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Eli's Decrease and Samuel's Increase

1 Samuel 3-4

Prayer: *Father, again I thank you for, like I said, the gifts that you've given to us. I thank you for the gift of your word, I thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit. And now this morning, we pray for that gift, we pray for that gift to be here, to be evident, that you would guide us into truth and make it of permanent value. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, we are again in the book of 1 Samuel. Last time out, we were focusing on Eli's wicked sons. Eli was Israel's high priest at a time when she was transitioning from being ruled by judges, many of whom were either wicked or incompetent or both. And Eli's sons, Phinehas and Hophni, were priests who served in the temple. They were priests who chose the path of wickedness.

We saw played out a statement once made by Tim Keller who said about sin, he said, "When you do sin, sin does you." And I said last time sin always presents a glide path that makes it easier and easier to commit and the unthinkable easier and easier to consider

and undertake. And in the case of Eli's sons it went from stealing from the Lord's sacrifices to sexually assaulting the women of the temple.

Their sin became so great that Eli said in *1 Samuel 2:25*: *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.*

You see, it wasn't God's will that Eli's sons would become wicked, that was their own choice, it was God's will to punish that wickedness, because God's judgment never involves active inducements to sin but instead it might involve the removal of grace that might have prevented more sin.

And having judged Eli's sons, God now turns his attention to Eli himself and he does it by sending a prophet. Verse 27 says: *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? 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.'"

You see, it was back in Egypt that God first established his priesthood and beginning with Moses's brother Aaron who was selected by God as high priest and then every subsequent priest was related to Aaron as was Eli who now hears his sins recounted by God through this prophet. It says: *"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?"*

You know it's easy to think that this accusation is kind of typical of the God of the Old Testament, always railing, always upset, always concerned about his honor, not like the kind, loving Jesus of the New Testament who would never say anything like *"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me"* except that's exactly what Jesus did say about himself in the New testament because Father and Son alike demand absolute loyalty.

And so would you, I mean, if you just reverse the roles, picture yourself as creator having appointed as your mediator and representative Eli the priest who now stays silent without lifting a finger as his sons disgrace and dishonor you. Mind you as I

appointed out last time when religious leaders treat God with disdain, they set the pace so that others in the rank and file see scorn and disrespect as something that God is now worthy of. Verse 30, it says: *"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.'"*

Well, God did indeed make that promise to Aaron's offspring but it was always understood as conditioned on their response. And God states the obvious as Eli's sons, they're still practicing the same religious rites, duties and honors as priests even though they give ample evidence that they despise the God that they're serving.

God's already stated that Hophni and Phinehas were worthless, that even though they were priests, they were unbelievers, they were also violent thieves and probably rapists, at best idolatrous fornicators who God says are worthy of death. And yet Eli could only muster up the weakest of rebukes. God states he's quite willing to honor those who honor him but not those who despise him.

And for failing to uphold God's honor even among his own sons, God says, Eli, you will pay a price. *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. 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.

I mean, at this point Eli was himself an old man but God says you're going to be the last of that line to enjoy that blessing. Furthermore his entire line will suffer because of his sin. Verse 33 says: *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.*

I mean God had previously blessed Eli's line with longevity, that blessing was going to cease and even those who did live longer than others would live to regret the direction that their family was now going in. So the prophet tells Eli that God was going to send him a sign proving that this awful prophesy will come true.

In verse 34, it says: *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. 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.

Now usually God sent a sign if the prophesy and its outcome were going to be separated by a period of time and in this case that's exactly what happened to Eli's sons, I mean, they both died far later in a battle that took Saul's life as well. And Eli knew that this was a sign from God and when it did happen, it was a sign that his prophesy was being fulfilled.

So God goes on to say that instead of the unfaithfulness of Eli's sons there would arise from that same priestly line a priest more given to faithfulness and that, too, happened many years later. But even more so, God is describing yet another high priest that Jesus himself would be when he came to take on flesh.

