

Backslidings of Balaam

by Charles Banna

The sermon teaches us the importance of listening to God's clear will and honoring Him in all aspects of life, as seen in the story of Balaam's backsliding.

Duration: 1:13:54

Scripture: Numbers 24:16, Job 12:16, Ecclesiastes 7:26, Matthew 6:24, 1 Corinthians 10:12, 1 Timothy 6:9-10, 2 Peter 2:15

Topics: "Covetousness", "Spiritual Pride"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the dangers of falling into covetousness and pride, using the example of Balaam who was led astray by these sins. It highlights the importance of fleeing from the love of money and seeking to please God to avoid being deceived and falling into destruction. The message urges believers to be vigilant, self-judgmental, and to guard against the snares of the world, especially in relationships, by seeking to please God above all else.

Transcript

When we come to the end of the year, especially when we enter December, you sense a feeling in the air that in the neighborhood you'll hear songs related to the festive season, and you'll see stars outside homes. And in Matthew 2, verse 2, the wise men, when they came to Bethlehem, when they came to Jerusalem, they asked, where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east, and have come to worship him. These wise men saw the star in the skies, and they thought this is an unusual star, and they wanted to find out what it is all about.

And then they came to know that this represents some very important person. And they came and asked, where is he who has been born king of the Jews? You see, nobody in the world has ever been born as king. They were all born babies, and they grew up, and they were called prince, and then they were coronated, and then they became kings.

But here is someone who is born king. This is unusual, which never happened in the history of the world. And there was a prophet in the Old Testament who prophesied about this star.

Can anyone under 30 years tell me which prophet was that? Young people, under 30 years. Anybody? Yeah, turn with me to numbers. Chapter 24, verse 17.

In the middle of that verse it says, A star shall come forth from Jacob, and a scepter shall rise from Israel, and shall crush through the forehead of Moab and his enemies, etc., etc. So it was spoken of by the prophet Balaam. Many of us think that Balaam was a false prophet.

I too thought about it when I was young in the faith. But Balaam was not a false prophet. He became one, just like Judas became a betrayer.

He was not a betrayer when Jesus chose him. He was as wholehearted and sincere as anybody else, as the rest of the eleven. But he became one because his backsliding began gradually.

So also this prophet Balaam, I will run you through some of his prophecies. He has made some excellent prophecies concerning the people of Israel and concerning Jesus. Maybe you could turn to 23, chapter 23, verse 19.

It says, God is not a man that he should lie, nor a son of man that he should repent. He has said, and has he said and will he not do it? Or has he spoken and will he not make it good? And verse 21 he says, he has not observed misfortune in Jacob. You see, even though Israel was in the wilderness for 40 years, all the time sinning, but still prophetically, this prophet says he has not observed misfortune or iniquity in Jacob.

You see the kindness and goodness of God there. How good the Lord has been and he has overlooked all their iniquities and forgave all their sins. Like the Sami says, bless the Lord of my soul, who forgives all your iniquities and heals all your diseases and crowns your life with glory and honor and things like that.

He says he has not observed misfortune in Jacob, nor has it seen trouble in Israel. The Lord his God is with him and the shout of a king is among them. God brings them out of Egypt.

He is for them like the horn of the wild ox. I wanted to note this verse 23. For there is no omen against Jacob, nor is there any divination against Israel.

You see, this is one of the rare verses that we read in the Bible where it says black magic, divination, shall not affect God's people. Do you believe that? If you are a born again child of God and have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus, there is a hedge around you and around your family and around your property, like we read in the book of Job. That is something that the devil gave away when he was having a conversation with God.

If it was not so, I wouldn't have believed that. We wouldn't have got that verse. But Satan just gave away that vital information that God has put a threefold hedge around his people, around your life, around your family life, and around your property.

God has put a threefold hedge which Satan cannot break through unless it is permitted by God, like God gave permission in the case of Job. Such wonderful prophecies he made, and also he made here in 24, 17, we saw about the star and so many things. Maybe you can go home and read about all these things.

But I was thinking how this man's backsliding began. You know, he had such a good reputation that he was known. He was, by the way, living in a place called Petor that is in present-day Iraq.

And this man Moab was very close to Canaan, a place Moab and Medianites, they were close by, side by side. And one of their adversaries, Amorites, had already conquered Moab and taken much of their land.

And Israel, in chapter 21, we read before Balaam's episode, we read that Israel had already conquered Amorites and also Medianites.

We read about that in verse 21 of chapter 21 onwards up to 35. And when King Balak, the king of Moab, heard this, that his conquerors, those who had defeated him and took away his kingdom and property and all that, when they were defeated, this man got so afraid. He thought that these guys are no match for anybody here on this earth.

