

Remnant Life Church
February 15, 2015

“The Importance of the Motive” (Numbers 22)

- We look this morning at a man who, while you may not know his name, you do know that event that he experienced.
- Balaam is not a terribly familiar name so let's look at he was
 - The time period is nearing the end of the Israelite's 40 years of wandering in the desert
 - Moses' is coming to end of his life and the people will be crossing over the Jordan River soon to enter Canaan
 - The Israelites have been living in the favor of God (because they were being faithful) and they had already defeated the Amorites and the city of Bashan on the eastern shore
 - Now they are traveling through the plain of Moab and the king of the Moabites, Balak has become alarmed having heard of Israel's victories
 - Balaam
 - not of Israel but from Mesopotamia
 - He was a priest-diviner who had great fame for his powers of blessing and cursing with the Moabite king summoning him from approximately 500 miles away (although some scholars have tried to place him much closer to the scene)
 - He certainly knew of and had a relationship with God
 - So why then is he always referred to as a wicked man?
 - He was not a true prophet
 - He intermingled Judaism with idolatry (priest/diviner)
 - His motives (his heart) were wrong for what God had originally gifted him to do
 - What a person is capable of doing does not always reflect who they really are (caution) or what they may have become (fallen ministries)
 - Guard our hearts, our homes, our relationships, our churches
 - Pray and seek discernment from God
 - Use only the Word of God as the point of measure

READ – Numbers 22:1-13

- Balak sends his emissaries to entice and purchase Balaam's services
 - He starts off well saying that he will ask God what he is to do and then let them know
 - Many people start off doing the right thing but at some point get off track

READ – Numbers 22:14-20

- This is where Balaam gets into trouble
 - He actually says the right thing but does the wrong (v 18-19)
 - V 19 – he goes back to try and see if God would change His mind
 - Why? For the love of money (*I Tim 6:10 - For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*)
 - This is where he needed to be like Daniel
 - Interpret the vision of the hand writing on the wall for King Belteshazzar
 - (5:17) *Then Daniel answered the king, “You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means.*
 - This is where we begin to ask of Balaam - “what is his motive?”
 - Carefully consider vs 20
 - God allowed him to go but not with His divine approval
 - Sometimes God will teach us a very hard lesson by allowing us to have our own way
 - Balaam got permission but with limitations
- Balaam begins his trip
 - He is riding his donkey on this journey (not exactly first-class transportation)
 - V 22 – But God was angry as He went
 - God’s permission does not guarantee His favor
 - God will use whatever is available to first, accomplish His will and second, to teach us what we need to learn

READ – Numbers 22:21-35

- An unusual journey
 - The donkey is aware of what is going on
 - Balaam is so blinded by his greed that he is not sensitive to what God is doing
 - This great and powerful man – this wisest of men is more blind and foolish than the dumbest of the beasts
 - 3 times the donkey turns to the side because of the angel of the Lord standing in the way with a drawn sword
 - This was not a created or ministering angel but the presence of Jehovah
 - A drawn sword meant only one thing – blood would be spilt
 - After the third time the donkey speaks to Balaam and confronts him
 - Again Balaam is so focused on what he wants that he actually has a conversation with the donkey!
 - Now the angel reveals Himself and Balaam still cannot see
 - V 34 – IF you are displeased...?!?!
 - How much more did he need to know?

- The donkey got it!!!
- For the time being he does right but again has the wrong heart
 - The next 2 chapters recount his 3 oracles of blessing, instead of cursing, over Israel
 - But he still did not have a right heart in spite of what his spoken blessing
 - We read in the **31:16** that Balaam counseled the Midianites on how to make the Israelites vulnerable
 - Send them prostitutes from Moab
 - Have feasts and worship the pagan god Baal
 - God sent a plague of judgment and 24,000 people died (**25:9**)
 - Balaam also paid as he was killed during the battle with the Midianites when God told Moses to go and attack them for what they had done. (**31:8**)
- Balaam's name lives on in the NT like so many other prophets from the OT – but not in the same way
 - **2 Peter 2:15-16** - *They have left the straight-way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Bezer, who loved the wages of wickedness. But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey—an animal without speech—who spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.*
 - **Jude 1:11** - *Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.*
 - Cain – the first murderer; Korah – one of three who tried to raise up a rebellion against Moses in the desert
 - These are the men Balaam is associated with
 - **Revelation 2:14** - *Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality.*
 - Jesus speaking to the 7 churches through John – the church in Pergamum (PURG-uh-mum)
 - Balaam becomes a symbol for false teaching, scheming and plans of the wicked against God's people
- Balaam had every opportunity to obey God and use the gifts he had been given to serve
 - His motives for what he did were never right
 - Every time they undid what good had been done
- What are the motives for what you do, how you treat people, and most importantly, how you live for God?
- Invite and allow God to search your heart and reveal those things that don't allow you live your life with right motives