

The Walk of Faith - Part 6

by Larry Ainsworth

The sermon explores the tragic story of Eli, emphasizing the importance of obedience to God and the consequences of neglecting one's responsibilities as a leader and father.

Duration: 57:57

Scripture: 1 Samuel 1:3, Revelation 1:4-5

Topics: "Faith And Obedience", "Judgment And Consequences"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by sharing his enjoyment of a recent float trip and expresses his excitement to share a study on a man who rejected the priesthood of God. He describes this man as one of the great tragedies in the Bible, as he had the opportunity to serve as a high priest before God. The speaker emphasizes the importance of being prepared for the second coming of Jesus and encourages the audience to find comfort in the promise of being reunited with Christ. He warns against being deceived by man's devices and emphasizes that God is the ultimate judge who will bring about judgment and consequences for disobedience. The speaker references the story of Eli and his sons, Hosni and Phineas, who faced physical death as a result of their disobedience. He concludes by sharing a story about a native girl who offered a silver dollar as her sacrifice, highlighting the importance of giving from the heart.

Transcript

That was some singing. I hardly ever hear that hymn. It is well with my soul.

I think some years ago, I was sitting in an auditorium in the city of Omaha, listening to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. I don't know how many of you have ever had the privilege of hearing them. They can sing.

Did you know, as I was sitting there that day, listening to them sing, it struck me, and I've never forgotten it since I hear that hymn quite frequently. I wonder how many in that choir could really say, it is well with my soul. I would pray tonight that each and every one that is here can say, it is well with my soul.

That if the words of Paul Thessalonians, he's coming again, if we were to come in the clouds tonight, and the dead in Christ shall rise first, and we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with him in the clouds, and so shall we ever be with him. Therefore, comfort and encourage one another with these words. If that were to become reality before this day was over, would you say it is well with my soul? I pray that would be the song of each one of us.

Well, I can tell you, it's hard to believe that this is the sixth message that I'm going to be giving to you this wonderful weekend. I have just been, I tell you, I've just been overwhelmed at your fellowship. It's been so good to see so many of you, young and old alike, come and introduce yourselves, and we've had a time of fellowship together and talk over some things that are going on in your life and mine.

You've made this a real joyous weekend for me, and I want to tell you all from the bottom of my heart, thank you very much. It has been a wonderful weekend. We've had excellent weather.

I understand Missouri is not known for having exceptionally good weather in July. It's usually kind of warm, real warm and real humid, but I think we can say we've had an exceptionally good weekend. We can thank the Lord for that.

I think it's been a wonderful time for all of us. How many of the camp workers have we got here tonight? Would you stand? All of you that are here full-time workers, would you stand, or they got you all busy somewhere? They must be out working. We'll catch them tomorrow morning.

Tomorrow morning when they're here, we're going to get them all to stand up, and we're going to give them one of your yahoos from down in Texas. Boy, I'll tell you, they made this weekend super, especially those that have been out there when it was just singing a few moments ago. They're out there paddling down that Gasconade River watching us floaters so we don't fall off and drown and keep away from the sandbars and the hidden logs and all that stuff.

She's done a great job. You can swim up and down that thing three times. It's got my undying gratitude.

She's some kind of woman. Boy, I'll tell you. She didn't have any problems telling the old preacher, taking that float trip on the inner tubes down there.

Do it. It's a lot of fun. You'll have to come back because I think we're all done with that.

But that was a lot of fun. I really enjoyed that. Tonight, I'd like to share a study with you.

It's going to be a rather, a little bit more lengthy study in the Word of God. We've been studying some short character studies in the Word of God, and tonight we're going to have a little bit longer one. Not in time.

I want to quit on time so we can carry on with the other activities. We're going to talk about a man who rejected the priesthood of God. I think of this man and others in the Bible as being some of the great tragedies of the Word of God.

Here was a man who was given the opportunity to practice probably one of the, in the eyes of the Israelites, one of the most prestigious of all positions, that of high priest, before the living and the true God, Jehovah. And this man not only served himself, but his two sons served with him. The tragedy of these three lives is our study for this evening.