And you see the verse 22, chapter 1, it says, Then the sons of Israel journeyed and camped in the plains of Moab beyond Jordan, opposite Jericho. And Balak, the son of Zippor, saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. He was in great fear because the people, for they were numerous, and Moab was in dread of the sons of Israel.

And Moab said to the elders of Median, see they make an alliance with their neighbors, Medianites. Now Moab and Medianites, they come together. And they say, now this horde will lick us up like an ox licks up the grass of the field.

And he was so scared and he sent messengers to Balaam, son of Beor. You see, he was in Iraq and these people are in Moab, near Moab. It is now about 606 or 650 miles journey.

And if one had to travel on the mule at the rate of 50 kilometers a day or say 30 miles a day, it would take them at least about 20 days to travel. And this guy had 20 days to think about it and when they went back another 20 days or another 20 days on the way when he was going, you know that story. I don't have to go through all that.

You go home and read that. And when Balak sent some important people, both from Median and Moab, some VIPs with some good reward. You know, he had such a great reputation.

You see, he says here in verse 6. Now, therefore, please come curse these people for me since they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I may be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom you bless is blessed and he whom you curse is cursed.

See this Balaam had such a reputation that whomsoever he cursed was cursed. Whomsoever he blessed was blessed. And his reputation had gone far and wide.

And so the elders of Moab and the elders of Median departed from there with the fees of divination in their hand. And they came to Balaam and repeated Balak's words to them. And see what Balaam says.

And he said to them, spend the night here. And I will bring word back to you as the Lord may speak to me. I don't think there was any prophet in the old covenant where he could so confidently say, I will let you know what God has in mind or I will let you know God's will by tomorrow morning.

Some prophets prayed, even Elijah prayed seven times for the rain to come on Mount Carmel. But this man says just lodge here for tonight and tomorrow morning I will tell you what God speaks to me. And in few translations it says here, spend the night here and I will bring word back to you as the Lord may speak to me.

It is written here in some translations it says, I will ask the Lord again. When that word again comes, I was thinking probably God may have already pre-warned him that something is going to come. Or maybe this

embassy is going to come to you to ask you to go with them, but don't go with them.

Maybe God had already told him. That's why he uses the word again, which is not there in the NASB. And he tells them, I will tell you by morning and leaders of Moab stayed with them, with Balaam.

And then God came to Balaam and said, who are these men with you? And Balaam said to God, all that he repeats. And then verse 12, God told him, do not go with them. You see, this was the perfect will of God.

God's word is cut and clear. He said, do not go with them. Well, stop.

And what did he do? He got up in the morning and called them and he said, go back to your land. For the Lord has refused to let me go with you. What does that mean? The Lord has refused to let me go with you.

It means the Lord has not given me permission, much that I would have come with you, wish that I were with you. But you see, my boss is not giving me leave to go with you. Like some children say, I would like to come with you, man, but my parents are not allowing.

And the leaders of Moab went, arose, and went to Balaam and said, Balaam refused to come with us. They didn't tell the answer properly. They didn't say that Balaam's God refused to let him go.

He said, Balaam refused to come with me. By that he understood, Balaam understood that probably the fees or the reward that I sent was not enough to fetch him. Or probably these VIPs that I sent were not noble enough.

So what he does, he sends another contingency, another embassy, saying, he says in verse 17, for I will indeed honor you richly and I will do whatever you say to me. Please come then, curse these people for me. It is as if he is giving a blank check.

And he is saying, you write your fees. Come, not only that, I will give you, I will promote you to a high place in my kingdom. Come, let nothing hinder you.

He says, let no one, let nothing hinder you. Come. And when the reward was becoming greater and greater, these guys, you know, Kanuchians were becoming less and less strong.

He was weakening because of the money power. And then we read, they come again. And in verse 19, a second batch comes.

And he says, now please, you also stay here tonight. And I will find out what else the Lord will speak to me. Would you like to go and ask the Lord what else he wants to speak to you? When he has already told you, oh man, what you should do.

Do not go with them. Full stop. You should have listened to that and said, hey, why did you come again? Didn't I tell you last time, go back just as you came.

If you had told that and stood his ground, he would have been in heaven today. But he says, what else the Lord will speak to me, I will find out. Wait here tonight also.

Do we pray like that sometimes when we know the express will of God? Especially I'm speaking to you young people who are considering marriage. The Bible is explicitly clear. It says, do not be unequally

yoked with unbelievers.

And you say, oh no, that is a pastor's wife, you know. Pastor's daughter, you know. A pastor's son, you know.

Or they said, no, she's like an angel. I want to marry her. I have heard of such angels.

Turned out to be just the opposite. You are so fascinated by such people and such smooth words. Before any ware is sold, the seller always tells something good about that.

