



## **DIVIDED LOYALTIES** By: *David W. Lankford*

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We want to take our scripture text from **1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 2:29**, "Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honorest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people".

Needless to say, the Lord God of Abraham strongly condemns leaders who don't do enough to correct their favorite subordinates when they are committing sin or wrongdoing. The word *kick* here in the Hebrew is #1163 and it means "to trample down or to despise". God was simply telling Eli that he had despise for the holy things of God, and that he showed unmitigated favor to his two sons, who were committing adultery at the doors of the Temple of God. Each and every day we witness a spirit of recklessness when it comes to dealing with sin and the wrong doings in this nation, but it is even more pronounced when we find sin in the house of God. The failure to call sin "sin" and put a stop to it shows that one's loyalties are divided rather than being wholly committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus knew all too well that no man could ever serve two masters, for we read in **Matthew 6:24**, "For no man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon". The New Testament equivalency of our scripture concerning divided loyalties is found in **Matthew 15:8-9**, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men". What we

witnessed in our scripture text is that Eli chose to live with, and to accept the wrongs being done by his sons. The old cliché is true, "blood is thicker than water". This same problem has presently permeated, as well as pervaded the church of the living God. Ministries no longer stand for what is righteous, but rather they capitulate and gave in to the whims and caprice of the people. The truth is, being biblically sound and biblically correct is not popular with the people in the congregation today. When God calls a man into the ministry, he does not call him to be politically correct, but rather he is called to be a preacher of righteousness. Regretfully, most preachers today have become religious politicians and are no longer men of God. I want to remind you, there is always consequences for sin. Sin must never be left unchecked and left to continue. I have often said, sin is like a cancer. The word cancer simply means, any evil condition that spreads destructively.

Needless to say, sin is a cancer. When you add the word malignancy to the word cancer, you have a situation that will ultimately produce death. The word malignancy simply means tends to produce death. Sin left unchecked will produce eternal separation from the Lord God of Abraham. The fact that Eli would not deal with the sins of his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas; the Lord would ultimately mete out very harsh punishment to the entire family and nation. I want you to try and fathom how harshly God dealt with Eli because he would not deal with sin: **1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 2:30-34**, "Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should

walk before me **for ever**: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house forever. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age. And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons; on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them". The Lord cannot continue to bless that which has become sinful and degraded. The Lord was very clear here in His Word, "those that honor me, I will honor them". The truth is, if we dishonor God then He will dishonor us. God issued Eli a prophetic judgment in that He would cut off his arm, not physically but spiritually regarding the priesthood, along with his two sons. What is even worse, we read in verse 32 where the Lord said: "**thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation**". What a grave tragedy when the Lord allows the enemy to triumph over His own people in his own house. Eli witnessed that prophecy when the Philistines stole the Ark of the Covenant and destroyed 30,000 Israeli soldiers in one day. Don't ever think there is not a penalty for sin in this life and in the ages to come. As judge and high priest, Eli had to witness the death of his two sons, along with the loss of the Ark of the Covenant. No wonder Eli's heart was overwhelmed along with death

pursuing him so quickly. Spiritually we are witnessing the same traits and characteristics in the modern church today. We've lost the presence of God, and for that reason, we are now dying spiritually. How quickly we witness the judgment of God as it fell upon the household of Eli: when his two sons were killed, Eli having fallen from off the gate and breaking his neck, along with his daughter-in-law having died while giving childbirth. Because of all of this sin, she named the child **I-chabod**, meaning, "the glory of the Lord is departed". You may say that type of judgment was very harsh, but that is what sin does when left unchecked. Remember, the Lord loves the person but He hates the sin. You must remember Eli, Hophni, and Phinehas were the spiritual leaders of their nation at that time. Eli allowed his two sons to persist in their sins. Yes, he gave them a verbal reprimand, yet he failed in dealing with their sins. I want to remind you that the turban which was upon the top of Eli's head had a very powerful inscription written upon it, **"Holiness to the Lord"**. Simply put, Eli forgot to remain holy in his service to the Lord. We find that inscription in **Exodus 28:36-38**, **"And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD". And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the miter; upon the forefront of the miter it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things"**. When the Lord says holy, He means holy and righteous are His ways. May I remind you that God will not tolerate sin, no matter what office one may possess, and that even meant the high priest of Israel. May I ask you humbly today, where do your loyalties lie when it comes to the morals and ethics of your

close friends, associates, and family members? Do you tolerate their sin and turn your head the other way when you know in retrospect you should say something? I know they will condemn you and say that you are being judgmental: but sin is "sin". You see, for the most part, the church does not even want to address the issue of sin, lest they offend someone. And for that very reason, the church today is profusely inundated with wicked and sinful people who must repent and repent quickly. It is a sad day in this nation, and in the church, when people continue to ignore cases of flagrant wrongdoing and sin. I have often said, we do not judge people eternally, but we judge whether or not something is right or wrong. Every day we make judgments, while we are driving, or whether to purchase a particular item, or in how to deal with a particular circumstance or situation. Anyone that will not scrutinize, neither prudently judge a circumstance or situation, will ultimately endure great disaster and tragedies. When sitting at the intersection on a highway I have to make a decision as to whether or not I have time to pull out safely or should I wait until the car passes by? That is a judgment and a time centered one. Let me encourage you today to quit being afraid to make a decision. Even Joshua told the people in **Joshua 24:15**, **"Choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"**. Regretfully, spiritual judgment has become profusely skewed here in these last days, for we read in **Isaiah 5:20**, **"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter"**. We must arise to the occasion and do our very

best to put a stop to sin and sinning. I've often said, lawlessness only breeds more lawlessness. As long as this nation and the leadership of this nation continues to tolerate sin and wickedness, things will only grow worse. My heart stays broken as I witness a continued falling away of so many in this nation and within the ranks of the nominal church. But I still possess great hope and courage in the living God of Abraham. With God all things are possible to them that believe. I just want you to know that I still believe in Christ our Lord. I trust you will find the time to pray and seek the face of our Lord. The Lord God of Abraham is not a hard taskmaster, but don't ever think you can live in perpetual sin and retain the blessings of God. For that very fact, Eli and his house were forever cut off from the Aaronic priesthood. Remember, this was all because Eli did not honor the Lord and His Word. Each and every one of us must honor the Word of our Lord, if we expect the blessings of the Lord to remain upon our lives. Never suffer Satan to divide your loyalties when it comes to the Lord Jesus Christ. I assure you if you stand with the Lord, He will certainly stand with you. Until next month, may you faithfully abide in the Word of the living God. Thank you for your love and support, and when the Lord does bring us to your mind, please pray for us that we might remain faithful and always preach an uncompromising message from the Word of our Lord.

Serving With You All,

Pastor David W. Lankford