So then God ends this prophetic sentence by stating that poverty would now be the lot of Eli's family who had clearly before enjoyed worldly success. Verse 36 says: *"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.'"*

Well in the next chapter, chapter 3, we now see the scene shifting from Eli to the young boy Samuel. And we know Eli's clearly

descending and we see Samuel beginning to ascend, and it starts with a prophetic word that's now being extended to Samuel. This is *1 Samuel 3:1-3*. It says: *Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD in the presence of Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.*

Well, for many years now Israel has been in rebellion, they've stood far, far away from God and once again we see a principle involved. It's one that we've read in *James 4*. James says: *Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you*, and for years now Israel's done the exact opposite. They've rebelled, they've abandoned the God who has rescued him, and to no one's surprise during that period of time God has remained largely silent.

It says: *At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called Samuel, and he said, "Here I am!" And ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. And the LORD called again, "Samuel!" and Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the*

LORD had not yet been revealed to him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears."

Who wouldn't like to be Samuel? I mean, not once, not twice, not three times but four times God actually spoke audibly to Samuel. Apparently during the fourth time God physically came and he stood before Samuel calling out his name. We assume this was what is called a Christophany, that's a pre-incarnate appearance by the Lord Jesus Christ before he went to Bethlehem to take on flesh as a baby.

But I just want you to consider how gracious God is in speaking to this boy probably about twelve years old in the temple. I mean, over and over and over again the same God who thundered so violently at Mount Sinai that Israel begged Moses to just speak to God in their place for the sheer terror of his presence, that very same God is now gently and quietly speaking to this young man who is as yet clueless about the things of God. And each time he

speaks, Samuel mistakes God voice as coming from Eli who he's serving.

I mean, I'd love to have a view of how heaven was watching this unfold. God is speaking and an obedient but a misinformed Samuel, he's responding by going to Eli to see how he could serve him not once but three times until God finally enters the room that Samuel is sleeping in and he stands before him and speaks. Verse 7 says: *Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.*

Well Samuel was God's chosen vessel to turn all Israel back and yet at this point again probably he's about 12 years old, at this point he did not yet know the Lord. I mean, he was wise, he was attentive and yet he had still not fully come into the kingdom. Well that was about to change, and God was going to use Eli in the process. You know, it was John the Baptist who said to Jesus: *"He must increase, I must decrease,"* and now Eli's experiencing the very same thing. To his credit, Eli graciously acknowledges Samuel's role and he then advises him how to proceed in hearing God's voice. He's telling Samuel something he either neglected to tell his sons or something his sons refused to hear.

Well, how many times have you heard people say or for that matter

how many times have you said it yourself, "If only God would speak to me. I mean, life would be so much easier if I knew what God wanted." Well, Samuel is actually a picture of how to hear God's voice. He's young, he's not very qualified and God says he doesn't even know the Lord yet, but he's heard Eli's excellent advice and he puts it into practice.

Eli tells Samuel to say, "*Speak, LORD, for your servant hears.*" The most important part of that statement is that very last word "hears," because this type of hearing is very different from the earthly hearing that's actually just taken place that very night. I mean, four different times God has called Samuel and four different times he's indicated that he's heard something, but we all know that there's more than one way to hear. I mean there's the physical sense of having vibrations enter your eardrum and get interpreted by your brain so that hearing takes place, and then there's the type of hearing that clearly implies that not only has the voice been heard but the hearer himself is ready to respond, ready to obey.

Let's say you're running a landscaping crew and you give them a series of tasks to do and you tell these five guys what needs to be done and they all hear what you're saying but one guy picks up a rake and he starts raking as he says, "I hear you, boss." You know

that man has actually heard because the hearing has led to doing.

Years ago we looked at James as he spoke about that type of hearing. This is what James said in *James 1:22*. He said: *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.*

You see, Samuel was blessed to hear an actual voice because he was ready to do. But audible voices are not something any of us really expects. And so the question is, how do you actually hear God? Well, God himself insists that he has spoken and he tells us that his final spoken word was Jesus.

