



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## *Sojourners and Pilgrims*

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Peter urges saints to regard themselves as sojourners and pilgrims. A sojourner is one who lives among aliens. Pilgrims live in a strange place, away from one's own people. Hostility is injected into this alien, strange place by the phrase, which war against the soul (1 Peter 2:11). He says the present dwelling place of Christians is in a strange, hostile land; a land where danger lurks in the form of fleshly lusts.

I know Americans who live abroad. They are literally sojourners. They are living in a country of which they are not native. The customs there are different from their homeland. Most of them live in relative safety from governmental persecution, but some do not. There is actual danger of deportation or threat of harassment while they live there. A remarkable thing about these people: they volunteered to live in this environment because they believe their being there would be helpful to the cause of Jesus. Living there is generally more rigorous and less comfortable than living in the USA. They have not forgotten their homeland and look forward to the time they can return.

Christians are living in a land which is not theirs and which is inhabited by people and influences which are foreign to them. How easy it is to forget that we are just pilgrims passing through. We are like Abraham who dwelled in tents (only a temporary home) while he traveled in search of the city which hath foundations (Hebrews 11:9-10). He was incessantly looking for this permanent dwelling place.

The world is out to make us citizens. Its efforts, sometimes subtle, sometimes bold, are to make us feel at home here. We need to slip into something more comfortable. Since we are going to be here for awhile we ought to at least enjoy being here. Don't be so uptight.

I'm afraid many saints are vulnerable to this persuasive song the world sings. Some have concentrated so hard on the here and now that they have all but been forgotten. We are surrounded with the gadgets of culture which dazzle and amaze our eyes and minds. The popular media praise modern paganism and denounce Christians with convictions as right-wing fanatics and bigots. Surely we do not want to be either fanatics or bigots. The only way to be relieved of those names is to cease opposition to the world's agenda, be silent and lay down our arms.

Dear brethren, when we become sophisticated and are comfortable in our surroundings, the enemy has won. Our lips will be silenced in opposition to wrong and closed for use to convert others. Our numbers will dwindle, our influence lessen, until we are gone. Vanished! Unless we remain conscious to the designations of sojourners and pilgrims and act consistently with the meaning of those terms.

## Eli: A Weak Leader

David Hartsell

Eli was the next to the last Israelite judge. He was not only a judge but he was also the high priest. As political and religious leader, Eli was in prime position to influence many to follow God. However, though Eli was personally good, he failed as a leader – first as a father and then as a judge.

Eli had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas that were priests. They were not dedicated to God but were extremely evil. They violated the sacrificial laws and were immoral with the women who assembled at the tabernacle. Their sins were so blatant that they caused many in Israel to abhor “the offering of the Lord.” **(1 Sam.2:12-22)** Eli reprimanded his sons for their evil behavior. “So he said to them, ‘Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people.’” **(1 Sam.2:23)** They ignored their father’s warnings and continued in their sinful ways. The text says that this was “because The Lord desired to kill them.” **(1 Sam.2:25)** Clearly, God’s nature does not want to kill anyone or does not wish anybody to be lost. The meaning here is that they had such an irreverent, defiant manner toward all godly things that The Lord was determined to punish them. The greatest lesson is that Eli failed in raising his sons. Training children involves modeling proper behavior before them. But that’s not all. We must teach them God’s will and discipline them too. Eli refused to restrain his sons from their wickedness. **(1 Sam.3:13)** He did not have the moral courage to do what he knew was right. Fathers are given the enormous task of raising their children in “the training and admonition of The Lord.” **(Eph.6:4)** Eli did not do this but we can.

Israel needed a strong leader during Eli’s time. The Philistines were threatening and Israel greatly needed God’s help. Yet, The Lord does not bless a people whose leaders show disdain for righteousness. You might say, “Eli was good. He followed The Lord.” It is true that Eli did not participate in any of the iniquities of his sons. Yet, he did not truly follow The Lord. In fact, God sent a prophet to tell Eli that his family was going to be punished because he honored his sons more than God. **(1 Sam.2:29)** Hophni and Phinehas were killed in battle with the Philistines. The Philistines captured the ark of God. Upon hearing of its capture, Eli, fell backward out of his seat and died. **(1 Sam.4:18)**

Too often as fathers we console ourselves by saying we don’t approve of what our children do. We are washing our hands of their evil deeds. Yet, we might not do the difficult work of standing against their sins. When we refuse to stand against evil, we fail as a parent and as a leader of God’s people.

## Our Study of Ecclesiastes

I hope you are enjoying the study of Ecclesiastes as much as I am. In the beginning of the book it is easy to feel like it is a depressing book or a book that just makes all pursuits of life to be useless, to not be worth our time. Yet what we are clearly seeing now is how empty all pursuits in life are vain if God is not at the forefront steering our life.

There are certainly a lot of things in life that perplex us. There are certainly a lot of directions in life that really lead to nowhere. Thankfully the Preacher is teaching us to trust God because God is in charge and does know what is going on. He does know where the vain things of life do lead and He gave Solomon wisdom to guide his heart while showing us many of life’s follies. (Ecclesiastes 2:3).

Our life is certainly prone to many ups and downs (Chapter 3) and time and chance has proven itself to be true in many of our lives (9:11). And the true vanity of life is to try to go through it without God and His guidance so always recall the conclusion... Fear God and keep His commandments.” This is the whole of your life!

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