

Following God's Will vs. Following Personal Desires: Lessons from Balaam

The Israelites were now camped in the **plains of Moab**, preparing to enter the Promised Land. But instead of engaging them in battle, **Balak, the king of Moab, tried a different approach—he sought to curse them.**

He sent messengers to **Balaam**, a prophet who had a reputation for **powerful blessings and curses**. Balak wanted Balaam to place a curse on Israel so that Moab could defeat them. What unfolds is **a powerful lesson about obedience, compromise, and God's sovereignty.**

1. Obedience vs. Compromise: The Danger of Ignoring God's Clear Commands

When Balak's messengers arrived, **Balaam inquired of God, and God gave a clear answer: "Do not go with them. Do not curse these people, for they are blessed."** (Numbers 22:12).

Balaam initially obeyed and sent the messengers away. But when Balak sent **more prestigious messengers** and promised **greater rewards**, Balaam didn't immediately refuse. Instead, he **went back to God, trying to get a different answer.**

Application: Are You Trying to Change God's Mind?

- **God had already spoken clearly, but Balaam kept pushing for a different answer.** Do we do the same thing?
- **Are you asking God to change His will to fit your desires?**
- **Are you ignoring His clear direction because it's not what you want to hear?**

God does not contradict Himself. **When He has spoken, we need to obey—** not go back and ask again, hoping for a different answer.

2. When God Allows What He Doesn't Approve

Finally, God told Balaam:

"If the men come to call you, rise up and go with them; but only say what I tell you." (Numbers 22:20)

Balaam took this as **permission** to go, but **he wasn't truly in God's will.** As soon as he set out, **God's anger burned against him.**

Application: Just Because God Permits Something Doesn't Mean He Approves of It

- Sometimes, God allows us to do what we insist on—even when it's not His best for us.
- Are you forcing open doors that God has closed?
- Are you moving forward with something just because God hasn't stopped you, even though you know it's not His will?

If we keep pushing, **God may let us have what we want—but we will also face the consequences.**

3. The Talking Donkey: When God Tries to Get Your Attention

As Balaam traveled, **his donkey saw an angel blocking the way and turned aside.** Balaam, blind to the spiritual reality, **beat the donkey three times in frustration.**

Finally, **God opened the donkey's mouth**, and it said, *"Why are you beating me? Have I ever done this to you before?"* (Numbers 22:28).

Application: Are You Ignoring God's Warnings?

- Are you so focused on your plans that you can't see when God is trying to stop you?
- Are you frustrated because things aren't going your way, when in reality, God is protecting you?
- Are you treating people harshly because you're blinded by your own ambitions?

Balaam was so **determined to get what he wanted** that he was **blind to God's warnings.** Even when confronted by an angel, **he still wanted to move forward.**

Is there something in your life that God is warning you against, but you're ignoring the signs?

4. The Temptation of Power and Greed

Balak **offered Balaam riches, power, and prestige** in exchange for cursing Israel. Balaam **claimed** that he could only say what God told him, yet **he still entertained the offer.**

Even though he didn't immediately curse Israel, **his heart was not fully devoted to God.** Later, in Numbers 31:16, we learn that Balaam **advised Balak to use Moabite women to seduce the Israelites into sin—an act that brought God's judgment.**

Application: Are You Serving God or Seeking Personal Gain?

- Are you holding onto God's Word while still trying to get worldly rewards?
- Are you more concerned about money, influence, or power than obeying God?
- Are you compromising in small ways for personal gain?

Balaam's story reminds us that **a divided heart will always lead us away from God's will.** We must choose: **God's way or our own.**

5. You Can't Curse What God Has Blessed

In the end, Balaam **was unable to curse Israel**—every time he opened his mouth, he ended up **blessing them instead.**

"How can I curse whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce whom the Lord has not denounced?" (Numbers 23:8)

This is a powerful reminder that **no enemy, no spiritual attack, and no opposition can change what God has blessed.**

Application: Trust in God's Protection Over Your Life

- If you are in Christ, you are blessed. No enemy can steal what God has promised you.
- Don't be afraid of opposition—if God is for you, who can be against you? (Romans 8:31).
- Rest in the truth that God's blessings cannot be reversed by man.

Final Takeaways from Balaam's Story

1. **Obey God the first time.**
→ If God has spoken clearly, stop pushing for a different answer.
2. **Don't force your own way.**
→ Just because God allows something doesn't mean it's His best for you.
3. **Pay attention to God's warnings.**
→ If obstacles keep blocking your way, maybe God is trying to get your attention.
4. **Be careful of divided motives.**
→ You can't serve both God and personal ambition at the same time.
5. **Trust that God's blessings are secure.**
→ What God has blessed, no one can curse.

Are You a Balaam or a Faithful Servant?

Balaam had enough knowledge of God to hear from Him, but his heart was still drawn to personal gain.

Where do you find yourself today?

- Are you fully trusting God's will, or are you still hoping for another answer?
- Are you pushing forward despite obstacles, when maybe God is telling you to stop?
- Are you seeking God's kingdom first, or are you still drawn to the rewards of the world?

Balaam's story is a warning—but it's also an opportunity to realign our hearts. Let's choose to walk in obedience, trust God's plan, and avoid the compromise that led Balaam away from God's best.