In *Hebrews 1*, he says: *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*

So God insists he speaks to us through Jesus and Jesus himself said

in Luke 11: *"Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"* And the hearing that Jesus is referring to is the "I hear you, boss" hearing that's determined to not just hear but to hear and obey.

In other words, God says that hearing and doing are so linked that if you have one and not the other, you have neither. And you hear first of all the word of truth through scripture, you hear it in word, in song, in praise, in prayer and in simple conversation. But we all know as well as anyone that we get to control the dial of what we're hearing. We can turn it up so that God is practically shouting or we can lower it so that it's barely a whisper, or we can ignore it altogether as hearers only often do.

We can also hear the word of truth like a doer. You see, doers who hear the gospel, they hear it like someone who's in a private plane who's being talked into landing by the ground control because the pilot has collapsed and he's hanging on to every single word and he's determined to not just hear it as clearly as he can but to do it because he knows his very life depends on it. That's how a doer hears the word.

But on the other hand you can hear the word of truth like a hearer alone. That's someone who sees obedience as being it's important

but frankly optional, someone who understands the gospel to say that Jesus paid it all and to insist on my doing the gospel is to engage in legalism.

Now, it's critically important to understand that James refers to such people who think that obedience to the gospel is optional, he refers to them as self-deceived. The simplest way to distinguish between doers and hearers is actually to think of them as fruit trees. Listen to what Jesus said in *Matthew 7*. He said: *"So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits."* What Jesus is saying is if you are truly hearing God speak, you will be producing fruit.

There are so many Christians that I know that would readily acknowledge that when it comes to fruit bearing, they're not all that healthy. I mean, they may be willing to admit that their lives don't really bear good fruit but they really believe that that kind of fruit is optional. And they believe that to say otherwise would be placing the burden of fruit bearing on us which would be the height of legalism. You know, here's what you have to do to get to heaven. You got to bear X-amount of fruit but if you

don't bear that fruit, you're diseased, you're going to be thrown into the fire. That misses the entire point of Jesus' illustration.

You see, fruit bearing is not something you have to do in order to earn the right to heaven. It's something that every healthy fruit tree does naturally. Hearing automatically becomes doing. It's not God saying, bear fruit or else; rather it's God saying, since you are a fruit tree, you will bear fruit. Trees that are thrown into the fire, they're not thrown there for refusing to bear fruit, they're thrown into the fire because good fruit was never in them in the first place.

Our good deeds don't bring us life, they merely indicate that life itself is already in us. But understand that good deeds themselves, that's not proof of life at all. Just look at the Pharisees, the Pharisees were just like that, I mean, their good deeds were not something that rose organically from within, they were outward expressions designed only to impress. I mean, they're fruitless and as phony as a \$3 bill.

If I went to Shop Rite and I purchased a bushel of apples and I glued each one to the branches of my oak tree, I haven't made a fruit tree, I've made an oak tree that has apples hanging on it and

all it ever produces is acorns. The Pharisees' deeds were glued on externally just like those apples because they were doers without hearing. They never listened for God and consequently they never heard him because their lives were so taken up with externals.

You see, when you're one of his own you become a doer not because you have to but because on the most fundamental level of your existence you want to. When Jesus says that it's only the doers who will enter the kingdom of heaven, you have to understand he's making a fundamental distinction between hearers and doers that is not based on religious activity. Legalism says, do A, B and C and you can somehow hope to earn the right to heaven. But that's exactly what Jesus is not saying. We tend to define "doers" by what they do, and Jesus defines "doers" by the heart attitude that they have.

I mean, the Pharisee who thinks religious activity is going to make him right with God is deluded. So is the easy believer who thinks he can accept Jesus as Savior and not as Lord. Both have something in common, both are deluded. Jesus is asserting a truth that James is reiterating about how easy it is to be self-deceived. James says: *"Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."* And once again, if it's not both, it's neither.