And once you take it and unwrap it at home, you will know that you have been cheated. God's word is very clear. Don't get unequally yoked with unbelievers.

And you say, okay, why let a soul go to hell? She can be converted after she comes to CFC. Or he can be converted after he comes to CFC. In CFC only people are sitting for ages and not converted.

What will you say? It is not in your hand, nor is it in the hands of the elders to convert them. The Bible says, on whomsoever I will have mercy, I will have mercy. You cannot bribe God.

Grace is a gift from God. Mercy is a gift from God. God is, of course, he shows mercy to everybody.

But not everybody responds. People take advantage of his mercy and goodness and grace. And see here, he asked the Lord again.

And God puts one condition there in verse 20. If the men come and call you, rise up and go with them. If they come and call you in the morning, you rise up and go with them.

But what does he do? He gets up in the morning, verse 21. So Balaam arose in the morning and saddled his donkey and went with the leaders of Moab. His heart was already there in Moab and on that honor.

And probably he was eyeing for the post of defense minister or something there. And he got up, saddled his donkey, like he filled petrol in his car and started off early in the morning. And then verse 22 it says, verse 20, when God said, if they come and go, they didn't come, but this fellow only went in the morning to meet them and said, come, let's go.

God was angry, verse 22, because he was going. And the angel of the Lord took his stand in the way as an adversary against him. Now he was riding on his donkey and his two servants also were with him as his bodyguard, because he is also an important person.

You see, he is not going alone, he is going with two guys, one to his left and one to his right probably. And what he doesn't realize is that the angel of God is blocking his way. He is standing as an adversary on the way.

When I was young and when I read this, I wondered why God was angry. Now I realize God was angry because he asked for a second time. And God said, okay, you want to ask for a second time about that person whom you are considering and you already made up your mind to marry that person.

God will say, okay, go ahead. And what happens? Shortly, in no time you will realize, Lord, I missed your perfect plan. I messed up my life, now I regret.

I hear people, they are so intent upon marrying somebody and they ask God, Lord, if the sun rises in the east tomorrow morning, I believe that it is your will. Why don't you pray, Lord, if the sun rises on the west and find out God's will like that. That's what Elijah did.

He said, come, dig a trench and he said, pour out water on the offering, pour and pour and pour until everything was drenched in water. And then he said, Lord, I am doing this because you told me to do. Please send the fire.

Before he could complete the thing, the fire came and consumed everything. He made it impossible for God. But it got, if it was God's will, God will give you a definite sign.

Sometimes people come and ask the elders, can I marry so and so? And the elders sense that the person is not born again in the first place. They say, no, I don't think that's a good choice that you have made. Better consider somebody else who is born again.

And you go back crying. It's better that you go back crying now, than that you come back crying after six months, after marrying the person, saying that I can't live with this fellow. If you don't honor God, God will not honor you.

Those who honor me, them will I honor, God says. In 1 Samuel 1.30, I think. God is very specific.

Here in verse 23 and verse 22 and verse 27. Three times the angel of God opposed him. And you know in the old covenant, these prophets were called seers.

Seers means they were able to see ahead of time and ahead of things. As to what was going to happen. And they used to warn the people, like Elisha used to do.

Tell the king of Israel, the enemy is going to come in this place, you better be prepared. He is going to come in this place, you better be prepared. And the king used to be ready, and the enemy used to wonder, how is it that there must be some mole in our midst, there must be some spy in our midst, giving away the information.

But somebody told him, it's not the spy, O king, it is the prophet of God that is there, who tells you even what is speaking in your bedroom. But unfortunately, this seer was worse than his donkey, which was a better seer than him. The donkey was able to see the angel three times.

But three times this man failed to see the angel and he started beating the donkey. And finally when God opened the mouth of the donkey, and the donkey spoke in unknown tongues, which it had never learnt, and asked him, why are you beating me these three times? Am I not the one who has been carrying you all these years? He said, yes, but if I had a sword in my hand, I would have killed you. Then the Lord opens the eyes of this man, this seer's eyes are opened after the donkey's eyes were opened.

And verse 31, the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand, and he bowed all the way to the ground, and the angel of the Lord said to him, why have you struck your donkey these three times? See the concern of God for this donkey, does that speak to you? When you treat your pet at home, you know there is a verse in the Proverbs, it says, a righteous man is kind even to his animals. And in the book of Jonah, the Lord said, there are 122 children there who don't know the difference between their left hand and right hand. How do you expect me to destroy that land of Nineveh? And there are numerous animals there also, God said.

Why did he make mention of animals there? God has created them, and God loves them, and he watches how you take care of the animals that are there with you in your house. He said, why did you beat your donkey? And behold, I have come out as an adversary, because your way was contrary to me. And the donkey saw me and turned aside from me these three times.

