



## Hophni and Phinehas

The lives of Hophni and Phinehas found in the first four chapters of **1 Samuel** illustrate the danger and tragedy that come from ignoring the voice of the Holy Spirit. Their father, Eli, was apparently the high priest even though the Bible does not specifically say that, for his sons and Samuel took their orders from him. Hophni and Phinehas mistreated the services of the sanctuary and the people who came to worship. Because of this the Lord spoke to Eli and warned him to correct his sons, but Eli, other than reprimanding his sons never did anything to really change the situation (**1 Samuel 2:22-36**).



The boy Samuel had been brought to Eli at the sanctuary in Shiloh to become a servant of God by his mother, Hannah, who had dedicated Samuel to Lord because God had miraculously allowed her to have a baby though she had been barren. While Samuel

was ministering to the Lord and to Eli God spoke to him one night and gave him a message for Eli. Again God was sending a stern warning to Eli concern his sons, Hophni and Phinehas. Instead of acting upon this warning Eli simply said, "It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him." **1 Samuel 3:18**.

Years passed, and yet God was patient and merciful with the wickedness of Hophni and Phinehas giving them ample time to repent. God was also very patient with Eli giving him time to repent of his refusal to correct his sons. But the day came when the Philistines fought against Israel, and during that battle Hophni and Phinehas lost their lives. Upon hearing this news and upon hearing that the ark of God had been captured by the Philistines Eli, being startled and overwhelmed by the bad news fell backward off his seat and broke his neck. The Bible adds that he was very old and very overweight which combined to make his injury fatal (**1 Samuel 4:1-18**).

If only Eli and his two sons had listened to the warnings God sent them. So much trouble and sorrow would have been prevented if they had not become stubborn against the Holy Spirit. Many people today are in danger of making the same mistake. God has spoken clearly to them in His word regarding right and wrong, and His will

for their lives. Yet, in spite of everything God has said to them, and in spite of what they know to be right many people continue to live the way they always have and ignore the voice of the Holy Spirit. Just as trouble come to Hophni and Phinehas because of their disobedience trouble will eventually come to everyone who stubbornly refuses to listen to God's voice.

God, through the Holy Spirit, is constantly trying to communicate to us. He has given us His Word, the Bible, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (**2 Peter 1:19-21**). It is the Holy Spirit that teaches us the truth the Bible contains (**John 16:13**), and it is the Spirit that brings the truth we have learned to our memories (**John 14:26**). The Bible is the standard by which all spiritual communication and experience is to be tested (**1 John 4:1, Isaiah 8:20, 1 Corinthians 14:32, Acts 17:11**).

The Holy Spirit also communicates to us by the conviction of our conscience (**Romans 9:1**). God has given some light to every person (**John 1:9**), and He has also given every person some faith (**Romans 12:3**). Even in nature



God's voice is heard and impressions are made on our conscience (**Psalms 19:1-4 & Romans 1:20**). "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them." **Romans 2:14-15**.

But the conscience is only a safe guide if it is educated correctly. A person can be convicted that something is right, such as Sunday keeping, even though the Bible says "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." **Exodus 20:8**. There is a way that seems right, but in reality is wrong (**Proverbs 14:12**).

Our consciences can become hardened and unimpressionable to the truth (**1 Tim. 4:2**). Or sometimes people are convicted that something is wrong such as having the assurance of salvation even though the Bible says, "That you may know that you have eternal life." **1 John 5:13**.

The only way a person can know whether or not their convictions are accurate is by the Word of God, the Bible. “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” **John 17:17.**

We are to “test the spirits, whether they are of God.” (**1 John 4:1**), and see whether the teaching or the conviction received is according to the Scriptures (**Acts 17:11**). The conviction of our conscience on the basis of truth by the Holy Spirit is the witness of the Spirit. **Romans 8:16** says, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

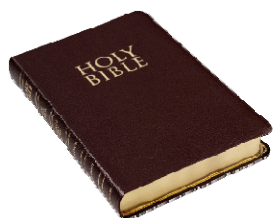
When it says “our spirit” it is referring to our mind, specifically our conscience. In **1 Corinthians 2:11** it says, “For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?” Obviously the “spirit of



the man” here refers to our mind. **Romans 9:1** mentioned above refers to the witness of the Spirit to the conscience. Therefore, the witness of the Spirit with our spirit means to have the conviction, the confident assurance of conscience, regarding what is right and wrong. In the case of **Romans 8:16** above it means to have the absolute assurance that we are children of God.

“And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin . . .” **John 16:8**. The sense of guilt we feel from a violated conscience when we have sinned is the Holy Spirit seeking to correct us as a loving Father would do (**Hebrews 12:5-11**). The law of God, the ten commandments, defines sin (**1 John 3:4**) both in principle and in action. God’s law witnesses, or testifies to us, and tells us when we have sinned. In fact, the Ten Commandments are referred to as the “testimony”.

The word “testimony” in Hebrew for the Old Testament and in Greek for the New Testament is the same word translated “witness”, so that witness and testimony could be used interchangeably. According to **Exodus 25:16 & 31:18**, the law, or testimony was put inside the ark. The ark then became known as the ark of the testimony (**Exodus 25:22**). Since the ark was housed in the tabernacle it became known as the tabernacle of the testimony, (**Numbers 17:7-8 & 18:2**).



As we compare our lives with the law of God, and the rest of the Bible (**Matthew 4:4**), the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin (**Romans 3:20, 4:15, 5:13 & 7:7**), and thus we are driven to exclaim, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver

me from this body of death?” **Romans 7:24.**

When a person is convicted of their sins and feels bad because of their past life, and the evil tendencies of the

present, this is proof that Satan’s delusions are being broken by the power of the Holy Spirit (**Ezekiel 36:26-31 & Zechariah 12:10**), even if they have never heard of Jesus (**Acts 19:1-6**).

If you are aware of the fact that you are a sinner and feel yourself to be “poor in spirit”, if you “mourn” over this, and are “meek” because of it, and you “hunger and thirst for righteousness”, this is proof that the Holy Spirit is working on your heart, and you “will be filled.” **Matthew 5:3-6.**

It is the hardened heart of a person that is not right with God that does not feel its sinfulness (**Revelation 3:17 & 1 Timothy 4:2**). The Holy Spirit strives with us (**Genesis 6:3**) trying to make us see our sinfulness and cause us to repent. When we refuse to admit our sins to God and confess them we are resisting the Holy Spirit, and making our hearts harder still (**Acts 7:51 & Hebrews 3:7-8**).

This is what the Egyptian pharaoh did when God commanded him to let Israel go. He refused to acknowledge God’s authority. Plague after plague fell until Egypt and Pharaoh’s army were destroyed. So shall it be in the end of the world. People would rather refuse to acknowledge the authority of God in their lives and confess their sins, even though it means death, than to accept forgiveness and salvation. To constantly refuse to submit to God and continue in sin is what the Bible calls grieving the Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 4:30**).



Every person in the world hears the voice of the Holy Spirit. Because God loves His children, all the children of the world, and because He is “not willing that any should perish” (**2 Peter 3:9**) He seeks to separate them from the sin that will destroy them.

The law of God, convicting us of our sin, drives us to Jesus (**Galatians 3:24**). In **Psalms 19:7** it says, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” Each person should meditate within themselves to see if their conscience is at rest, or if they know themselves to be a sinner in violation of God’s expressed will. “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.” **1 John 3:18-21**. Each person should consider whether their inner thoughts “accuse or else excuse” them (**Romans 2:15**). Peace comes when we listen to the still, small voice of God (**1 Kings 19:11-13**) and submit to His will.