But basically, I want to talk to you this evening and share with you from the Word of God, the tragedy of a man named Eli. Will you turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 1, please. 1 Samuel chapter 1. We're just going to take bits and pieces and I'll tie some things together, otherwise we're going to be reading four chapters.

I don't really want to take that much time. So we'll be taking bits and pieces and I want you to stay with us. 1 Samuel 1 verse 3. Now this man would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord

of hosts in Shiloh.

And the two sons of Eli, Hosni and Phinehas, were priests to the Lord there. Priest to the Lord at Shiloh. Verse 12.

This is, remember now that Hannah has come and is praying. Now it came about as she continued praying before the Lord that Eli was watching her mouth. As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart.

Only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought she was drunk. Then Eli said to her, how long will you make yourself drunk? Put away your wine from you.

But Hannah answered and said, no, my Lord, I am a woman oppressed in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the Lord. Do not consider your maidservant as a worthless woman, for I have spoken until now out of my great concern and provocation.

Then Eli answered and said, go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you your petition that you have asked of him. Verse 18. And she said, let your maidservant find favor in your sight.

So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad. Here is a portion of scripture that we need to lay as foundation. Eli was a priest before the living God.

One of the things that the priest was concerned about was to those who would practice praying or that would practice being holy, that he would judge them. He would look at them, and as high priest, he would in his own way judge them. And here he did it, and isn't it interesting? A woman who was sincere of heart, praying to the living God.

Eli looks at her and considers her drunk. Now I ask you, consider the situation of Eli. Who was in the right, and who made the misjudgment? For it was Eli who was to be the one who had the discernment, and here we see he is not a very good discerner of the truth.

Let's turn now to chapter 2 and verse 12. Note the striking condemnation in this verse. Now the sons of Eli were worthless men.

They did not know the Lord. And yet in chapter 1 we read that Hophni and Phinehas were priests before the Lord. But now a short time later we read in the word of God, they were worthless men.

They did not know the Lord. And the custom of the priest with the people, when any man was offering a sacrifice, the priest's servants would come while the meat was boiling with a three-pronged fork in his hand. Then he would thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot.

All that the fork brought up, the priest would take for himself. Thus they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. Also before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, give the priest meat for roasting as he will not take boiled meat from you, only raw.

And if the man said to him, they must surely burn the fat first and then take as much as you desire, then he would say, no, but you shall give it to me now, and if not, I will take it by force. Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for the men despised the offering of the Lord. What a condemnation we have here of Eli and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas.

He gives us a very striking condemnation. They were worthless men. They did not know God, but yet in the eyes of men, they were practicing the priesthood before the living God.

Let's look at verse 18 of the same chapter. Now Samuel was ministering before the Lord as a boy wearing a linen ephod, and his mother would make a little robe and bring him up from year to year when she would come up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. Then Eli would bless Elkin and his wife and say, may the Lord give you the children from this woman in place of the one dedicated to the Lord, and they went to their own home.

And the Lord visited Hannah, and she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters, and the boy Samuel grew before the Lord. Now Eli was very old, and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting. And he said to them, why do you do such things, the evil things that I hear from all these people? No, my sons, for the report is not good which I hear the Lord's people circulating.

If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him, but if a man sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him? But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the Lord desired to put them to death. The Lord desired to put them to death. Verse 27, Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, Thus says the Lord, did I not indeed reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt, in bondage to Pharaoh's house? And did I not choose them from all the tribes of Israel to be my priests, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, to carry an ephod before me? And did I not give to the house of your father all the fire offerings of the sons of Israel? Why do you kick at my sacrifice and at my offering which I have commanded in my dwelling, and honor your sons above me by making yourselves fat with the choices of every offering of my people Israel? Therefore, the Lord God of Israel declares, I did indeed say that your house and the house of your father should walk before me forever.

But now the Lord declares, far be it from me, for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me will be rightly esteemed. Behold, the days are coming when I will break your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be any old man in your house, and you will see the distress of my dwelling, in spite of all that I do good for Israel, and an old man will not be in your house forever. Yet I will not cut off every man of yours from my altar, that your eyes may fail from weeping, and your soul grieve, and all the increase of your house will die in the prime of life.

