

McDowell 1

Deborah McDowell

Professor David Emanuel

BIB 102: OC-Old Testament Literature

7 February 2023

Obedience to God Trumps Character

The first three chapters of 1 Samuel tell us about a man named Elkanah who has 2 wives, one wife named Peninnah, has children, and his other wife Hanna, was unable to have children. Every year Elkanah and His family traveled to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice to the Lord. Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were Priest in Shiloh. On one of those trips to Shiloh, Hanna, while distraught but silently praying to God for a child, was thought to be drunk and rebuked by Eli, who misinterprets what he sees. Hanna explains to Eli what she was doing, Eli wishes her well and that God would grant her what she prayed for. Hanna promised to give the child back to God if her request was answered. In time God answers Hanna's request, she has a son named Samuel, and keeps her promise bringing him to Shiloh to live with Eli. Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's two sons, have displeased God by living a shabby life. God's judgement not only comes upon them and their father Eli, but the entire family line.

Eli did a lot of things right. He taught his sons Hophni and Phinehas the right way to live and serve as Priest before God and the people for many years. Unfortunately, Hophni and Phinehas did not stick to what they were taught. We can see by the way Eli addressed Hanna when he thought she was at the alter drunk in chapter 1:12-14, that he tried to make sure people came before God the right way. Eli wanted God to answer the prayers of the people favorably as seen in his pronouncing a blessing upon Hanna prayer request, seen in chapter. 1:17. Eli took time with Samuel and accepted the responsibility involved in training Samuel as a very young

child, in the things of God. He taught Samuel how to recognize God's voice, and how to respond to back to God. Eli was aware of what was going on in the community, and that the people felt they were being abused by the Priest in 1 Samuel 2:22-24. Eli also brought to Hophni and Phinehas attention the fact that he knew about their unacceptable behavior as Priests. They were warned by Eli about sinning against the Lord in 1 Samuel 2:25. Eli accepted God's judgement that would come upon him and his family for his disobedience, as told to him by Samuel 1 Sam 3:18.

I believe Eli was a man of good character, respected by the people and wanted to please God. However, he put his love for his children above following God's commands. The behavior of Eli's sons caused people to view the Priesthood in a very bad way. Eli was wrong not to hold his sons accountable for their actions. Eli verbally bringing the wrongs of Hophni and Phinehas behavior to their attention was not good enough. He did not discipline or rebuke his sons in the way God required, 1 Samuel 3:13. He continued to let Hophni and Phinehas function as Priest, overlooking their wrong, even though they knew what was required of them, and continued to dishonor God. Hophni and Phinehas represented God poorly, their actions became a pattern of sinful behavior that disregarded the offerings and instructions of God. In chapter 2:29 it sounds as if Eli himself was also a partaker in their sinning by eating some of the best parts of the offering coerced from the people which God alone should have received.

What this story teaches me is that being a person of good character alone will not be enough to save me from God's judgment, if I do not follow God's laws and regulations for my life. God wants us to put Him first, above everyone and everything else in our lives. We must take God, His word, and His instructions seriously. The way we live our lives must not

knowingly bring shame on God's name or be a hinderance to others. God will not overlook or excuse the bad behavior of those claiming to represent Him. God can remove or reverse His blessing if He feels to, because, once anointed and appointed by God does not mean always appointed and anointed 2:31-33. I cannot allow my love for my children or the choices of my children to cause me to disobey God. My response to my children's behavior can affect how people view me. My children just like everyone else must be accountable to God's word. I should not support their foolishness nor overlook sin and encourage repentance when needed. I must also repent when needed.

I will have to give an account for my decisions, my behavior, and the deeds done in my life, just as we all will. Matt.7:22 tells us many will claim to have worked in His name only to be rejected by God. We must make sure that after all our good deeds, we are not seen as unworthy by the father, because of sin. It is sad to think that Eli's whole family line lost so much because of his disobedience to God. What happened to Eli and his family also serves as a reminder for us, that if we fail to do as God requires, He can raise up another person who will.