If he had not turned aside from me, I would surely have killed you just now and let her live. And then what Balaam says in verse 34, Balaam says in verse 34, he says, I have sinned. I didn't know that you were standing in the way against me.

If he had stopped there and turned around and gone back, that would have been his salvation. But you know what he says, again he adds one more sentence. Now then, if it is displeasing to you, I will turn back.

Why do you use the word if, when you want to ask somebody's forgiveness. If I have hurt you, please forgive me. Why do you use that if? You know that you hurt the person.

Why don't you just be frank and say, brother, sister, I am sorry I have hurt you, please forgive me. If I have hurt you, please forgive me, means I have not really hurt you, but if you are stupid enough to believe that I have hurt you, please forgive me. Not for my sake, for your sake.

See how diplomatic we can be. If he had not used that word and stopped there and then turned around and gone back, history would have been different. But because he said that if, the angel said go with them.

So be careful when you know God's perfect will written in the word of God concerning various issues. And you want to have your way and you want to twist God's arm by fasting and praying and by offering sacrifices and like this fellow, we will come to that later. Trying to, you know, win God over to him.

Trying to get God's mind changed in favor of his covetousness or whatever. Because his heart was full of covetousness, his eyes were blind to what was there, which the donkey could see, but he could not. And then he comes and Balak meets him and he says, you think I wouldn't have honored you, I can do whatever you ask, I can promote you to any position, things like that.

Then Balak says in chapter 23 verse 1 and in the same chapter verse 2 and in the same chapter verse 29, three times he asked the king to build an altar. Why is he asking the king to build an altar? Build seven altars for me, every time it is seven altars and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for each of the altar. Seven times, three times, seven altars, seven bulls and seven rams.

Why is he trying to bribe God that way, when we know clearly God's will and we want to somehow try to bend God's will in our favor. I try to come to the meetings regularly. In the first place, I never used to come to the meetings properly.

Then I start coming to the meeting properly every Sunday, every Wednesday, and then I start giving money, putting money into this thing, thinking that God will be pleased with me. God will like, many people go and dump their money, black money in the hundis, in different temples trying to bribe God. Is God a partner in your crime, to accept your bribe? He did that three times and God didn't change his mind.

God is not a man that he should change his mind, neither a son of man that he should repent. Once, when he has said, that is it. And he will not change his mind just because of you.

And we read further there, in verse 14 of chapter 24, after all this is over, he says, now behold, I am going to my people. He is telling King Belak, come, I will advise you. You see, he tells the king, I will give you some advice.

And he gave the advice, but what advice he gave is not written there. You read verse 25, then Belam arose after he spoke all that, and departed and returned to his place, and Belak also went his way. He spoke exactly word to word what God had told him to speak.

God had told him, you have to speak only what I want you to speak. He said, okay, Lord. And he spoke everything word to word, verbatim, repeated exactly what God had told him to speak, and he spoke, and he finished, the mission accomplished, and he went.

When I read this, I thought, dude, this boy, he did the will of God, and God must be happy with him. But you read later that Jude mentions about him, Peter mentions about him, and John, the apostle, mentions about him in the book of Revelation. All three of them mention about him as one having lost his salvation.

When you read verse 25, chapter 24, it says he rose, departed, returned to his place, and Belak also went his way. That's the end of it. But you know what happened in chapter 31, verse 8, last part of it, when the Israelites fought with Midianites, they say they also killed Balaam, the son of Beor, with the sword, along with other Midians.

You know, why was he there in Midian? Why was he not there in Pethor, from where he was called? Probably the king of Midian must have offered him a post of defense minister or something like that, or minister of state or something like that. A very big post with a huge salary or something like that. Probably that is the reason why he came and got settled here, instead of being there.

And if you read between lines, between verse 25 of chapter 24 and verse 1 of chapter 25, there is something which is very closely connected with his advice. What is that advice? You see, while Israel remained in Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab, for they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel joined themselves to Beor of Peor and the Lord was angry against Israel.

You know what advice he gave is written in Revelation 2.14. Turn with me to Revelation 2.14. You know what was the advice that this chap gave. Revelation 2.14. It says, the Lord says to the church at Pergamum, he says, but I have a few things against you because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching. What did he teach? Here it is.

He kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. So this was the teaching that Balaam gave to Balak, which is not written there in between. It only says that, he called him and he says, I will come, I will advise you.

Whatever is written there, it is written, but the rest is not written there, that is written in Revelation. So people get a little flummoxed. Why was God angry with Israel and things like that? It was because this guy whispered something in the ear of Balak.

He said, you know, I will tell you one thing. This is off the records. This is not what God told me, but I will tell you how to get these people defeated.

