

## ***Eli's Family: Lack of Discipline***

The Bible depicts Eli as a godly man. He judged Israel forty years (1 Sam. 4:18), the next to last ruler of that era. Eli was a priest as well as a judge, serving in the tabernacle at Shiloh (1 Sam. 1:9). His last years were spent as a mentor to young Samuel, who grew to be one of the all-time great characters of Bible history. Eli's death reflected his character, too: news that the ark of the covenant had been captured by the Philistines made him fall off his seat, and he broke his neck and died (1 Sam. 4:18).

Eli's sons were another story. They "were worthless men; they did not know the Lord" (2 Sam. 2:12). They acted as though the priesthood existed for their benefit. Instead of limiting themselves to the prescribed priestly portion of a sacrifice, the breast and right thigh (Lev. 7:28-34), they took whatever their fork would hold. And they had no qualms about taking the Lord's portion, the fat (Lev. 3:3-5). They used the priesthood to make themselves fat!

Hophni and Phinehas were as brazen as any priests in history. They threatened anyone who challenged them. They even went so far as to commit fornication with the women who served at the tabernacle (1 Sam. 2:22).

Old Eli rebuked his rebellious sons (1 Sam. 2:22-25). He warned them that they were not only sinning themselves, they were leading others to sin, too. But his rebuke fell on deaf ears. God revealed to Samuel that the day would come when He would cut off Eli's house from priestly service. He explained, "I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves, and he did not rebuke them" (1 Sam. 3:13).

How could God say Eli did not rebuke his sons when the text records his rebuke? The answer is obvious: Eli did not do enough. The word rendered rebuke literally means to be dim. We might say that Eli did not sufficiently take "a dim view" of what his sons were doing. Yes, he reprimanded them, but when they did not repent he left them in office (Most translations use the term restrain). Actually, what Hophni and Phinehas did deserved death. God accused Eli of honoring them above Him (2:29).

Personal devotion to God and a good example are musts if we are to bring up our children in the way of the Lord. But more is needed. Persistent misbehavior calls for corrective discipline. Hopefully, a rebuke or mild punishment will suffice. When it does not, God clearly expects us to do whatever is necessary. May He bless us with wisdom and courage.

***- by Frank Himmel***

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## ***Warning!***

The average consumer should feel insulted over the silly warning labels that accompany many products.

- On a blanket from Taiwan: Not to be used as protection from a tornado. This is good to know.
- On a fireplace log: Caution — Risk of Fire. Who would have thought it?
- On a string of Chinese made Christmas lights: For indoor or outdoor use only. This narrows our options.
- Warning on a cartridge for a laser printer: Do not eat toner.

Perhaps these warnings should come with a warning: Do not take this warning seriously.

Unfortunately, frivolous warnings disarm us. They tend to make us suspicious of all warnings. This is tragic. We must take God's warnings seriously.

In the Old Testament, the Lord warned Israel, "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2).

Embedded within this warning is the revelation that adding to or taking from His words results in keeping something other than the word of God.

Agur adds a similar warning in Proverbs 30:6: Do not add to His words, lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar." We could be guilty of adding to His word by writing additional chapters or books. But we can violate this passage without going to that much trouble. Any time we substitute human wisdom for divine truth, we add to His word.

If someone objects that these are Old Testament passages, the New Testament offers the same warning. “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia —remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine” (1 Timothy 1:3).

Those who fail to abide in the teaching of Christ do not have God (2 John 9). This means that if something is unauthorized by the Scriptures, we must leave it alone. Otherwise, we are no different from rebels who practice lawlessness – and that’s not a frivolous warning!

**- by Rick Duggin**

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## ***Has the Bible Been Changed?***

We are frequently asked about the reliability of our Bibles. Specifically, how can we be sure that the Bibles we are reading today are true to the original messages delivered so long ago? In particular, can we be sure that the New Testament has not been altered and changed in the almost 2000 years since it was written?

The answer to these questions is a resounding YES, we can be absolutely certain that we have good, reliable copies of the messages as they were originally written. To illustrate how we can have this confidence, consider this illustration:

- At a potluck dinner, Sally has a delicious dish and several other ladies ask for her recipe.
- Sally makes three handwritten copies of her recipe and gives them to Anna, Betty, and Clara.
- A good while later, Anna pulls out that recipe and is preparing to fix the dish. She calls Sally to confirm the ingredients, but Sally has lost her original copy of the recipe.
- Is there any way for Anna to confirm the accuracy of her copy?
- YES, although the original has been lost, Anna can compare her copy to those of Betty and Clara. If all three agree, she can have good confidence that her copy is exactly like the original.

Now, take this illustration and apply the same principle to the New Testament. Admittedly, the original ‘autograph’ copies of these documents are all lost and unavailable. But, there are literally thousands of copies of those originals, many dating back to the immediate time frame in which the originals were written. By comparing these thousands of copies, and by observing their nearly perfect similarities, we can conclude that our Bibles today are true to the originals. In fact, there is no book of antiquity that comes even close to the Bible in being able to provide this sort of documentary evidence for authenticity and accuracy.

YES, you can trust your Bible!!!

**- by Greg Gwin**