

Remnant Life Church

June 1, 2025

The Necessity of Right Motive

Numbers 22:1-35

- We look this morning at a man who, while you may not know his name, you do know the event that he experienced.
- Balaam, for many, is not a very familiar name, so let's look at who he was
 - The time period of this account is near the end of the Israelites' 40 years of wandering in the desert
 - Moses is coming to the end of his life and the people will be crossing over the Jordan River soon to enter Canaan by its eastern shores
 - The Israelites have been living for some time in the favor of God - because they were being faithful - and they had already defeated the Amorites and the city of Bashan which would have been obstacles to their crossing
 - 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 an Israelite but from the town of Pethor in Mesopotamia
 - He was a priest-diviner or sorcerer who had great fame for his powers of blessing and cursing
 - So much so that the Moabite king summoned him from, as many scholars believe, over 500 miles away
 - He was an odd mixture of good and evil
 - He certainly knew of and had a relationship with God
 - God spoke to him and he obeyed God
 - But there was not a full commitment to serving God with the gift he had been given
 - He is actually a perfect example of a person who will do the right thing but for the wrong reasons
 - IOW – the wrong motive
 - What I want to know, however, is if he knew God, why then is he always referred to as a wicked man in the NT?
 - First, he was not a true prophet
 - He was intermingling Judaism with idolatry (priest/diviner)
 - His motives (his heart) were wrong for what God had originally gifted him to do
 - This is why what a person is capable of doing does not always reflect who they really are or what they may become
 - This speaks to the reason why many pastors and even ministries fail that started out so well
 - We must continually guard our hearts, our homes, our relationships, our churches
 - Pray and seek discernment from God

- Use only the truth of the Word of God as the point of measure in your life

READ – Numbers 22:1-13

- Balak is the king of Moab and he is very concerned about the size and power of Israel
 - His solution to this problem is to be proactive
 - So he sends his emissaries to entice and purchase Balaam’s services
- Balaam actually 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, due to their motives, get off track

READ – Numbers 22:14-20

- This is where Balaam begins to get into trouble
 - He actually says the right thing but then does the wrong thing (v 18-19)
 - **V 19** – In the NIV there is a discrepancy in the translation that impacts the meaning of the verse
 - The NIV reads, *Since these men have come*
 - ITOLT, however, reads, *If the men come to you*
 - That means God is saying if they come, in other words, that will be a sign to you
 - But the men did not come, meaning Balaam did not have God’s permission, but he went anyway
 - He did the right thing by seeking God’s direction and will originally, but his true motives were revealed
 - He disobeyed God by going after the emissaries
 - 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 explains why God was angry with Him when it could appear that He gave Balaam permission
 - This is also where Balaam needed to be more like Daniel
 - Daniel was summoned to interpret the words written on the wall by the disembodied hand for King Belshazzar
 - And the king was offering a substantial sum of money to Daniel in order for him to speak for God
 - (**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 time that the question needs to be asked of Balaam - “What is your real motive?”
 - Is this not the same question we should always be mindful of as it relates to our actions, our desires, and even our words?
 - Carefully consider **vs 20**

- God allowed Balaam to go, but not for the reasons Balaam thought, and not with God's divine blessing
 - There are times when God will teach us a very hard lesson by actually allowing us to have our own way
- And so, Balaam begins his ill-advised trip
 - He is riding his donkey on this journey
 - This may not appear to be a first-class mode of transportation
 - But it was, in fact, a recognized symbol of spiritual and kingly authority
 - The prophet/king Zechariah rode a donkey when traveling (*Zech 9:9*)
 - King Solomon rode a donkey through Jerusalem (*I Kings 1:38*)
 - And of course, Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday riding on a colt or donkey (*Matt 21:7*)
 - Regardless of what the donkey symbolized, Balaam was in trouble
 - **V 22** – God was angry as He went
 - In this instance, God's permissive will did not guarantee His favor
 - God will use whatever is available to first, accomplish His will and second, and then to teach us what we need to learn

READ – Numbers 22:21-35

- Two things are certain on this unusual journey
 - Balaam is so blinded by his greed that he is not only disobedient but blinded to what God is doing
 - But the donkey was fully aware of what is going on
 - This great and powerful man used by God many times 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 is standing in the way with a drawn sword
 - Notice this was not a created or ministering angel but the very presence of Jehovah
 - And a drawn sword meant only one thing – it was going to be used
 - Well, after the third time, the donkey speaks to Balaam and confronts him and his actions
 - Notice that Balaam is so focused on what he wants that he actually has a conversation with the donkey!
 - If your dog or cat at home suddenly started a conversation with you, I'm thinking you would most likely have a different reaction!
 - Then the angel reveals Himself, and Balaam still cannot see
 - **V 34** – *IF you are displeased...?!?!?*
 - How much more did he need to know?
 - Even the donkey got it!!!
- For the time being, Balaam does the right thing, 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 the right heart in spite of his spoken blessing

- We read in **31:16** that at some point, Balaam counseled the Midianites on how to make the Israelites vulnerable
 - Have feasts and worship the pagan god Baal
 - As a part of that, invite the Israelites to participate in the sexually immoral acts that were associated with that type of worship
 - And because the people sinned in that way, God sent a plague of judgment and 24,000 people died (**25:9**)
 - Balaam also paid a great price 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 type of 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
 - But his motives for what he did were never right
 - He followed the letter of God's law, but violated the spirit of God's love
 - His actions were devoid of love, justice, purity, and faith
 - And every time, his actions 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?

- God always sees past the acts of what we do and the words we say, straight into our hearts
- He knows what your true motives are
- To grow and mature as a Christian means that not only are your actions and words honorable but your motives align with what you do and say
- That is how we honor God with our whole lives!