Make God himself their enemy, then God himself will destroy them. How? Send some of your pretty girls into the camp of Israel and entice these Israeli soldiers with their looks and with their charm and ask those girls to invite them back to your temples. These were temple prostitutes trying to get as many people as possible to their temples, so that their hordes will swell up, so their offering will swell up, like today in mega churches you see they compromise on so many essential teachings of Christ.

They only speak some nice words, make feel good factor, that kind of thing. Their teaching, you know, be happy and be joyful and think positive and psychology and never speak about their sinful life and exhort them and rebuke them and correct them. You do that, the number will decrease and your income also will decrease in your church.

So that's why probably God has raised these mega churches to let those who don't love the truth go and join such churches and sit there and finally end up where they should not end up. Go to a place where you hear God's pure word and where you are rebuked and corrected and where you are put on the right track, where they are not interested in your money, but they are interested in your soul. Where they don't want your tithes or your offering, you give them somewhere else, but listen to God's pure word which sets you free.

You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. Jesus said that in John 8. And finally when they started doing this insinuation, this insidious advice of Balaam, Balak put it into practice and he said, okay, come on, let's do it and see if it works. And it worked.

And you see what happens there. God sent a plague, verse 29 of chapter 25, and those who died by the plague were 24,000. 24,000 Israelite soldiers died on that day because of playing harlotry and also because they joined themselves with Baal and idol worship and Aaron's grandson Phinehas had not stood up against this and put an end to that.

Probably the whole of Israel would have been wiped out that day. Maybe there would not be Israel existing today. Just because of this one man, Phinehas, he stopped that plague.

Go home and read that or maybe we'll talk about that later on some other time. God smote 24,000 people on that day because of their sin. All this happened because of one small advice that an evil hearted prophet, who was a genuine prophet once upon a time, who was in touch with God, kept backsliding slowly, slowly, slowly because of the love of money and honor and then gave an evil advice and caused the downfall of Israel that day.

You know there's a very terrifying verse in Psalm 106. I want to close with this. Psalm 106, verse 15.

It says, the heading of the chapter is Israel's rebelliousness and the Lord's deliverances. You go home and read this Psalm. So often the Lord rescued them and they forgot about it.

Verse 13, they forgot about it. Saved them from the one who hated them and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. They forgot about it.

Gave them waters to drink and food to eat. They forgot about it and they craved for something. Verse 14, intensely for the wilderness and tempted God in the desert.

So verse 15, he gave them their request just like he gave the request of Balaam but sent a wasting disease among them. He gave the request of Balaam. He said, okay, go.

But he kept on stopping him on the way. In spite of that, he went ahead and suffered the consequences. And here also these people, they craved intensely in the wilderness and tempted God in the desert as if God was unable to provide them food and non-vegetarian and water and so many things.

Daytime sort of AC over them, cloud and nighttime light through the pillars of fire. Who in the world has experienced such miracles like the sons of Israel? Since they forgot everything and they craved for something else and God said, okay. Gave them the request.

He sent a wasting disease among them. You know what is a wasting disease? In the olden days they used to call tuberculosis as consumption that used to consume a person. Once a person was affected by TB, there was no hope in the olden days.

It used to consume him little by little little by little until he was gone. It's like that God gave them the request then sent leanness into their soul. What does that mean? God will say, okay, go ahead.

But you will suffer the consequences because you have disobeyed God's command. Let not that happen to us. May we be sensitive enough to heed the voice of God and carry out His will and say, Lord, just like Jesus, even on the last day on this earth He said, Lord, father not as I will.

His will was to avoid as far as possible the drink, the cup. He said, however not as I will but as you will. Because of that you and I are saved today.

Shall we also pray like that in our heart all the time? Prayer is not twisting God's arms. Prayer is laying hold of God's will and making myself you know, be obedient to His will. May the Lord help us.

Shall we bow our heads in prayer? Our dear father, we thank you that you are such a good and loving father that you warn ahead of things that befall us. Thank you that you are a great and mighty God, a living God in our midst. We want to thank you that it's your will that no one should perish but everyone should have everlasting life.

But Lord, how often we have hindered you here and there and stopped you from blessing by having our own way and will. We ask you father that from henceforth you will so work in us through your Holy Spirit that you will put your fear in our hearts that we may really fear you for our good and please you in all things and may your spirit guide us along the way and fill us every day that we may only long to do your will and not ours. Thank you Lord that you will not tempt us beyond our ability.

You will give us grace in time of need. We thank you and praise you father for all your goodness. Bless you in Jesus precious name.

Amen. You do well to take heed to what God has said to us and I believe we are living in days of great darkness and the darkness seeks to creep into the church, creep into our personal lives and because we take many things for granted. Just like Balaam we heard about he took many things for granted.

