

Naïma Saint-Fleurant

117727

Professor Dr. David Emmanuel

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A World of Good and Evil

The Bible gives us an overview of how people show their gratitude to God; being devoted to someone who can make all our dreams come true is the best thing that can happen in people's lives. Hoping can get us far in our lives; we pray, believe, and thank God when our prayers become real. We saw, in the first three chapters of 1 Samuel, how God listened to Hannah's prayers. She believed in what God was capable of and let him lead her wherever he wanted to take her. The first chapters of the first book of Samuel introduce us to the life of Samuel's family, the story of his birth, and how he became a servant of God under a priest's wings. We learn about Eli, God's servant, who will be our character of interest, seeing as we have read about what he has done and the consequences of his actions.

We are introduced to Eli, the priest responsible for the temple at Shiloh, where Samuel's family comes every year to worship and give sacrifices to God. This priest had an impact on Hannah's life, Samuel's mother because he did not ignore her cry of pain from seeing her other husband's wife having children and mocking her, instead he told her to "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him" 1 Sam 1:17. He has been a guide to Samuel by teaching him how to worship the Lord just like Samuel's mother wished.

Eli had to make decisions like everyone else; they mentioned that he had two sons and that God was not happy with their actions. Even if he had talked to his sons about what they were doing, he did not take action and stop them before God's judgment. Eli accepted God's curses on the family line instead of saving them by admitting his sins and repenting. He had let his sons "scorn [God's] sacrifice and offering" in his presence 1 Sam 2:29. He had given up on God by accepting the curses thrown on his family; he lost God for his blood.

Was he a good or a bad person? I cannot answer this question without putting myself in his shoes. What do I really know about good or bad? I know nothing; I can be as bad or as good a person. So who am I to conclude that he is evil for his actions or good for helping others? In my view, Eli was neither good nor bad; he made choices. Nothing, even his good actions could not justify his ignorance of his sons' actions. He knew what they were doing and did not even try to stop them from taking advantage of the goodness of others. He was aware of the consequences because he knew God was watching, so he chose his family. Did that make him bad? No, he did not because although he knew what God was planning for his and his sons' actions, he did not try to harm Samuel because of it. He accepted his sentence and waited for God's judgment because he was the only judge of humanity.

We are the first to judge people when they make bad choices or when they choose to be bad, but we are not the judge of others' lives. We are just bodies made of dust, so we cannot decide what someone's life would be because we identify ourselves as being the good among the bad people. Even if someone claims to love God with all their life, there is a day or a time that we will choose to protect our family. That is what I have learned from this chapter; even if Eli had lost his connection with God, he did not stop having faith in God's power. By accepting that God can "do what is good in his eyes" 1 Sam 3:18, he showed me that sometimes we have to let go of

things that are good for us to understand their importance in our lives. God was indispensable to Eli, but his sons were to him, so he let go of God and took the blame for his son's actions.