

Broomfield



# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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## The Soil of Apostasy

### *Apostasy and Its Attributes, Part 1*

Christ said:

Matthew 24:10, “And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.”

Paul wrote:

1 Timothy 4:1, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;.”

We also read:

Matthew 26:31-32, “Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.”

Brothers and sisters, these passages have one thing in common, they all deal with apostasy.

Now what is apostasy?

Apostasy means an abandonment of ones faith. Literally it means to fall away. Now it can reference what I term the macro-apostasy of 1 John 2.

1 John 2:19, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

This form of apostasy occurs among people who at one time professed faith in Christ, and yet were never saved. It is the apostasy predicted of the last day.

And yet there is another kind. And that is the apostasy that we might call the micro-apostasy. Each of us is guilty of this micro-apostasy. It is the micro-falling away that we experience every time we sin.

Matthew 26:34, “Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.”

Accordingly, with this type of apostasy, there is always the anticipation of renewal and repentance.<sup>1</sup> For the “fallen” person has not ceased being a child of God. He has ceased being spiritually vigilant.

Now having made a distinction between macro- and micro-apostasy, this does not mean that micro-apostasy is a small matter. Indeed, as we shall see, if left unchecked it can ruin our lives.

This is the beginning of a study on the attributes of apostasy as described in 1 Samuel 2:27-36. In this passage we gaze upon God's response NOT to Eli's children — who were guilty of macro-apostasy<sup>2</sup> BUT to Eli himself — a genuine child of God who nevertheless had become hardened on account of years of unchecked sin.

Notice first the soil from which micro-apostasy arises — it is quite surprising!

## **Spiritual Privilege**

1 Samuel 2:27, “And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house?”

Here we read of an Old Testament prophet who came to Eli and made an incredible statement about Eli's heritage. It is traced back NOT simply a couple of generations to some prominent figure in his family line. BUT rather it is brought all the way back to the time before the Exodus and Sinai to Egypt when God's people were in bondage and in chains.

This serves to emphasize the fact that it was when Eli's family was in slavery that God chose to reveal Himself salvifically to them. Again notice the text. Here God roots His calling to the time when they were in Egypt IN BONDAGE to Pharaoh's house. Truly, nothing could speak of Eli's impoverished background better than this. In fact when we think of his father, Aaron, we could think of the time he fashioned an idol for the people's false-worship and then tried to down-play his offense. We read of Aaron trying to explain why he made the golden calf, “So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf” (Exodus 32:24).

When Aaron rebelled against Moses — God's leader and his brother — saying, “Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?” (Numbers 12:2).

Indeed, there are many less than flattering things that Aaron did which could have made Eli look with shame upon his ancestry. However NOTHING could compare to the fact that when God revealed Himself to Eli's family, they were NOT noblemen, princes, or kings whose position merited the call of God. NOR were they deep and devoted servants of the Lord. Rather, they were slaves bound to the service of Pharaoh's house! Yet God chose them, exalted them, and made them servants of God Most High!

And it is this choosing — this election — that serves as the Soil of Apostasy! In other words, it is not the soil of deprivation, indifference, persecution, poverty or harsh toil, as if this could explain why some Christians fall away from Christ. Rather, it arises in the context of richest blessing: God's Election of the Unworthy to be Servants in His Kingdom!

Now brothers and sisters, whether you realize it or not, Eli's background is ours!

1 Corinthians 1:26-29, “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are

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<sup>1</sup> Compare Matthew 26:12

<sup>2</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 2:25

mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.”

Do you understand what this means as children of God? With Aaron, I'm sure we could point to many foolish things that we have done and continue to do. We could point to past acts of rebellion. We could point to the ways we have failed the Lord — even this past week! Yet like Eli, the most shameful and embarrassing truth about our past is that at one time we were “In bondage to Pharaoh's house.” We were imprisoned to the kingdom of darkness. We were lost, helpless, hopeless. And yet in spite of it all, God delivered us to the utmost! Paul, after describing different forms of unrighteousness wrote this:

1 Corinthians 6:11, “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

Isn't this the most glorious truth?

