

TITLE: THAT GOD'S NAME BE NOT BLASPHEMED

TEXT: 1 SAM 2:12-17; 1 TIM 6:1; 2 COR 6:3

INTRO: When we think of great OT leaders of God's people, we usually think of Moses, David, Elijah, or Daniel (and rightly so). What about Samuel? Here is an example of a great leader. Most of everything we know about him from the beginning of his life until the end is exemplary. But this lesson isn't about him; it's about his predecessors. So often, God raised up a good leader in order to replace a bad one. This is the case with Samuel. If not for the house of Eli, we may have known nothing of Samuel! But the actions of Eli's sons can teach us a lot of things, as we learn from their mistakes.

I. GOD'S LAW GIVEN:

A. Law of the peace offering given

1. Regarding the person sacrificing (**Lev 3:1-5**)
(v. 1-2) A person brought his own peace offering of the herd or flock (v. 6) and killed it; the priests sprinkled the blood.
(v. 3-4) The fat is to be taken away; (v. 5) it belonged to the Lord (it's what produced the savory aroma to Him).
2. Regarding the priests (**Lev 7:22-25; 28-34**)
 - a. **7:31**—*"The priest shall burn the fat upon the altar: but the breast shall be Aaron's and his sons'."* The priests were given *their* part. One purpose for this was to provide for the priests. Another purpose was to identify the priests as being God's servants & therefore worthy of respect as such (they were allowed to share in God's sacrifice).
 - b. But nobody, including the priests, was allowed to have the fat. **7:22-25**—*"Ye shall eat no manner of fat... For whosoever eateth the fat of the beast, of which men offer an offering... shall be cut off from his people."* They were forbidden from eating the fat of a sacrificial animal. This was **God's** portion!

B. Law of the peace offering in practice (1 Sam 2:12-14)

1. (**v. 12**) *The sons of Eli* (priests, Hophni & Phinehas- **4:4**) *were sons of Belial* ("without profit, worthless, wicked, ungodly"—Strong). *They knew not the Lord.* This is a sad statement about anyone at anytime. But how could this be said of priests?! They were supposed to know the Lord better than anyone (they were the teachers)! This ignorance was *not* an excuse for their behavior. But even if it were, we'll see in **v. 16** that the people still tried to educate them, but they wouldn't listen!
2. (**v. 13-14**) *The priests' custom* – while the flesh of the animal was boiling, they used a fleshhook to take their portion (the breast & right shoulder –**7:31-32**). This process could've been done in accordance w/God's law (the fat is God's).

II. GOD'S LAW VIOLATED (1 SAM 2:15-16):

- A. They ignored God's law (v. 15)** – *"Before they burnt the fat* (the Lord's portion), the priest's servant came to get the flesh for the priests (i.e., they took God's portion, completely ignoring God's law & His desire)!
- B. They ignored those who wanted to obey God's law (v. 16)** – If the one sacrificing told them "burn the fat first (offering it to God), then take all you want (it's yours)," the priest's servant wouldn't listen, but would threaten to take it by force! So even if someone tried to defend them by saying that they didn't know the law, now they have no excuse! This is similar to the person who teaches something that's false. If he ignores sound teaching like this, *then* he should be considered a false teacher!

III. GOD & HIS LAW ABHORRED (1 SAM 2:17):

- A. (v. 17a)** *Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord.*
 1. "Before" means "the face, in front of, in the presence of." It means that their actions were in front of God (well known by Him). God always knows what's going on (He's omniscient –cf. **Psa 139:1-6**)! There is no place you can hide from him (**Psa 139:7-12**—omnipresent). So just because He hadn't punished them *yet*, didn't mean He wasn't going to!
 2. Their sin was great.... This doesn't mean that other sins aren't as bad! Never underestimate the effects of your sin on God! He cares! He is always hurt by our sin (every sin)! Every sin is a sin against God, because every sin separates us from God (**Isa 59:2**), and every sin cost Jesus his life!
- B. (v. 17b)** *For men abhorred the offering of the Lord.* There might not be a sadder statement than this! God's laws are **ALWAYS** for our benefit! He simply wants us to be obedient so we can be with Him for eternity. And look at the result when we disobey!
 1. It's bad enough that my sin separates *me* from God. God is *never* happy with this. And I should be just as upset about it!
 2. But what about when my sin negatively affects other people? Presumably these were good people, simply wanting to offer their peace offerings to God in accordance with *His* law. But this required the mediation of these priests (they couldn't just bypass them). Look at the predicament these Israelites were stuck in because the priests were selfish & cared nothing about God! How could these good people fix this and offer their sacrifices if the priests wouldn't change?
 3. Result: *They abhorred* (despise, blaspheme) *the offering of the Lord.* What was supposed to be a good, obedient act, pleasing to God & purifying to the people, was now something they hated and spoke against!
- C. Applications:** Are you **1)** a concerned sacrificer? **2)** an unconcerned sacrificer? **3)** a priest causing others to stumble?
 1. Have you ever been unable to worship in spirit & truth because the congregation added & subtracted from God's word in order to please themselves? The people in Eli's day could've tried to circumvent the priests ("fix" the problem) by offering the sacrifices themselves. This would've been wrong! The problem had to be addressed. They should've demanded that Eli remove & discipline his sons. Since he didn't, God stepped in (Hophni & Phinehas were killed in battle). Likewise, if a church is in error, we can't circumvent the problem (by ignoring it & continuing there). It must be addressed properly.
 2. Many others become guilty by blindly following those who are leading them astray (**2 Pet 3:17** –*Beware...!*).
 3. **What about our influence?** Do members' actions ever cause others to have bad feelings about the church? **Mt 5:16** –*Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works....* The opposite is **1 Tim 6:1-2**—when things are done in God's "name" but not according to God's ways, people usually blame God for the negative results (e.g., crusades).

CONCLUSION: The people in 1 Sam 2 hated their peace offerings because of what Eli's sons were doing. Might members hate coming to worship because of our actions (hypocrisy, friction between brethren)? Do non-Christians ever speak against Christianity because of *our* actions (**2 Cor 6:3**)? Christians have a very important & difficult responsibility to be good influences – so God's name isn't blasphemed!