And this will be a sign to you which shall come concerning your two sons, Hosni and Phinehas. On the same day, both of them shall die. But I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and in my soul, and I will build him an enduring house, and he will walk before my anointed always.

And it shall come about that everyone who is left in your house shall come and bow down to him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and say, Please assign me to one of the priest's offices, so that I may eat a piece of bread. This to me has to be one of the saddest commentaries that I read in the word of God. A man who was blessed of God to serve before him as a priest, a high priest, one who went yearly into the holiest of holies to serve the living and the true God, the one who had the rare and precious privilege to serve before the living and the true God, to see the glory of the living God, to enter in before the ark, and how lightly he esteemed that position.

Samuel was an elderly man by this time. He had two sons, Hosni and Phinehas. By right of their birth, they served as priests, but they were worthless men in the eyes of God, and God calls them to account in the

eyes and in the ears of their father.

There is something there that we need to see in the life of Eli. In the first portion that we read, we're reminded that Eli rebuked Hannah because he thought she was drunk. For that, he would challenge a woman.

But for his own two sons who were married, he challenges them with a simple exhortation. It's like, boys, you know, I'm hearing these stories, and that's not making me too happy. You know, you're doing these things.

These things ought not to be. You know, the one thing that I can think of is that I wonder how Eli lived his life before God. An example to his sons.

Did he fear God? Did his sons understand that God judges sin? What a challenge for a father to bring up his children, to bring them up in the love and fear of God. Reverential fear, a fear that says God judges sin, and as a priest they knew the law. Thou shalt be holy even as God is holy.

And to take upon themselves the ephod and serve as priests, and yet defile themselves so blatantly in the eyes of all Israel and before the living God. What a rebuke to God. How they abused the privileges and the honors of the priesthood.

One of the things that I can see is that the tragedy of Eli is the patience of God. Out of all these things, in a way, I can see how patient God is with those whom he loves. In spite of all of his failures, I believe that God really loved Eli.

To let him serve the many years that he did as a high priest. And yet, I wonder if God would have implanted in the heart of Eli something to challenge him to straighten out his sons. Or was this God's plan? Understanding the sovereignty of God is one of the lessons of Eli.

God is a sovereign God. For we read in the challenge of the word that the man of God, the man of the Lord, brings to Eli. He says to Eli, thus says the Lord.

And then he begins very slowly and very methodically to lay down the groundwork, the basis of the coming judgment. We need to understand from the word of God that God does nothing haphazardly. He has put before us his word, his commandments, his statutes, his laws, his precepts.

He has set them before us as a foundation. He has explained to us the judgment that will come upon us for failure to be obedient to his word. He has set before us clearly and succinctly everything that we need to know concerning our lives before him.

For we are priests. We are priests before the living and the true God. The man of the Lord, the man of God comes and says to Eli, thus says the Lord.

And then he begins. He reveals to Eli the great sovereignty of God. God says, did I not choose? Did I not choose you and your father's house out of all the tribes of Israel? Did I not take Levi to serve as priest before me? It was my choice as God.

And he chose the people to be his priest, the sovereignty of God. He begins to lay down the basis of who is speaking to him. It is God speaking to you, Eli, and you need to remember who I am.

For in order for these things to become clear to you, you must understand who I am. Did I not choose them? Did I not choose them to be the priest? He chose the time. He chose the people.

And now he chooses to explain to them their duties. He says your duties are to serve before me, to go up to my altar, my altar. Notice how God explains that to us.

It's his altar. He says to my altar, to burn incense, to carry an ephod before me, before me. And did I not give to the house of your father all the fire offerings of the sons of Israel? God said it was my provision for you.

As we consider the priesthood of the Old Testament, of the people of Israel, we see some remarkable things that need to speak to us. So often when we get into these things that consider the priesthood in the Old Testament, and as we consider God speaking to the people of Israel, we say, well, that's for them. You know, that's past.

You know, one of the saddest things is that they call the First Testament of the Bible old. The Old Testament. You know, for us in the now generation, we don't like those kind of words.

Old. The Old Testament. So we sometimes we kind of gloss over the things.