We sometimes wonder how it can happen a man like Balaam and I long long back when I thinking of so many I knew were called and anointed of God and wondered how you know living in sin living in immorality, living in adultery and still use of God to heal and bless people. Long back there was a word that God gave me and that helped me to understand. It's there in scripture and we read that in Romans chapter 11 Romans chapter 11 when we think of people like Balaam and in our day many many preachers that we hear about and not just preachers but many who were anointed and used of God and wonder how

can it be.

We saw in Numbers 24 that God is not a man that he should lie in either son of man that he should repent. God does not change his mind. If he says something, if he gives something, that's it.

He does not change his mind. James says that we have a father in whom there is no shadow of turning. Every gift that he gives us is a perfect gift and comes from a father from whom there is no shadow caused by turning.

And so this word in Romans 11 which speaks about Israel you know Paul says there in verse 25. I do not want you brethren to be uninformed of this mystery that you will not be wise in your own estimation. Romans 11 25 And a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

So all Israel will be saved. And this is my covenant verse 27 with them when I take away their sins. From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake.

You know Israel the Jews from the standpoint of the gospel they don't see Christ. The veil is still over their hearts. Even in the reading the scriptures the same scriptures that you and I have.

From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake. But from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers and this is the word verse 29. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

God does not take back. The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. And God gave Balaam the gift of prophecy and God called him at one time.

I always used to think that Balaam was not saved, not a believer. But when I examine the scriptures and I see yeah. One time he knew God.

Maybe right in the very beginning. At one time God used him but very quickly he fell away and we can see why. And that's a warning to us.

You know if you turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 10 the Holy Spirit says there through Paul he says in verse 10, I do not want you to be unaware brethren. 1 Corinthians 10 verse 1. And our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea and all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, listen to this nevertheless with most of them God was not well pleased for they were laid low in the wilderness.

Now these things happened as examples for us so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. Do not be idolaters as some of them were. As it is written the people sat down to eat and drink and stood up to play.

And that's what we see in this festive season. People celebrate the birth of Christ but this is exactly how it is in Christendom. They sit down to eat and drink and they stand up to play.

Let us be free from that. We can give thanks to God for the birth of Christ and however we regard the day but this should not even be named among us. And no let us act immorally as some of them did.

In 23,000 fell in one day. We just read that in Numbers 24. No let us try the Lord as some of them did and were destroyed by the serpents.

No grumble as some of them did and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example. The Holy Spirit repeats that warning.

These things happened to them as an example and they were written for our instruction on whom the end of the ages have come. And verse 12. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.

Let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man and God is faithful will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also that you may be able to endure it. Not escape it but to endure it.

Yield not to temptation we just say. That's all I have to do. Yield not to temptation.

Run away from all appearance of evil. Therefore my beloved flee from idolatry. And that is what God would say to us my brothers and sisters at such a time and through what we have heard powerfully this morning.

All this has happened as an example for us. So that we should not crave evil things as they craved. Whatever that craving may be.

Can be so many things. May not be just sex. It may be money.

It may be position. It may be honor. Can be anything.

We should not crave evil things as they also craved. And sometimes it can be a good thing. But it can be an evil craving.

And it says again that these things happened to them as an example. That they were written for our instruction upon whom the end of the ages have come. And that's you and me.

So we do well to take heed to the warning that God gives us. To the prophetic word in the church. It's for me.

I should not think that's not for me. I'm not in danger. Let him who thinks he stands.

Let she who thinks he stands. Take heed that you do not fall. And like I said Balaam probably started well.

But he ended badly. Not just did not end well. He ended so badly.

He became mad. The Holy Spirit uses that word. He was mad.

He needed a dumb donkey to restrain his madness. Look at it in 2nd Peter. Turn there for a moment.

And the Holy Spirit there is speaking about false prophets. That's how it begins in 2nd Peter in chapter 2. False prophets was one also arose among the people. Just as there will also be false teachers among you who will secretly introduce destructive heresies even denying the master who bought them bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

Many will follow their sensuality. And because of them the way of the truth will be maligned. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words.

It goes on to say there. And it says there that in verse 15 it goes on to explain what these people are like. Many things there.

We don't have time to read it. But read it sometime. We can take heed to those warnings that the Holy Spirit gives us.

It talks about such people they are daring and self-willed. They do not tremble like the man who brought that Zimri who brought Cosby and daringly committed sexual sin. Right? In the presence of God's people, in the presence of Moses and Joshua.

In the presence of God there. Daring, self-willed. That's the kind of times we are living in.

That's what our children face. My brothers and sisters, let's take heed. They do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties.