Oh, let us bask in light of the glory of God who on account of His good pleasure. He set His love upon us. He chose us to be His children. He called us into His kingdom. He gave us a future and a hope! Such that today, our greatest lamentation — whether you realize it or not — is not the sin we struggle with, the weakness of our flesh, or the evil day in which we live. Our greatest lamentation is the fact that without the grace of God ALL HERE WOULD BE SLAVES!

In the words of John, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1). And yet according to the man of God who approached Eli, this also was Eli's testimony. Eli had so much for which to be grateful. AND YET HE FELL AWAY!

## **Eli's Calling**

Such is the Soil of Apostasy. And yet, this is but a third of it. Notice another one of Eli's Spiritual Privileges.

1 Samuel 2:28, “And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar<sup>3</sup>, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?”

You say, “I'm not sure this is such a big deal. Who'd want to be a priest in the Old Testament?”

The charge of a priest is one of the most significant callings in the Bible. Sure there might be kings who were called to rule. And there were prophets who were charged to teach the people. (And I am not talking down either of these offices). It is just that upon the priesthood was conferred the varied and multiple privileges of entering into the presence of God and speaking to Him on behalf of the people! The priest brought the sacrifice into the Holy of Holies. The priest was able to gaze upon the Mercy Seat — which was Christ! And the priest knew — day in and day out — the grace and mercy of God to forgive sinners.

## **Full Access to God**

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<sup>3</sup> Literally this could read “to ascend to my altar” because the dwelling place of God usually was elevated. Compare also Leviticus 9:22, Ezekiel 43:13-17, 1 Kings 12:33, and 2 Kings 16:12, 23:9. Robert Gordon made this observation, “the earliest regulation on the subject, in the “Book of the Covenant” (Exodus 20:22 – 23:33) actually prohibits the construction of altar steps from consideration of modesty (Exodus 20:26). The later relaxation of the rule may be connected with the sartorial modification mentioned in Exodus 28:42. Robert Gordon, 1 & 2 Samuel, Page 85.

In fact, this text emphasizes three privileges associated with the calling of the priest. Let's look at them one by one.

The first privilege of the priesthood was full access to God.

1 Samuel 2:28, “And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, **to offer upon mine altar**<sup>4</sup>, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?”

The altar was the dwelling place of God. Accordingly, there could be few callings greater than being able to approach in the flesh the presence of God<sup>5</sup> to worship!

In fact recall what happened to Adam and Eve after they sinned against God in the Garden of Eden, God kicked them out of Eden and placed the Cherubim and the flaming sword to guard the entrance.<sup>6</sup> Thus as fallen individuals, NO MAN even to this day can approach God in this state of sin and misery unless you are a priest!

And herein we see the privilege of a priest. They daily enter into the presence of God to worship!

Such privilege! Such a calling! And such was the gift given to Eli!

## Unhindered Prayer

1 Samuel 2:28, “And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, **to burn incense**, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?”

Incense in Scripture is the picture of prayer.<sup>7</sup> Aaron's family was called to offer incense continually to the Lord.<sup>8</sup> What a picture for the intimacy of prayer. And what a privilege also.

Isaiah 59:1-2, “Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”

One of the consequences of the fall is that a chasm now exists between fallen man and God. We can pray all day long, but because of our “iniquities,” God does not hear!

And yet, if you are a priest to you has been given the privilege not only to approach God but to pray with the confidence that He listens! Talk about a privilege!

## Ability to Fellowship

1 Samuel 2:28, “And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, **to wear an ephod before me**<sup>9</sup>? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?”

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<sup>4</sup> An alternate reading is this: “to go up to My altar.”

<sup>5</sup> Compare Exodus 20:24

<sup>6</sup> Compare Genesis 3:24

<sup>7</sup> Compare Psalm 141:2 and Revelation 5:8

<sup>8</sup> Compare Exodus 30:7-9; 40:5

<sup>9</sup> Compare Exodus 28:1-6

As we noted in relation to Samuel,<sup>10</sup> “to carry an ephod before Me<sup>11</sup>” as we saw in relation to Samuel<sup>12</sup> (cf. 1 Sam. 2:18), the Ephod was part of the dress of the priest.

