

**Judgment in the House of God**  
**1 Samuel 2:11-36**

**1 Samuel 2:11-36** [11] Then Elkanah went home to Ramah. And **the boy was ministering to the LORD** in the presence of Eli the priest.

[12] **Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the LORD.** [13] The custom of the priests with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant would come, while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand, [14] and 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. This is what they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there.

[15] Moreover, before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give meat for the priest to roast, for he will not accept boiled meat from you but only raw." [16] And if the man said to him, "Let them burn the fat first, and then take as much as you wish," he would say, "**No, you must give it now, and if not, I will take it by force.**" [17] **Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the LORD, for the men treated the offering of the LORD with contempt.**

[18] Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy clothed **with a linen ephod.** [19] And his mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. [20] Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "May the LORD give you children by this woman for the petition she asked of the LORD." So then they would return to their home.

[21] Indeed the LORD visited Hannah, and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. **And the boy Samuel grew in the presence of the LORD.**

[22] Now Eli was very old, and **he kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel,** and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting. [23] And he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all these people. [24] No, my sons; it is no good report that I hear the people of the LORD spreading abroad. [25] **If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?"** But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the LORD to put them to death.

[26] **Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and also with man.**

[27] And there came **a man of God** to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Did I indeed reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt subject to the house of Pharaoh? [28] Did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? I gave to the house of your father all my offerings by fire from the people of Israel. [29] **Why then do you scorn my sacrifices and my offerings** that I commanded for my dwelling, and honor your sons above me **by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel?**' [30] Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: 'I promised that your house and the house of your father should go in and out 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 shall be lightly esteemed. [31] **Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house,** so that there will not be an old man in your house. [32] Then in distress you will look with envious eye on all the prosperity that shall be bestowed on Israel, and there shall not be an old man in your house forever. [33] The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep his eyes out to grieve his heart, and all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword of men. [34] And this that shall come upon your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, **shall be the sign to you: both of them shall die on the same day.** [35] **And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest,** who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever. [36] And everyone who is left in your house shall come to implore him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and shall say, "Please put me in one of the priests' places, that I may eat a morsel of bread.'""

**You know what is interesting about this part of our story?** It seems all too familiar doesn't it...  
People in authority, abusing that authority and the people they are supposed to serve.

**The truth is, I could read a list of names to you and you would know who they are and what they have done.** There are many in our world of politics, business, and entertainment and sadly... God's church that have propagated abuses that are similar to those committed by Hophni and Phineas.

These abuses, sex by coercion (rape), stealing from the people, misuse of the office and authority... these are not new to us are they... We have all been touched by these kinds of things haven't we.

**There is corruption in the house of God.** The sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas are evil men and are without any fear of God. They are stealing the best meat from the people, having sex with the women that attend to the tabernacle. These two brothers had authority and were serving a priests. They were abusing their power and the people they were supposed to serve.

This is classic church abuse. These are the same abuses we see in churches today isn't it? There is nothing new under the sun. You would think that by now, we as the people of God would be able to see, understand and deal with this kind of abuse in a Godly way.

But our hearts are sinful. And our desires are earthly.

### **When We Don't Get A Happy Ending by Peter Chin**

The American dream revolves around the belief that if a person works hard enough and generally treats others well, he will thrive in this country. And this is why we love happy endings. They are consistent with the American dream and serve to reinforce the rightness of that worldview. Without these conclusions, we experience uncomfortable levels of cognitive dissonance as we wrestle with the unfortunate reality that people often do not get what they deserve, in one respect or the other. In this way, happy endings are not a preference for us, but a necessity, essential in helping us make sense of life.

We are so stubbornly entrenched in the American dream, where happy endings are mandatory, and all loose ends firmly knotted. It *has* to be that way, otherwise we do not feel settled, and our faith in God somehow shaken. But we must have forgotten our church history. There is no happy ending for Paul, Peter, James, and Stephen. The final chapter of their earthly life does not read, "But they all became rich and famous and married and lived long and healthy lives—praise God!" No, their final chapters read thusly: one was beheaded, the next crucified upside down, the third thrown from a building by a mob, and the last stoned to death.

As hard as it is to believe, these men had already had their happy ending. They had already discovered peace, redemption, resolution, purpose, and hope. They had already discovered these things years ago, not in circumstance, but in Christ. They did not need their earthly lives to continue on an upward trajectory because they knew they were on an eternal one instead. And how desperately I, and I suspect so many of us, need to reclaim this dynamic. We need to divorce our joy and peace from the ups and downs of our circumstances, the hectic EKG of success and failure, **and plug them instead into the constant character of God.**

**Folks, if you are a follower of Jesus... you already have your happy ending.** If you feel that you don't have this "happy ending" then you need to check yourself. Check your heart, your motives, your desires. What drives you? Is it for some earthly pleasure of things, relationships, even family? Are you content?

**Do you believe that Jesus is really all you need... or do you just see Jesus as a life enhancement.** A good thing to add to all the other good things in your life.

**We don't get the abundant life of Christ by adding Jesus to our life plan.** This "abundant" life doesn't come from being a better person or using Jesus as an additive to our gasoline so that we get better performance.

**Life and life more abundantly comes solely from Jesus Christ. Life itself is Christ.** If we are swayed to and fro in our faith as we depend on earthly leaders of God's church and their "morality" or "generosity" or "transparency"... we are not trusting in the one who saved us. We have reduced our belief to the behaviors and motives of human beings and not those of Almighty God.