And it speaks of them as unreasoning animals. That's what we see. Born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed.

Suffering wrong. Verse 13. As the wages of doing wrong they counted a pleasure to revel in the daytime.

And that's what we see around us. Their stains and blemishes reveling in their deceptions as they carouse with you. Having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin.

Enticing unstable souls. Having a heart trained in greed. Accursed children.

Forsaking the right way they have gone astray. Having followed the way of Balaam. We read about the way of Balaam.

We read that in Revelation also, which Brother Charles read earlier. Who loved the wages of unrighteousness. But he received a rebuke for his own transgression.

For a mute donkey speaking with the voice of a man restrained the madness of the prophet. He became mad. There are springs without water.

He's not talking about people outside. He's talking about people who seek to creep into the church. Because there are blemishes.

There are spots in your love feasts. There are people in the church. Not outside.

Outside, that's how it is in the world. But these are people who seek to creep in the church. And be in the church.

And there are spots. He says there are blemishes in your love feasts. There are springs without water.

They speak arrogant words of vanity. And he says promising them freedom while they feel themselves as slaves of corruption. For by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.

Then we read these solemn words. It says if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. This is speaking of people in the church who have tasted something.

Who have tasted the good life to come. Who have tasted the power of the ages to come. The writer of Hebrews says, then they fall away.

It will be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than having known it to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, a dog returns to its own vomit and a sow after washing returns to wallowing in the mire. And this is written as a warning to us, my brothers and sisters.

And we see what happened to Balaam that we think I can never become like that. I'm in great danger. I want to tell you that the spirit of Balaam is in your flesh and mine.

The spirit of Babylon is in your flesh and mine. And if I'm not aware of it, if I don't take heed, this will be the end. You become mad.

Paul says that, 1 Corinthians chapter 6 where he warns Timothy to run away from the love of money. That's what, that was, what was Balaam's problem. Turn to 1 Timothy in chapter 6. 1 Timothy chapter 6. This is the love of money.

Read a little before that. Verse 8. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. That's a word through the years God spoke to me, especially when I was in business.

We have food and covering. There were times I had no business for the month. But we had food on our table.

We had clothes on our back. With these we shall be content. We lived in a one bedroom house.

I didn't lust. I wanted to live in a bigger house. We were content.

Six of us, eight people in that house. We taught our children that with food and covering we shall be content. Those who want to get rich, listen to this.

There is no sin in wanting to earn more money to supplement your income. There's no sin in that. But if you want to get rich, that's what it means here.

Fall into temptation and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil. And some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, and so on. Flee from these things. And that's a warning that we have to take heed to, my brothers and sisters.

The only way I can preserve myself from getting mad is if I don't run away from the love of money. If I don't run away from the love of honor. That was what was Balaam's problem.

It says there, what we read in Numbers chapter 24, that he lifted up his eyes and he saw Israel. And these are people God had blessed. And he had an amazing revelation.

We heard that he even prophesied about the coming of Jesus. But he prided himself in the revelation that he had. He says there that the oracle of him who hears the words of God, Numbers 24, whose eye is opened, the oracle of him who hears the words of God, who sees the visions of the Almighty, this is what he prides himself in.

Falling down, yet having his eyes uncovered. You see, the spirit that had already kept into Balaam, the spirit of irreverence, the lack of the fear of God, contrasted with the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 12. Paul had amazing revelations.

Went up into the third heaven. He said he didn't want to speak. He was reluctant to even speak about it.

He was so humble. He says because of that, God had to give him a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble. You see the spirit of the apostle Paul and the spirit of Balaam.

And like I said just now, that spirit is in our flesh. If I'm not alert to it, I'm not aware of it, I can go the same way. I can run after money.

I can run after honor. I can run after all these things that the world offers. I may have had tremendous revelations.

I may have shared things and blessed other people with them. I may have had a prophetic word to give. I've always, always been warned what Paul says, after having preached to others.

Many times I pray that prayer, Lord, after having preached to others, after having preached to my brothers and sisters, let me not end up being disqualified. Let me take heed. And if I don't have that fear, then like I said, we can take many things for granted and end up becoming mad.

Balaam needed a dumb donkey to restrain his madness. Thank God for dumb donkeys, who God opens their mouths to restrain us. For that friend of yours, my dear brother, who puts a restraint and says, look, that girl's an unbeliever.

Not compromises and says, no, she'll get converted, bring her to CFC, like we heard. That girl is an unbeliever. That's an unequal yoke.

God does not change his mind to not be yoked together with unbelievers. God does not change his mind. Thank God for the dumb donkeys, who God opens their mouth.

