

Killing the Messenger Contentiously Contending -8

by Anton Bosch

The sermon warns against the dangers of rejecting God's messengers and emphasizes the need for humility and openness to correction.

Scripture: Numbers 22:9

Topics: "Humility And Correction", "Discernment And Obedience"

Description

Anton Bosch emphasizes the importance of receiving correction and admonition with humility, highlighting how some 'watchmen' with bad attitudes have discredited the ministry of discernment by rejecting correction and turning against those who bring balance. He warns against rejecting messages that challenge us, using the example of Balaam who fell into disobedience by refusing to accept the word that did not please him. The sermon underscores the need to listen to the Lord's voice through unexpected messengers and events, urging listeners to seek forgiveness for pride and un-Christlike attitudes that may have caused harm.

Transcript

In case you get the impression from the previous articles that I am against any form of apologetics or discernment ministries - I am not. The ministry of a watchman is vitally important to the church. But, unfortunately, many have brought discredit to a crucial ministry by their bad attitude.

Even sadder than the fact that those with bad attitudes have brought disgrace to all who stand for the truth, is the fact that these same "watchmen" often cannot receive correction from others. It seems they often regard themselves as being above correction and the only custodians of Truth. When someone dares bring balance or correction they immediately turn their sword on the messenger and seek to discount the one whom the Lord has used to speak to them.

Some even feel that the admonition is proof of the fact that they are "suffering for the faith." But the Scriptures are clear that it is only when our suffering is wholly for His sake that we can claim to be martyrs. When we suffer for our own bad attitude and misdeeds we only get what we deserve (1Peter 4:15, 3:16, 2:20). It seems to me that a lot of the attacks that come against "defenders of the faith" is deserved. And, sadly, nothing can repair the damage done by such loose cannons.

Those on both sides of the fence seem to find it hard to accept correction. Those who claim to be "defenders of the faith" should be more sensitive to correction than the heretics. Sadly, it seems that both sides resist the admonition of the Lord through His servants.

We would all find it very easy to receive the rebuke if the Lord Jesus Himself appeared to us and spoke the words. But, He mostly chooses to speak through the most unlikely representatives. And because the message does not come in the package we expect it to, we reject it with contempt and often kill the messenger. We may not kill them physically, but we kill their reputations and sometimes their entire ministries.

God spoke to Israel through the thunder and the lightning. He spoke to Balaam through the ass, to Israel through unpopular prophets and to the Jews through the social misfit clothed in camel skins called John. They were all rejected. When Jesus came as a carpenter's son, Nathaniel echoed the views of the nation when he said: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46, 7:41).

It seems that as humans we are very good at finding a reason to reject and even kill the messenger (Matthew 23:37-39). Rather, we should be listening to hear the voice of the Shepherd who speaks and seeks our attention in the most unexpected ways.

Balaam became the archetype of a prophet gone wrong. Three times the New Testament refers to him as an evil example of a prophet for hire. But it was not always so. There was a time when he had a relationship with the living God and when the Lord spoke to and through him (Numbers 22:9-13). So how did he sink so low as to actually advise the Moabites to commit adultery with the Children of Israel and thus incur the wrath of God? By rejecting the message of the Lord. Numbers 22 records how it happened:

First the Lord spoke to him directly (v12) but the word did not suit Balaam. This is the first step towards apostasy - rejecting the word because it does not please us. This is why the seeker-friendly churches are packed and those who preach the Truth are empty - people simply do not want to hear a message that confronts them or their sin. Ahab had collected a retinue of prophets who all told him what he wanted to hear. But he despised the one man who told the truth (1Kings 22). We all glibly accept that all our ways are pure (Proverbs 16:2) and cannot believe that anyone dare suggest otherwise. Apologist and heretic both claim immunity and infallibility under the banner of "the Lord's anointed".

As a result of Balaam's disobedience, and in a very short time, the donkey saw what the prophet could not (Numbers 22:23). How sad when even animals and children can see what we cannot. The donkey then turned out of the way. This was out of character and we should take heed to every event that comes our way that is out of the routine. It may just be the Lord's way of getting our attention. Instead we do just what Balaam did; we fix the problem with brute force. Rather, we should dismount and ask the Lord whether He is trying to get our attention.

Balaam beat the poor animal and got his own agenda back on track (v25). Soon after, the donkey crushed Balaam's foot against the wall. The pain should have gotten his attention. It is sad to watch people hurting because the Lord is trying to get their attention. But it is tragic to see them pull out the whip and beat the very thing that the Lord has used to speak to them. As a preacher I have tremendous sympathy for that poor donkey having been on the receiving end of the same treatment many times.

Next the Donkey lay down under Balaam. If we were to translate this into modern English it would read: "then the wheels came off". This time Balaam did not use the whip but took his staff to the poor animal in

an attempt to kill it. (He wished the rod had been a sword.) How violent do we become towards those who are only trying to help us! When the wheels come off our health, finances, relationships, ministry, etc., we need to take heed - it is very likely the Lord trying to get through to us.

In the end the donkey spoke to Balaam in an audible voice. Surely that should have grabbed his attention, but still he would not listen. Yes, the Lord speaks through the most unlikely mouthpieces but nothing gets the ear of those who do not want to hear. Balaam was angry with the very thing that the Lord had sent to save his life (v33). Whenever people react to the preaching or reading of the Word with anger, it is a sure sign that they heard, but refused to receive the message. How sad.

Finally the Angel of the Lord Himself appeared to him and spoke to him. Still he did not listen but continued on his merry way. Five times the Lord tried to get his attention but his continued disobedience, ambition and greed had made him deaf.

Do not despise the warnings because the instruments that bring them are not esteemed in your eyes. Listen, because the Lord speaks through the most unlikely people, events and things.

If this series has angered, confronted, convicted or been a reproach to you, please pray that the Lord may help you hear what it is He is trying to say. The fact that you have stayed with us through the entire series is a good sign; but now you may need to ask for forgiveness for pride and for those you have hurt, slandered or even turned away from the truth through an un-Christlike attitude. You need to seek the Lord's forgiveness first, and then the forgiveness of those you have wronged.

"He who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25).

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