And Jesus describes the delusion of the religious and he gives us this terrifying vision of where that self-deception ends. In *Matthew 7:22*, he says: *"On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"*

Well, these are arguably the worst words that human ears could ever hear. And you have to understand what Jesus is saying here and what he is not saying. I mean, the day that Jesus is referring to, it's judgment day. The ones who are speaking, they've either been in hell already or they've been unconscious in the grave and they're standing before the judge for their final judgment. They're desperate to try to claim something they're not. And so they're speaking about the mighty deeds that they had done while they were on the earth: They prophesied, they cast out demons, they did great and mighty deeds. Well, they sure look like spiritual doers rather than simple hearers.

So they give a list of their bona fides hoping that somehow a list of spiritual accomplishments is going to sway the judge of their souls, and Jesus shuts them right down with a damning statement that has nothing to do with their deeds. He says: *"I never knew*

you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness." And Jesus makes no mention whatsoever of what they did, whether it was good, bad or indifferent. He just tells them, *"I never knew you."* And all the while they were prophesying and doing their mighty works and casting out demons, they were complete strangers to the God that they were claiming to worship.

I mean, contrast Jesus' words, *"I never knew you"* with the words that he speaks to his sheep. In *John 10*, Jesus says: *"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me."* In verse 27, he says: *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."*

You see, Jesus' statement stands this idea of doing alone on its head. Jesus had more than his share of people who believed that religious activity and good deeds of all sorts would justify them before God. He identifies that as the grossest form of self-delusion.

In *Luke 16*, it says: *And (Jesus) said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God."* As those lost ones were who were pleading their case before Jesus:

'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' Well, there was one great thing that they had completely forgotten to do and that was to establish a relationship with the living God.

See, there are two different and opposite ways that you can delude yourself when it comes to being a doer. You can put together all kinds of religious activities like the Pharisees did and hold them out like these lost ones did for their justification or you can delude yourself into thinking that just being willing to hear the gospel is the same as doing the gospel. And again, that's the delusion that James is after when he says: *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourself.* And it was the attitude of doing what you're hearing that Samuel had when God spoke to him. *"Speak, LORD, for your servant hears."* Then the LORD said to Samuel, *"Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. And I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them."*

You know, when God says, *"your ears are about to tingle,"* if you

look it up in scripture, it occurs multiple times, you know terrible judgment is coming. You see, Eli wasn't just a poor high priest, he was the culmination of Israel's rebellion that had gone on for many, many years. Eli was to decrease that Samuel would begin to increase.

Verse 14 says: *"Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever." Samuel lay until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli.*

I want you to picture Samuel. I mean, Eli is all the parent that he's ever known; he's his mentor, he's his guardian. And Samuel hears this dreadful punishment awaits him. He obviously never slept for the rest of the night knowing that he'd have to face him in the morning. It says: *But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." And he said, "Here I am." And Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also if you hide anything from me of all that he told you."*

Well, you can certainly make the case that Eli knew this was coming. God already told him that his judgment was imminent. So

Eli goes out of his way to give Samuel the opportunity to lay out the truth no matter how brutal it may be. *So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It is the LORD. Let him do what seems good to him."*

You know, it's to Eli's credited that he accepted God's judgment, not that he had any choice. And his response is similar to Job's when he said: *"The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."* I have every confidence that when I get to heaven, I have every confidence I will see Eli. I have no confidence that I'll see his sons. And the difference is that Eli actually heard God while his sons never did. And you can tell that in the way Eli accepted his judgment: *"It is the LORD. Let him do what seems good to him."* In Eli's response there's no blame shifting, there's no argument, there's no justification. It's a sad commentary that one of Eli's best moments was in how he accepted God's discipline for his refusal to discipline his sons.

