

CALL to PRAYER - Model Prayer "...lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil"

1 Sam. 2:12-17, 22-26; 3:11-14 - Corruption in Church Leadership

INTRO - The account I just read happened about 3200 years ago. The Bible is old and full of old, old stories. It is ancient but relevant. The Bible is as up to date as yesterday's/tomorrow news. Baptist have been in news recently...not for a good reason. Sex scandals have been looming over the SBC like clouds of doom. The wicked laugh & mock when the church is in sin...people are hurt (not helped).....and the saints and the Savior are shamed. The US government is even getting in on the party....DOJ investigating the SBC. What a mess!
Our series on *Ecclesiology* has transitioned to *Messy-ology*. Churches can be messy places. God is a God of order and appointed leaders within His church straighten out our messes. We all come into the church broken & a mess. Jesus takes us as we are but doesn't leave us as we are. Church leadership is tasked with aiding this *order*. We noted last week leadership description & qualifications for the church. They are to be set in order/straighten out themselves. They are to have already gone through their spiritual orthopedics before trying to straighten out the church. Alas, not always the case. Church leadership matters but church leaders can be corrupt.

CORRUPTION BACK IN THE DAY

- Being a church leader doesn't make you a believer. 1 Samuel 2:12
 - Eli was the High Priest, and his sons were in position because of family tradition
 - Some church leaders are just pursuing a career...lucrative
 - Big religion is big business.
 - Eli's sons were priest but they were worthless & did not know the Lord Titus 1:16
- There were two major sins of Eli's sons. *Checks & Chicks* (money & sex)
 - Checks - these guys were getting rich off religion...getting fat off the faith
 - 2:13-16 describes their operating procedure with the tithes & offerings
 - the tithes and offerings were for the priests to live on
 - they were taking more than their share...they took the Lord's share
 - 1 Sam. 2:16 Lev. 3:16 (14-17) all the fat was the Lords
 - 1 Sam. 2:28-29
 - Making bank off of believers...fleecing the sheep...(sound familiar?)
 - 1 Samuel 2:17 1 Tim. 6:5
 - Chicks - 1 Samuel 2:22
 - they were mixing some *extramarital fun* in with their "faith"
 - Phinehas's wife was about to give birth to Ichabod (1 Sam. 4:19-21)
 - Sexual sins within is not a recent trend. All too common story
 - old, old story....but a shameful story
- These corrupt leaders were coddled (sin tolerated and downgraded)
 - Eli rebuked his sons but did not remove his sons from leadership
 - 1 Sam. 2:29 - the priests were honored and protected above Gods reputation
 - Eli went light on them. (who do we love more...The Father or family?) Matt. 10:37 Ex. 32:26-29
 - Phinehas' name-sake was jealous for God in confronting sexual sin - Numbers 25:7-13
- God takes sin within church leadership most seriously - 1 Sam. 3:12-14
 - In Hophni and Phinehas' case it was an unpardonable sin (let that sink in)

WHAT JESUS HAD TO SAY

1. Jesus was the harshest on the most religious. Dare I say that Jesus was vicious.
 - a. Religious leader drew His wrath and ire. (Matt. 23:13-33)
 - b. He pulled no punches...cut them deep and often...called them names
 - c. *Hypocrites, fools, sons of hell, blind guides, whitewashed tombs, snakes, vipers, hellbound*
 - i. The *religious* did not experience a "little sweet Jesus" back in the day
2. Those who teach (lead) in the church are judged more strictly - James 3:1
 - a. Even good and godly leaders are judged harder by the Head of the church
 - b. Lev. 10:1-3 Numbers 20:12 Miriam Uzza
 - c. The most dangerous thing I do is stand behind this pulpit (great risk & reward)
3. Church leaders need to be above reproach, or they bring reproach
 - a. 2 Sam. 12:14 David's sin gave occasion for God's enemies to blaspheme
 - i. Rom. 2:24
 - b. Church leader's immoral lives give Christ a black eye
4. When church leaders fail, they are to be publicly assailed
 - a. 1 Tim. 5:19-20 - no sneaking them out the back door quietly - (coverup/shut up/shhh!)
 - b. Ezra & Nehemiah publicly confronted leadership over money & marriage (Ezra 9&10 - Neh. 5:7; 23-29)
 - c. Gal. 2:11, 14 - even Peter gets a public rebuke when he was in the wrong

RELEVANT FOR PRESENT DAY

- Why did God preserve and write down these old, old stories? 1 Cor. 10:6, 11
 - Does this dusty old Book speak to today? YES!
 - Very ancient but very relevant.....even to the Baptist Farce and Mess
- Lesson -
 - When darkness is tolerated by the people of light the people of darkness mock
 - The world will capitalize on church leaders immoral lives.....attack
 - The small % in comparison to school/scouts doesn't matter - held to higher standard
- Back in the Day instructs us today
 - Church leaders can be unbelievers
 - *Checks & Chicks* are not a new problem. There is nothing new under the sun
 - There is a tendency to coddle the corrupt....go easy...be nice...sweep under
 - Church leaders are judged more strictly and they must have integrity
 - Football coach recently resigned over reading offensive words
 - Presidents/ Professors/Preacher in SBC stay on?????? Integrity in ministry
 - They signed up for the gig - great reward but great judgment for great damage
- Can a church leader be restored?
 - To membership....YES to leadership...NO I doubt it - disqualified
 - no longer above reproach when they bring reproach
 - Spurgeon - "....only if their repentance is as notorious as their sin" (wisdom)

Jude 24-25 "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand...."