**This does not mean that we should align ourselves with and follow those that are in grievous sin against God and man... but it does mean that we need to be sure of who we are following.**

**If you know me at all, you know that I am a sinful man.** I bump and stumble my way through things and I know it. I encourage you to not trust in me or any other Christian leader as your source of truth, but trust in God. I make mistakes. I sin. But I say that with the caveat that we are all sinners. And if we are in Christ we have been redeemed and walk as brothers and sisters, side by side with a sense of connectivity to the saving grace of our Holy God. And God gives us His word so that we can live together in a reasonable state of earthly harmony that is a pre cursor to His eternal and perfect kingdom... in which we will live together for all eternity.

**Jesus is the pastor of His church.** He calls and appoints imperfect servants... and sometimes He removes them. But He is always in control. He even calls and appoints those to lead for a time... fully knowing that He will be removing them. Fully knowing that they will sin and fail and disappoint. But He does so for His purposes and sometimes outside the realm of our understanding.

**I look back at a time of my life when I was tossed to and fro by the actions and behaviors of those in church leadership.** I even took a year away from church as I wrestled with God's plan of His earthly church. As I look back I can see God's hand in every step. Every detail. Every action and reaction. In many ways, my struggles were solely for my benefit. This big church with all its problems and sin (just like most churches) was actually a wonderful training ground for me and my relationship with Christ. The question was, am I going to serve Jesus or was I going to serve myself?

**You see, many of us think that we have been "hurt" by a church.** Or hurt by a leader. And in some cases that is true. But there is one element of truth that we sometimes miss. And that is that we really were hurt, in many ways, by our own selfish desires. Our own pride. Our own sense of rightness.

**Here is how this happens.** We place trust in an idea and a person or persons that propagate that idea. This idea or teaching resonates with us. We think, finally... someone is doing it right. This group has it together. And we think that because we agree with their direction and teaching. If it's a conservative Christian message and that is what we like to hear, we jump on board and give our acceptance and agreement. If it is a liberal Christian message and that is what we like, we do the same. We see this group and this leadership as a reflection of ourselves. We load in. We start to have thoughts that "we're the only church that's really doing anything significant in this area". Have you ever thought that?

I have. And that is a sign of my selfish sin. I have just created an idol. I feed this idol more and more. We see how our church is having an effect in our community and we take pride. We wear our shirts with the church logo, we tell people where we go on Sundays and encourage others to trust in the church as we have trusted in the church. And our idol gets bigger and bigger.

This idol consumes our time, and our money. It takes more and more to feed this idol so that we are now fully devoted followers of church.

And we pastors love it when the followers make "our" church, the object of their affection. We see masses of people, and we feel encouraged that we are doing the Lord's work. Because if it didn't have God's blessing, it wouldn't be growing right?

A number of years ago I read a study that in one year, internet pornography grew by 800%. God must be blessing internet pornography... because it's growing... right?

God must be blessing my stomach... because it's growing... right?

God must be blessing our government... because it's growing... right?

Hophni and Phineas are taking advantage. There are always people in every area of life that will take advantage. The truth is... we all take advantage at some time or another, but the difference is going to be this... when called upon by

God, when your sin has found you out, do you run and hide, or do you run to Jesus. Do you confess your sin to Christ and to others, or do you deny, deflect and cover up.

**I want to share a story with you.** It is an embarrassing story. It's a story of sin in my life. But it's an even bigger story of redemption. It's a story of a sinful leader.

10 page letter.

I was a relatively new ordained pastor in a relatively new position.

My associate in the worship department was my closest friend.

Out of the blue (to me) called into the pastor's office.

Given the letter. I was blown away. How could this guy say all this junk about me? He was more messed up than me.

Go home. Meet in the morning.

Own it all.

Now why did I have to own it all? Why couldn't I just own the stuff that I agreed was true? I'm not really sure... but I think it comes down to total submission. Not to the pastor, but submission of my entire life to Christ. My entire being. This idol of a job, of a church that I had built had to be completely eradicated from my being. If I would have been selective about the issues I would own... I believe that course of action would only "modify" my idol. It would only give it a face life. The same heart problem would remain.

My pastor and my church were so gracious. So loving and gave me the help I needed to confess, to rebuild and restore me, my family and my faith.

**This is a process.** No church has it all together. No follower has it all together. No leader is completely sanctified. We are together, today, for a purpose. Some of you are here and will go through struggles and trials and will leave this body of believers, but hopefully it is not the end of your faith and your discipleship, hopefully it is a new beginning. Hopefully it is God leading you to a life of complete surrender.

All through this 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter we see problems with leadership, but you know what else we see, the thread of hope. This undercurrent of vision. The plan of God. Samuel is being raised up in the midst of terrible hurt, pain and sin. Samuel is God's man for the hour.

Many of us will dwell on the problem. Many of us will dwell on the hurts that have been caused. Many of us will continue to suffer, but take heart, that in the middle of your suffering, God has already prepared a redeemer. Even in the midst of chaos and sin, God is doing a great work. Even in the great sin of Hophni and Phineas... He is bringing the people of Israel a Samuel.

And if you are a believer, a follower of Jesus... you don't need to hope for a happy ending, because your happy ending is already here.

Prayer of Confession: Prone to Wander pg 26.