The purpose of the Ephod among other things, together with the ark, it served as a kind of miniature tabernacle/temple.<sup>13</sup> And so wearing the Ephod, the priest understood that he ever and always was the dwelling place of God! And this is an incredible truth!

In Genesis 3 we read of the relationship that Adam and Eve enjoyed with God before the fall. We read of a time when Adam and Eve “heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Genesis 3:8).

Now the purpose of God walking in the garden was to call Adam and Eve to walk with Him and fellowship and commune with Him.

Yet, what do we read when Adam and Eve sinned? “And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden” (Genesis 3:8). This love relationship was destroyed. Now instead of coming out to greet the Lord when He walked in the garden, they hid themselves.

And such is the state of all men.

Romans 1:22-23, “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.”

And so now NO MAN CAN ENJOY FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD ON THIS SIDE OF THE GRAVE...  
EXCEPT A PRIEST!

As the priest wore the linen ephod, they became the dwelling place of God! This meant that at all times and in all places, the priest walked with God!

Brothers and sisters, do you see the privilege enjoyed by the priesthood? Such was the gift given to Eli!

So get this, not only was Eli's family elected to serve in one of the most coveted positions in the Kingdom of God when they were as nothing, but accompanying this were some of the richest privileges imaginable. Such was the calling to which Aaron, his family, and so Eli were appointed. These were privileges that Eli took for granted and so fell into sin!

Now family of God, with sobriety realize that this is our calling as well!

Speaking of the person saved by Christ, Peter wrote this:

1 Peter 2:9, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

Do you understand what this means?

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<sup>10</sup> See the sermon on 1 Samuel 2:18, April 17, 2005, [The Sincere Minister](#)

<sup>11</sup> Compare Exodus 28:1-6

<sup>12</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 2:18

<sup>13</sup> Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Harris, Archer, Waltke, Volume I, page 63

The priesthood no longer is confined to a family. It now is that to which each and everyone of us have been called in Christ. And thus, the blessings of full access to God, unhindered prayer, and the ability to fellowship with the Lord are what each and everyone of us this day in Christ enjoy!

In fact, it goes beyond these privileges.

Ephesians 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

Brothers and sisters, we cannot genuinely consider this truth without being left “undone!”<sup>14</sup> As priests of the Most High God, we enjoy untold spiritual privilege! And yet according to the man of God who approached Eli, such was Eli's testimony — AND YET AGAIN HE FELL AWAY!

How we must appreciate the soil of apostasy. As we have seen it is not the soil of neglect, kingdom poverty, or the like. It is the soil of the best that God has to offer.

Truly, if Eli could “fall away” having been chosen by God to serve in His house as a priest then we who similarly “are a royal priesthood” in Christ could just as easily fall away! And yet, there is one more element which makes up the soil of apostasy.

## Meeting Earthly Needs

1 Samuel 2:28, “And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? **and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?**”

At first glance this sounds rather strange. To Aaron and his family were allotted the “fire offerings.”

What are these?

These “fire offerings” reference the many sacrifices that the people of God were to present before the Lord for burning on the Altar of Burnt Offerings. And yet according to this text and others, God deigned to share a portion of that which was presented in worship with His priests for their support.

Leviticus 2:3, “And the remnant of the meat offering shall be Aaron’s and his sons’: it is a thing most holy of the offerings of the LORD made by fire.”

Numbers 18:8, “And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Behold, I also have given thee the charge of mine heave offerings of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel; unto thee have I given them by reason of the anointing, and to thy sons, by an ordinance for ever.”

From this perspective we see that the household of Aaron had it made! Unlike so many whose calling and support are different. For example, Paul was called to preach the gospel. Yet Paul’s support came from tent making.<sup>15</sup> The priest was to be supported on account of his calling! In other words, they could take their focus off of earthly concerns. They could forget about seed time and harvest. All they needed to concern themselves with was the service of God — and the Lord would take care of their needs!