But God have mercy upon the dumb donkeys who remain dumb and see their friends get into alliances where they're unequally yoked, thinking, yeah, they'll get converted. And you sisters too. Thank God for that dumb donkey, that friend that tells you, no, don't go after that guy for his money, for his position, his job.

He doesn't love God. He may be coming to CFC, but he doesn't love God. Why do you want to set your heart on him? Thank God for that dumb donkey, whom God opened her mouth.

But woe to those dumb donkeys who remain dumb. I said this to brothers in the church, that you can stand and bear witness when somebody gets into an alliance that is an unequal yoke. And you know it.

I always think of that word, that their blood will be on your hands. Their blood will be on my hands. I don't want anyone's blood to be on my hands.

No one. None of my family members, none of the brothers and sisters. This is my family.

I want to be able to say, like Paul, I am free from the blood of all men. That we give warning. And may God help us, my brothers and sisters.

And may God open the mouths of many dumb donkeys in CFC. Don't leave it to four elders. It's impossible.

May God in 2017 open the mouth of many dumb donkeys in CFC, that you see, I am my brother's keeper. I am my sister's keeper. Otherwise we're going downhill.

And I tell you, that has already begun long back. We're going downhill. We thought of many things that we should do to address that decline.

And if we don't see it, and we're not aware of it, and we're not alert to it in our own lives, that the decline has begun there, and I'm contributing to that decline, God have mercy upon us. There's an interesting word in Job chapter 12, verse 10 if you read, and verse 13. I came across it when studying about Balaam.

It says there that in God's hand is the life of every living thing, verse 12. And the breath of all mankind. Job 12 I'm reading from.

And with him, verse 13, our wisdom and mind to him belong counsel and understanding. And listen to this, in verse 16. With him, our strength and sound wisdom, the misled, that is the deceived and the misleader, belong to him.

Both serve God's purpose. The misled, those who are deceived, God allows them, they don't love the truth, but allows them to be deceived. And the deceiver, both are in God's hands, because they fulfill God's purpose.

A very interesting word. God allows deceivers to lead those who don't love the truth astray, just like he did through Balaam. And so there are two things that we can take heed to as we look at Balaam's downfall.

Two sins that trapped him. And God used them as a bait. God used them as a bait.

God sees that and God seeks to bring it out and when we see it, if we don't cleanse ourselves, then we can go the way of Balaam. We can become man. These two sins, covetousness and pride.

That was the cause of David's downfall. Somebody says that they are like the two limbs of the old man. Covetousness and pride.

Along with pride come selfish ambition, jealousy. James talks about it. There's disorder in every evil thing.

But covetousness and pride are two limbs of the old man that you and I have to constantly cut off so that we can preserve ourselves and constantly live in a self-judgment. Like Paul says, he saw coveting of every kind in him. Romans chapter 7. And if I'm not seeing that, coveting of every kind, a craving in my flesh of every kind, covetousness, and I don't cut that limb off, then I can be deceived.

And I can forsake the right way, like Peter says, and go astray. And I can go the way of Balaam. May God preserve us, my brothers and sisters, in these last days.

So that we may be kept in the new and living way, the straight and narrow way, and lead our families and lead one another. And may God open our mouths to be our brother's keeper, to be our sister's keeper. One last word, this particularly for us men.

Ecclesiastes in chapter 7, 25 and 26. For us men, brothers especially. This is Solomon, you know, who wrote Ecclesiastes.

I directed my mind to know, to investigate, and to seek wisdom and explanation, and to know the evil of folly and the foolishness of madness. And I discovered more bitter than death, the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are chains. Listen to this, men, brothers.

One who is pleasing to God will escape from her, but the sinner will be captured by her. That's a word that has really encouraged me. If I want to escape from the snares of the woman who is loose and flirtatious, seek to please God.

Seek to please God. The only way I can preserve myself. And he says, I discovered more bitter than death, the woman whose heart is snares and nets.

And such women can come into the church whose hands are chains. One who is pleasing to God will escape from her, but the sinner will be captured by her. Brothers, men, seek to please God.

You will escape the woman whose heart is snares and nets. And he says there, he says, I found one man in a thousand. One man in a thousand, that means who pleases God.

Not found a woman. But thank God under the new covenant with this Holy Spirit in our midst, that has changed. But there's still few.

Few in number. Few men and few women. Let's seek to be among that few who seek to please God.

Then we can preserve ourselves and we never go the way of Balaam. And we can live our lives and finish. Like Paul said, I've run the race.

I've fought a good fight. I've kept the course. I've kept the faith.

May God really minister to our spirits. We are entering a new year. We are entering darker times.

For the love of many will grow cold. Let's take heed that we do not go the way of Balaam. That we seek to please God.

The end of it all is that I live my life. Lord, I want 2017 every day to live to please You. May God bless us.

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