And you know, we seldom speak about it but discipline, that is God's discipline, is part and parcel of the entire sanctification process. This is what God says in *Hebrews 12* about discipline. He says: *And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the*

one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

No doubt God's discipline of Eli seems severe to us but so does the discipline of some of God's saints. It, too, seems incredibly severe. I'll just give you a list of them. You know, David once foolishly demanded a census. God disciplined all Israel severely for it. Quote -- *"But God was displeased with this thing, and he struck Israel."*

Moses was told only to speak to that rock in the desert and it would bring forth water for all Israel but he was angry at Israel's lack of faith and in his anger he struck the rock -- quote -- *and the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in*

me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them."

Moses' sister Miriam along with Aaron, his brother, once criticized Moses' leadership -- quote -- *"and the anger of the LORD was kindled against them, and he departed. When the cloud removed from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, like snow. And Aaron turned toward Miriam, and behold, she was leprous."*

Elisha's servant Gehazi, he was struck with leprosy for trying to extract money from a miracle. King Uzziah was struck with leprosy for thinking that he could worship just like the high priest just because he was king. It says: *And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead! And they rushed him out quickly, and he himself hurried to go out, because the LORD had struck him. And King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death.*

And then we remember Uzzah. Uzzah with a good heart, went to steady the ark of the covenant as it was falling off a cart and as he touched it, God struck him dead. Quote -- *"and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God."* I

want you to understand something. These were not God's enemies. These were precious saints who I think we will see in heaven.

So what is this telling us about God's discipline? Well, it's heaven-oriented and it's eternity-minded. That's to say God always has the long game in mind and that long game is eternity itself. My guess is that if you were able to interview these folks in heaven and asked them if they felt their punishment was severe, if it was inordinate, they would no doubt say, no, not compared to eternity. We look at these punishments with a very narrow scope of fourscore and ten years, that's 90 years of life. God looks at lifetimes and the effect that they have on his kingdom with eternity in mind; and if anything, that should give us pause because God says his love for us would not preclude his discipline. And understand, in each case God either explained precisely what he was doing or he took them home where I'm sure an explanation was forthcoming. Either way it tells us something we quickly forget especially in this modern era that sees God as our "co-pilot" or "the man upstairs" or our "celestial buddy." He is none of those. We serve a holy God.

And it goes on to say: *And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of*

the LORD. And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

And the reason why the Lord revealed himself to Samuel is because Samuel was willing to hear him. Eli refused to hear when it came to his sons and it cost him dearly.

You know, it's sometimes jarring to read about God's discipline but it's critical to always see that discipline in light of the cross. You got to understand, the same power that could exercise devastating and sometimes deadly discipline even to those God loved was emptied by God so that he could join us as a fellow human. And he lived among us perfectly and then he endured the shame of being stripped naked, beaten and flogged and then finally nailed to a cross so that he could offer up his perfect life in exchange for our sin, so he has the right to discipline his sheep.

And moreover, no discipline of God ever came close to the level of pain and suffering that God himself was willing to endure on our behalf. And God's intent through that discipline is always for our good but it's for our eternal good.

So that raises a question, say, well, how do I if life is just being extremely difficult at some point or whether I'm under God's

discipline? Good question. I would say just ask the major figures like David or Moses or the minor players like Gehazi or Miriam. You see, whether they're larger-than-life figures or simple servants, they all knew precisely that they were under God's discipline because he told them. And we, too, can expect to know for certain if God is placing us under his discipline.

Now it may be light. I mean, think about Peter's discipline. Peter's discipline for denying Christ was simply a look from Jesus at a breakfast conversation that took place after his resurrection because that's all it took; or it may be severe, but it should never leave you guessing. And if you are under that discipline, I suspect you, just like Eli, will know it as well. And so be encouraged.

God says: *My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.* Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for who you are. I thank you for your word which paints oftentimes a far different picture of what the culture loves to paint. We serve a holy God. Sometimes we serve a fearful God, and sometimes that discipline is severe, but it's always with

eternity in mind. And so, Father, today, this morning, I pray if any of us are under your discipline that we would know without a doubt exactly why and where and what it is. I pray that you would give that grace, that strength, and along with that, the absolute assurance that discipline comes from love. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.