



Love-Slaves

Chapter 13 – Sins Against Chastity

The preceding chapter was originally published as an article in 'The War Cry,' and in various Army periodicals in other countries. One result was that I shortly after received a communication from across the sea, in which a man wrote: 'I observe that you make a statement concerning Eli with which I do not altogether agree.' The writer says he does not consider Eli's appeal to his sons to be weak, as was stated in the article. Then he compares the sins of the sons of Eli (recorded in 1 Samuel ii. 12-17 and 22-25) with the sins of Samuel's sons (recorded in 1 Samuel viii. 1-3), and argues that the sins of Samuel's sons were more heinous than the sins of Eli's sons, 'one of which,' he writes, 'was a sin against morality, a natural following out of an instinct for the propagation of the race, and the other a violation of a ceremonial law. But the dealings of Samuel's sons constituted a violation of fundamental righteousness.

Then my correspondent questions why such terrible judgments fell upon Eli and his sons, while, so far as the record shows, Samuel and his sons escaped. Finally, he asks, 'Why this differentiation? Do you consider that it is a more heinous sin to go against forms and ceremonials in connection with religion than it is to deal unrighteously with your neighbor?'

This letter is private, but it raises the question of the comparative wickedness of sins against womanhood and chastity – a question that is seldom discussed except in private or in scientific or semi-scientific books which are not generally read. If I may, I wish to reply to it publicly, as follows: –

1. First, I have no lawyer's brief for Samuel. He is one of the very few men in the Bible of whom no ill thing is written. He seems to have been acceptable to God from his youth up, and since God has recorded no charge against him I can bring none. 'To his own Master he standeth or falleth.' I can only rejoice with him, as a brother, in his victorious life and walk with God. There is no record as to how Samuel dealt with his miscreant sons, but since he retained God's favor he



must have acted in harmony with God's will. I have no doubt, however, that his sons were rewarded according to their works, if not in this world then in the next, even though no mention is made of it in the Bible. (Ezekiel x. 10-13.)

2. As regards Eli, he seems to have been a kindly old man, but weak in his abhorrence and condemnation of evil, at least in his own sons. In 1 Samuel iii. 13, God tells us plainly His reasons for dealing as He did with the old man and his vicious son, 'because his sons made themselves vile (margin, 'accursed'), and he restrained them not' (margin frowned not upon them). He knew their evil; as judge and high priest he had the authority and power to put a stop to their evil doings, and, according to the law of the land, which was the law of God, it was his duty to do so, therefore he should so have acted. But all he did was to offer a feeble reproof. My correspondent objects to my describing it thus, and writes, 'To me it seems one of the most pathetic and moving appeals that an aged father could make to reprobate sons; he points out to them in moving language the difference between sinning against man and sinning against God.'

But Eli was not only a father – he was a ruler, clothed with authority and power, he should therefore have done more than make 'a pathetic and moving appeal.' He should have exercised all the authority and power of his great office to put a stop to the vile practices of his reprobate sons. 'He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of Me,' said Jesus. 'Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully (margin, negligently)', and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood,' said the Lord to His ancient people. (Jeremiah xlviii. 10.)

Eli might have saved himself, and possibly his boys, if he had acted, as he ought, promptly and vigorously, and as a righteous ruler abhorring evil and bent on protecting the sacred rights of society and the reverent worship of God. It is the duty of a ruler to rule diligently (Romans xii. 8) and impartially, and of a priest to insist on reverence in the service of God. Here Eli failed, so the terrible and swift judgment of God cut him and his family down, and the priesthood and judgeship passed to others.

3. As to the comparative heinousness of the sins of the two sets of men, the sin of Eli's sons was



far the worse. Let any right-minded man consider what it would mean to have the sacred shelter of his home invaded, and the purity of the wife or sister or daughter he loves assailed, and he must admit this. To rob a man of money is bad, but to rob a woman of her virtue is worse. To defraud a man in a court of justice and mete out to him injustice is vile, but to rob him of the sanctity of his home and the purity of his wife or mother or sister or daughter is far more vile. To debauch the future mothers of the race, and so to rob unborn children and generations yet to be, of the noblest of all rights – the right of pure, sweet, holy, reverent motherhood – seems to me to be like poisoning the wells and springs from which cities must drink or perish, and hence the supremest of all crimes.

All the moralities and sanctions of religion were despised and cast away, and all the sacred rights of men were trampled upon and imperiled by the apostate sons of Eli. They were set apart as the heralds and guardians of both religion and morality, yet their actions seem to have been the grossest insult to both God and man and the most flagrant neglect and violation possible of their high and sacred calling.

My correspondent writes that the offense of Eli's sons was 'a natural following out of the instinct for the propagation of the species,' as though that were some palliation of their crime. But among all nations, and even among savage races, there is a higher instinct that forbids men following the lower instinct, except lawfully, and among many tribes the punishment was death where this law was violated. Further, it was not the propagation of the species, but the gratification of lust, that moved these sons of Eli, as it is with all who break the law of chastity. The propagation of the species is the last thing such people desire, the one thing they wish to avoid.

The instinct and power of reproduction is the noblest physical gift God has bestowed upon man; it makes man a partner with God in the creation of the race, and therefore the prostitution of that noble instinct and power is the vilest and worst of all crimes, and has brought into the world more sorrow, shame, disease, ruin, and woe than probably all other crimes combined.



It is far more dangerous to the morals and ultimate well-being of society, to say nothing of the sin against God, for ministers of religion in exalted positions, such as were Eli's sons, to fall into open, flagrant, unblushing immorality and sacrilege than for a judge to cause justice to miscarry, wicked as that is. When will war against the unjust judge and condemn him, but what can they do when the sanctions of religion are destroyed, when the holy fear of God is lost, and when all the foundations of morality are rotted away – when their fathers are slaves of lust and full of corruption, and when the mothers of the race – who are our first and best teachers of righteousness and reverence – have no virtue? 'If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?' asks the Psalmist. The sins of the sons of Eli seem to me to be in the forefront of the worst sins and crimes mentioned in the Bible or committed among men.

'Do you consider that it is a more heinous sin to go against forms and ceremonies in connection with religion than it is to deal un-righteously with your neighbor?' asks my correspondent. I answer, No! But the sons of Eli were doing far more than going 'against forms and ceremonies in connection with religion.' They were violating the most sacred rights of their neighbors, as well as robbing God of that reverent service which He claimed and which was His due, and so were bringing the service and worship of God into contempt and undermining all morality at one and the same time.

In all this I am not forgetting nor condoning the wickedness of Samuel's sons, nor do I suspect for an instant that they escaped the due judgments of God. Why there is no record of His dealing with them we do not know. We do know, however, that the Bible declares the principles of God's moral government, and we may rest assured that in every instance He acts in harmony with those principles, whether or not we have a record of it.