bringing it to the here and now on why this is a bad thing, it is because we see this all the time in the church. At times I am guilty of this where we judge people based on their actions not knowing what's really going on in the heart. And in the case of Eli and Hannah she was lifting her heart to the Lord. The second thing that Eli did that was bad was to allow his sons to treat the offerings of the people to the Lord with contempt. This was very bad in the eyes of the Lord because instead of putting God first, Eli decided to put his sons first by letting it slide and in doing so, Eli the priest paid the price as well.

With all this being said, I believe we can all relate to Eli in the sense that we are human beings, and we all make good choices and bad choices. In the case of Eli, I neither see him being a good character or bad character only because I know that us as human beings make mistakes even when we love the Lord. In a weird way I sympathize with Eli because I have been in Eli's place before, I have done some bad things in my life, and I have done some good things in my life but whatever way you put it in those moments, I love the Lord with all my heart. I do not doubt that Eli loved the Lord but like all of us he has made mistakes. There are lessons that we can learn from his life which is always to do right by God even when the ones closest to you like Eli's sons are doing wrong. We must set the example for the people around us to show them the

right way and not follow their way. Lastly, what we can learn from his life it's to always build up the next generation up as he did to Samuel. We should be always looking to impart and equip those who are coming after us to do the work of the Kingdom.

In conclusion, what is it that we learned from Eli's life both good, bad, and indifferent? We can learn that no matter what position you are in, with the ministry or your personal relationship between you and God, we all fall short of His glory, and we will make mistakes whether in our personal life or in ministry, but we are not to get caught up in them but in Him. I believe as we look at his life, we can also see a piece of Eli in each and every one of us, so the real question is, what pieces reside in us?