I would venture to say this evening, if we went around and looked at your Bibles, that you would notice that the greatest amount of thumbprints and fingerprints are on the New Testament and how little we really spend. I'm not saying all of you. I know some of you understand the work in the entire word of God, but a great majority of us fail to go into the Old Testament to learn the foundations that God has laid in his word that we might function as priests in the New Testament.

These great foundations are laid for us in the life of Eli, the sovereignty of God. He chose the time and the people he provided for them. And he said before them their duties.

It was God's will that these things be this way. And here we have three Eli and his two sons who rebuked, rejected and abused the privileges of priesthood. God forbid that any of us would do such a thing in our holy priesthood, for it was a sad commentary.

Thus sayeth the Lord and judgment was pronounced. It's a serious matter, a very serious matter for anyone of the priesthood of God to abuse the grace of the living God. God's patient is great.

All of us can say, I know of God's patience. Look how long he's been patient with me. But another thing that Eli was to find out and we need to understand today, it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living and the true God.

A terrifying thing. We have lost our sense of reverential awe of the living and the true God, and we need to regain it. We need to regain it in these last days.

We stand in more in awe of man and his devices than we do of the God of all creation. The one who by the very breath put into existence all of our worlds. It's God who cast the judgment.

It is God who carry out the judgment. Let us not be deceived. God is not mocked.

What we sow, we shall reap. Hosni and Phinehas and Eli sowed the seeds of disobedience, and the seeds of disobedience are still the same today as they were in their days. The wages of sin is death.

And in their case, it became a physical death. A physical death. For God said, and he told Eli, I will require your son's life.

Now, being a father with two sons myself, if a man of God came to me and said, thus saith the Lord, your two sons' lives shall be required of them, I would be crushed. Literally crushed. For their disobedience, for their abuse, for their rebuking, I will take their lives.

As a father, I would be crushed to no end. I wonder what Eli thought when those words came. You know, I firmly believe that Eli knew it's just.

It's just. For how can I argue with God? It has to be true. And he knew.

He knew he carried the guilt as they carried the guilt. For here was the man who had the power to take his own sons and remove them from the priesthood and to banish them. And he would not, because he knew that if they were truly judged according to the law, they would be taken outside the camp and killed.

But he would not count. He would not take into account the sins that they had done and do his office. So God judged.

We need to learn this lesson that if we fail to judge our lives. God is patient, but there will come a day when he will judge. He will judge.

So often we believe that. Well, we get away with these things and nobody knows. I wonder how often we really believe that God doesn't know about it.

Do we really think that the sins that are done in the darkness are not known to God? Do we think that we're getting away with something that we're pulling the wool over the eyes of God? Would we believe that for a moment? And yet all of us have to say deep inside. There are those things that I haven't really brought before God. And repented of them.

Oh, God, don't let me walk that way anymore. Give me strength to withstand the wiles of Satan. Tomorrow morning, we're going to spend some time looking at really who Satan is.

Oh, beloved, we need to understand that even if Satan was alive and well in the days of Eli and working in the life of Eli and Hophni and Phinehas, he's alive and well today and he's still doing the same work. He's still saying the same thing that he said to Eve in the Garden of Eden. And can't you hear him? Now, you really don't think that God's going to do that, do you? You don't really believe that God would judge you and take your life, do you? Did God really mean that? And those little seeds of doubt begin to take root in our minds.

Now, I wonder if God does really judge, you know, so-and-so, he gets away, they get away with everything and nothing's happened to them. You know, we see some people that are professing Christians and we know the things that they're doing. We've all read about those that are prominent, what I call the video Christians.

You know, you can turn on the you can turn on the boob tube on Sunday mornings and you see them up there. And man, send us your bucks, you know, and we'll send you something that's really going to make you great and holy before God, you know? And people are sending them the dollars. They're emptying their bank accounts and sending them money because they feel here's a man that has some kind of secret

connection with God that they don't have.

They want to get into something that's going to pacify their religious obligations. Oh, how Satan works today. We say, look at how much they get away with.

You know, if I pulled something like that, God would probably strike me dead. But then we see that God doesn't judge or that he isn't judging in the way that we think he should. And we say, well, they get away with it.

Why can't I? We may not come out and say that, but inside of us, we know. This is something that I'm going to try. What happens? But you see the problem that we read in the word of God is God says that he's patient and he's loving, but he will judge.