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<sup>14</sup> Compare Isaiah 6:5

<sup>15</sup> Compare 1 Corinthians 9:6

Such was the incredible blessing that was given to Aaron, his family, and thus Eli! And yet in spite of this provision, Eli fell away! And thus we see finally another element when it comes to the soil of apostasy. It arises in the context of richest blessing: God's taking care of His servant's earthly needs!

You say well here is where the analogy falls down between Eli and us. For certainly the only "calling" today by which God provides for the physical needs of His servant is the calling of a pastor/preacher.<sup>16</sup>

Well, this isn't entirely correct. While it is true that if "anyone will not work, neither let him eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10) Nevertheless Christ said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). And so indeed with the call of the gospel comes the Divine promise that He is looking out for our needs!

## Feeding the 5000

Matthew 14 gives the story of the feeding of the five thousand. Toward the end of Christ's second year of ministry large crowds had come out to hear Him. It was now late and the people were too far from any town or village to acquire food. So lest they faint because they had not eaten anything all day Christ situated the people on the ground and fed them with five loaves and two fishes.<sup>17</sup>

And yet what do we read at the end of it? An important lesson for His disciples who likewise someday would engage in ministry.

Matthew 14:20, "And they did all eat, and were filled: **and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.**"

Do you see the point?

No doubt Christ's disciples were hungry and tired just like the multitude. They at times were thinking as they passed out the bread, "What about us and our needs?"

And yet what did they collect at the end of the day?

Not just twelve loaves of bread — one loaf per disciple — but twelve baskets full of bread.

Christ was teaching an important lesson: When one takes the focus off of his own needs and ministers and seeks Christ's kingdom that Christ will take care of the rest!

This is such a glorious promise given to each and everyone of us in Christ. And yet this was also a promise that Eli enjoyed. And yet, he nevertheless fell away from God into sin!

Do you see the incredible truth here about Apostasy?

Again it is NOT disadvantaged individuals — men and women who never really had it when it came to God — who fall away and lapse into sin. Rather it is the foolish and unworthy people given the best that God could give that lapse into sin. It is the priests of God Most High blessed "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" that fall away. It is servants well-cared for by God that apostatize. It is what each of us in Christ enjoy

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<sup>16</sup> Compare 1 Timothy 5:17-18 and 1 Corinthians 9:14

<sup>17</sup> Compare Matthew 14:17-20a

this day from the Father!

## **Avoid Apostasy**

So how do we avoid apostasy in our lives?

How do we, who have been given so much in Christ, protect ourselves from going the way of Eli?

- Fear, Hebrews 4:1
- Rely, Hebrews 4:2; 1 Corinthians 7:35
- Remember, Rev. 2:5<sup>18</sup>

To a church struggling with apostasy, Christ said, “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works” (Revelation 2:5).

Do you see it?

The implication behind this exhortation is that we fall away from God when we FORGET His mercy and TAKE FOR GRANTED the graces and privileges that God has given us in Christ!

In our next chapter we will pick up with verse 29 and discuss the end of Eli’s apostasy.

As we close, let us pray for the grace. Grace that we will never forget what Christ has done and given us. Grace to ever and always live in light of the mercy of God whereby we have been called as priests of the Living God!

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<sup>18</sup> Another verse toward this end is 2 Peter 1:9. After detailing the fruit of holiness Peter said, “But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, **and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.**”

Do you know why we are content when it comes to our sin? Do you know why Eli slowly fell into rebellion? It is on account of forgetting the blessing of God whereby He has (a) Chosen (b) Redeemed (c) Called (d) Commissioned and (e) equipped us unto service in the Kingdom of God.

And thus, may it never be that we are found looking lightly upon what Christ has done in order to save us. Let us never forget our purification from sin. For the moment that we forget about what Christ has done we will fall headlong into sin!



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## **About the Preacher**

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