

2 Peter 2:16

by John Gill

The sermon explores Balaam's story as a cautionary tale about the dangers of covetousness and opposing God's will.

Scripture: Numbers 22:12-32, 2 Peter 2:12

Topics: "Covetousness", "Disobedience"

Description

John Gill discusses the story of Balaam, emphasizing his covetousness and desire to curse Israel despite God's command to bless them. He highlights how Balaam's madness was rebuked by an angel and a speaking ass, illustrating the folly of opposing God's will. Gill draws parallels between Balaam's actions and the behavior of those who act against divine counsel, labeling such actions as madness. The sermon serves as a warning against allowing greed to lead one into sin and disobedience. Ultimately, it underscores the importance of aligning one's desires with God's purposes.

Transcript

Ver. 16. But was rebuked for his iniquity,.... Which was not merely going along with the messengers of Balak, for he had leave from the Lord so to do, Nu 22:20; but going along with them with a desire to curse Israel, when it was the will of God he should go and bless them, in order to get Balak's money; so that his governing iniquity was covetousness, which led him to other sins; and for this he was rebuked by the angel, Nu 22:32, as well as reprov'd by his ass, Nu 22:28: for

the dumb ass, as it was naturally so, the ass on which he rode,

speaking with man's voice; which was supernatural and miraculous, for it was God that opened the mouth of the ass: the mouth of that ass is said, by the Jews {m}, to be one of the ten things created between the two evenings on the sixth day of the creation; that is, as the gloss on it says, concerning which it was decreed, that its mouth should be opened to speak what this ass said; and the occasion of it may be seen in Nu 22:22. Lactantius {n} observes, that there are two stars in the constellation of Cancer, which the Greeks call the "asses"; and which, the poets feign, are those that carried Liberus over a river, when he could not pass it; to one of which he gave this for a reward, "ut humana voce loqueretur", "that it should speak with man's voice"; a fable, no doubt, hatched from the sacred history, and said in imitation of this ass. Which

forbad the madness of the prophet: and so Balaam, though a diviner and soothsayer, is called by the Jewish writers {o}; who, they say, was first a prophet, and then a soothsayer, from whom Jerom {p} seems to have received the tradition; who says, that he was first a holy man, and a prophet of God, and afterwards, through disobedience, and a desire of gifts, was called a diviner; for his eyes were opened, and he saw the vision of the Almighty; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied many things concerning Israel, and the Messiah, and others, Nu 24:4. His madness lay in going with the messengers of Balak, Nu 22:21, in order to curse Israel, contrary to the will of God, Nu 22:12; and it is madness in any to oppose God in his counsels, purposes, providences, and precepts; and every sin, which is an act of hostility against God, has madness in it; and this of Balaam's was forbid by his ass, and he was convinced of it. Very appropriately is mention made of this dumb ass, when the persons here spoken of were as natural brute beasts, and worse than them, 2Pe 2:12.

{m} Pirke Abot, c. 5. sect. 6. & Jarchi in ib. Sepher Cosri, par. 2. p. 254. {n} De falsa Religione, l. 1. c. 21. {o} Pesikta, Ilmedenu & Gerundensis apud Drus in loc. T. Bab Sanhedrin fol. 106. 1. Aben Ezra in Numb. xxxii. 28. {p} Tradition. Heb. in Genes. fol. 69. D.

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