But the thing that he doesn't say is when he will judge. It's when he will judge. Some people believe they can do things in their lives.

And then when they repent and come before God, everything's going to be OK. All the things that they've done to this body of theirs is not going to have a price. I've set in on in my studies for counseling and alcohol rehabilitation and treatment.

And I've seen some people that have drank themselves almost right to the point of death and God in his mercy dealt with them and they no longer drink. But yet the wages of their sin has taken its toll upon their bodies, for they have cirrhosis of the liver and they have other kinds of physical ailments associated with what they've done. But yet they are Christians, but their sins have still demanded a price.

I know some young people that were once in the drug culture. Now they're Christians. And I know one young man has told me, he says, years ago, it's been a good number of years ago.

He says, I took some strong stuff, Larry. He says it's some of the strongest LSD that was around. And he says there are times when he says I had the most horrible flashbacks and he says I haven't touched anything, any kind of drugs in over 10 years.

And he says I have some of the worst flashbacks that you can ever imagine. He says there are times when I absolutely wish I was dead. He said it is so fearful.

Do we believe that God does not judge? This young man is a child of God. I believe his testimony. I believe he's repented.

I don't think he's taken any drugs in the amount of time that he said. But when he did, it was disobedience to God. And today he's still paying the price.

We need to understand. I'm not saying that God works that way in every situation. I'm not this.

I'm not God. I don't know how God judges in every situation. But dear children of God, I think we need to get a firm view of the Bema, the judgment seat of Christ, because one day we will stand before him.

You say, yes, but my understanding of Scripture is that, you know, I'm not going to have my life isn't going to be blown up on a TV screen for everybody and their brother to see. I don't know exactly what the judgment seat of Christ will be, but I know it's going to be a revelation. And I know that for all of our sins, we shall suffer loss.

But you say our sins are our sins are taken away. They're remembered no more. That's right.

They're remembered no more. But the time that we took doing all these sins are times that can never be reclaimed. That's one thing that we can truly say yesterday cannot be reclaimed.

Five minutes ago cannot be reclaimed. The time that we spend in sin cannot be reclaimed and we will suffer loss. And I think the sad tragedy of the judgment seat of Christ is going to be this.

That God is going to hold up before us through his son, Jesus Christ. He's going to say, here's what you could have been for me, but here's what you were willing to settle for. The sad tragedy of the judgment seat of Christ.

Now, you may have your own understanding, and I'm not going to debate the issue. But I firmly believe we need to understand that God is still in the business of judging sin. He still understands.

That we have the sin nature. But he still calls us to a life of holiness. And it was a sad day for Eli.

A very sad day. Look at chapter four for Samuel, chapter four and verse twelve. Remember now that Hathnai and Phinehas have taken the ark of God out into the battlefield.

The men who God despised picked up the ark of the living God. They were not even supposed to touch it. They have picked it up.

They have taken it out into the battlefield where the Israelites and the Philistines are at war with one another. And we read of the results in verse twelve. Now, a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes torn and dust on his head.

When he came, behold, Eli was sitting on his seat by the road eagerly watching because his heart was trembling for the ark of God. Let's stop there for a moment. Eli's heart was not trembling for Hathnai and Phinehas.

His heart trembled for the ark of God. He trembled for the ark of God. So the man came to tell it in the city and all the city cried out.

When Eli heard the noise of the outcry, he said, What does the noise of this commotion mean? And the man came hurriedly and told Eli. Now, Eli was ninety-eight years old and his eyes were set so that he could not see. And the man said to Eli, I am the one who came from the battle line and he said, How did things go, my son? Then the one who brought the news answered and said, Israel has fled before the Philistines and there has also been a great slaughter among the people and your two sons also.

Hathnai and Phinehas are dead and the ark of God has been taken. And it came about when he mentioned the ark of God that Eli fell off the seat backward beside the gate and his neck was broken and he died for he was old and heavy. Thus he judged Israel forty years as a corrupt man as he was.

