

# Balaam and the Donkey

Sermon by Andy Sochor

Text: Numbers 22:15-35

Balaam is mentioned three times in the New Testament. Each time false teachers were likened to him – motivated by greed (2 Peter 2:15; Jude 11) and led God’s people astray (Revelation 2:14). The most memorable incident in his life was his argument with a talking donkey (Numbers 22:21-31). His character was on display in this event. There are some important lessons for us to learn in this.

## He Was Eager to Do His Own Will

- Balak sent leaders to call for Balaam to curse the people of God (22:1-17) – God told him to go IF he was called (22:20), but he rose early in the morning and made plans to go first (22:21)
- The way that seems right to man leads to death (Proverbs 14:12) – some rush “headlong” into this (Jude 11)
- We must be eager to do God’s will (James 1:19-22) – listen to it and practice it

## He Was Blind to God’s Punishment

- The angel stood against him to kill him for his rebellion, but he didn’t see it (22:22, 31) – yet the donkey saw the angel and tried to avoid it (22:23, 25, 27)
- We are warned about God’s punishment for sin (Romans 6:23; Hebrews 11:26-29) – His word defines sin (1 John 3:4; Romans 7:7); yet we can’t avoid sin if we don’t know what God’s word says is sin; this lack of knowledge leads to destruction (Hosea 4:6)

## He Was Angered by Roadblocks

- The donkey was helping by stopping him, but he saw it as an annoying delay (22:23, 25, 27)
- Roadblocks to sin don’t need to be divinely-given – the nature of the roadblock will depend on the nature of the sin; work keeps us from idle sins (1 Timothy 5:13-14), isolation keeps us from peer pressure (1 Corinthians 15:33), lack of extra money could prevent us from the casual use of alcohol, etc.
- Roadblocks like these can be frustrating in themselves – work, isolation, tight budget, etc.; but any such roadblock should cause us to pause and reconsider

## Following Sin Turned Him into a Fool

- How ridiculous it would have been to see him yelling at and arguing with a donkey (22:28-29) – he accused the donkey of making a mockery of him; yet he was yelling at a donkey, making a mockery of himself

- Sin makes a mockery of us – principle of wine (Proverbs 20:1); sin desires to rule over us (Genesis 4:7; John 8:24); we often do what we know is wrong (Romans 7:14-20), not due to a totally depraved lack of free will, but simply because there is an opportunity to sin (Romans 7:11) and we fail to take the way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13)

### **He Could Do ONLY What God Had Said**

- He finally could go, but he was only to speak what God told him to speak (22:34-35, 38)
- We must speak/teach only what has been revealed in God's word (1 Peter 4:11) – no changes to it (Galatians 1:6-9)
- We must do only what is authorized in His word (Colossians 3:17; James 1:22) – doing what is contrary to or unauthorized by His word is sin (1 John 3:4; Matthew 7:22-23)

### **Conclusion**

- There are many memorable accounts in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament – these are written for our learning (Romans 15:4)
- Let us learn from Balaam and the donkey – be eager to do God's will and not our own; follow His word in all things