Still, there was that relationship with God through it all. His concern was not for Hathnai and Phinehas, for he knew the judgment of God had already been set upon them, for Eli was sitting there beside the city gate upon his lifted seat where he would sit and listen as a judge for the people of Israel. This seat may have been six feet high off the ground, could have been any distance depending upon what they had at that time, but usually they were about six feet high and he listened.

And when he heard about the ark of the living God, it says he fell off his seat backwards and broke his neck for he was heavy. He was old and he was heavy. His eyes were set.

He could not see, but he was more than blind physically. He was blind spiritually, but yet through it all, this one word comes. He was more crushed over the ark of God than he was over his own two sons.

I wonder if we have that same idea toward the priesthood that Eli had. I would pray not. Because you see, as Christians, we are given a very special place.

We have the same as the priesthood of the Old Testament. See, it's the sovereign God who again chooses us. It is he who knows the time that we are chosen.

We have been chosen, as Paul says in the Ephesians, even before the foundations of the world were set. God knew those who were his own. He's the sovereign God.

He knows those who are his. We have something very special and Peter gives us some insights into it in 1 Peter chapter 2. 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 5. You also as living stones are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ. You are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood.

Notice that in verse 9. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation of people for God's own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Now, I know Peter was talking to the redeemed of Israel, but the words are for us. We are a holy priesthood.

We read again as John writes in the Revelation, Revelation chapter 1. Let's read there, Revelation 1, verse 4. John to the seven churches. The seven spirits who are before his throne and from Jesus Christ, a faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth to him who loves us and released us from our sins by his blood. And he has made us to be a kingdom priest to his God and father to him, be the glory and the dominion forever and ever.

Amen. We are priests. We are priests.

Every child of God is a priest. Now the challenge of Eli that I want to leave with you this evening concerning your priesthood. I tell you, when I made this study, this revelation made me quake in my boots to think of this.

I am a priest before God, the living God, the God who is above every other God. This little bit of Lord, I serve as a priest before God. If God was to send a man of his came to me and said, concerning your priesthood, thus says the Lord, would it be a condemnation such as Eli heard or would it be a well done thou good and faithful servant? We need to understand the priesthood.

We need to understand what it means to be a priest before God. It is a chosen position, chosen by God for us. He has laid down in his precious word, the duties of the priest.

And we read and what a challenge they are to us. And Paul gives us the duties of the priest. We read these words and the old nature rises up in rebellion and says, no, absolutely not.

It cannot be. There has to be something else. But Paul says it very clearly in the epistle to the Romans, chapter 12 and verse one.

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God to present yourselves a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and and perfect. I remember one time we were studying about being priests, a priesthood of the believer.

And I rose one time and I read this portion. I said, a priest offers sacrifices. And I understand from the word of God, this is to be my sacrifice to him.

Another man rose up and I considered this man to be a very saintly man, a godly man. I knew his children. I had the pleasure of performing his daughter's marriage, wedding ceremony, very dear friends of ours.

And he says, Larry, when you read those words, something welled up within me. I said, no, no, no, I don't want to be a sacrifice because sacrifices are consumed. And I want to be me.

He says, I'm humbled. I didn't know that was within me. But he said the challenge of the scriptures came home to me that day.

That moment that you read those words, sacrifice, sacrifices are consumed and that they are. He challenged my heart that night. I said, do I understand what I read? Do I understand what God's telling me that you, brethren, by the mercies of God, present your bodies a living and holy, holy sacrifice that in itself brings us before God in a way that humbles us as nothing else can.

But something else touched my heart about the priesthood. Where does the priest serve? Eli served in the temple. But I read also from the Apostle Paul in First Corinthians chapter three, some very interesting words.

Many of you, I know these are familiar scriptures, but if there's one heart here this evening that doesn't understand the priesthood, these are the challenges of the word of God. First Corinthians chapter three and verse 16. Do you not know that you are a temple or a sanctuary of God and that the spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him for the temple of God is holy.

And that is what you are. You are a temple. Isn't it wonderful? Isn't it dynamic? What God has given to us in the priesthood of the believer in the walk of faith, we are called priests before God.

And what greater privilege could we have than this? God dwells within me. The spirit of the living God, the Holy Spirit of God dwells within me. And through that living Holy Spirit dwelling in me, I offer up sacrifices to the living God and the temple.

The temple is to be holy, not desecrated as in the days of Eli and how Eli in his blindness allowed things to go on that he knew should not be. They should never transpire in the household or the temple of God. Present yourselves a living sacrifice.

I was reading in a book not too long ago, the story of a woman who was a missionary in Africa a number of years ago, and she wrote this little commentary on this verse. She says, I never really understood this verse until I saw it in life. It was the time for the feasts of thanksgiving.

When all of the natives in that particular vicinity would come and they would bring to the Lord, the Christian natives, they would bring to the Lord offerings of thanksgiving for all that he had done for them.

Many would bring out of their fields, some of their crops, some would bring beautiful flowers, some would bring fruit. And she said, I stood there that day and she says, I watched the long line and all of those carrying the variety of gifts of thanksgiving sacrifices that they were willing to offer up.

Because they were things that were important to them, that they gave out of their lives. But she said, I saw in that line a native girl that was very dear to me. And she held nothing in her hand.

She held her hands to her side. But she said her hand was clenched. And she said, I wondered as she came close to the place where they were laying down their various offerings.

She said, I watched her. I wondered what she was going to give. And then it was her turn.

And she said, the native girl stretched forth that clenched hand and out of that clenched hand came a bright, shiny silver dollar. And the woman immediately, the missionary, where in the world would she have gotten that? For only the wealthy landowners had money. She said her curiosity would not be still.

So she sought out the girl. She said to her, I know I should not ask, but I must ask, where did you get the silver dollar? She says, you know, I've heard about so much what Jesus did for me. He gave his life for me.

She says, I thought and I thought for a long time, what could I possibly give back to him in thankfulness for all he's given to me? And she says, only one thing seemed to satisfy. She said, I went to the landowner and I sold myself to him for one year for a dollar, for that's all he would give me. She says, I belong to the landowner for a year.

I am his servant. But she says, I have the dollar and I gave it to him who loved me. She says, it's a simple sacrifice, but she says, I wanted to do it.

A girl that was willing to sell herself to a landowner in servitude for a year, for a dollar, that she might give it an offering of thanksgiving. What an example for us. She understood the priesthood of the believer far better than we do often.

Well, here's the challenge. God calls us to offer up spiritual sacrifices and that spiritual sacrifices ourselves. The lessons of Eli and Hophni and Phinehas, we just barely scratched the surface of the priesthood, but our time is gone.

Think about your priesthood. Tomorrow morning, 930, here in this place that our Lord cherished, we have the opportunity to exercise our priesthood. I wonder how many of the men will accept the responsibility of the priesthood to offer up sacrifices of praise audibly.

I wonder how many of the ladies in humbleness before God will silently offer up sacrifices of praise. And when we sing together as priests before the living God, I wonder if the melody that is in our hearts will be a sweet savor before God. Will the incense of our prayers be a sweet smelling savor in his nostrils? The priesthood of believers, what a challenge for us to understand.

And what an opportunity. What an opportunity. And most of all, what a privilege.

What a privilege to be a priest before God. You know, it's important for us to understand the priesthood of believers. For you see, we're going to be priests before God for all eternity.

Our priesthood here is but a prelude to our priesthood that is eternal. For you see, in eternity, our spiritual service of worship will be to offer praises to our God, who has provided us an eternal home. Heavenly Father, again we come into your presence.

And Father, as we've been reminded sometimes, thy word is like sandpaper upon our lives. But yet, our Father, we know that many times the roughness of our life needs to be smoothed, and we need to be made smooth by thy hand. No, Father, we would pray that this word that we've heard tonight would not be something that would gnaw at our hearts, but it would be something that would encourage us to better understand what a great and precious privilege it is to be a priest before thee.

To be able to go past the veil to the Holy of Holies, unencumbered to see him in all of his resplendent glory, and to know him, the God who is truly the God. Father, we thank you for the blessing of this beautiful day and the time that we've had in fellowship. And we would pray, our Father, that this word would have been an encouragement to each and every heart.

And now, our Father, we pray for thy hand of blessing upon the remainder of the evening. And Father, we would pray that all of our activities might bring glory and honor to his precious name, for it's in that name we pray. Amen.

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