

**When the Lord stands in your way.**

**Numbers 22:21-35**

I would like to thank David for this invite to give the Friday night devotional at ViZion church. Thank you for your prayers for myself and family during a time of bad flu.

I want to continue from last time and share my reflections I gleaned from the book of Numbers but before we read the passage let us open in prayer.

Moses authored the book of Numbers, and it's thought to have been written between 1450-1410 B.C.

This passage from Numbers 22 is written about the time when the second generation of Israelites, where they had pitched and camped in the plains of Moab, ready at the border to go into the Promised land.

The journey to the plains of Moab was unhindered where they had overcome and won two major battles defeating King Sihon and King Og

Balak who was a king of Moab, heard of the Israelite whitewash and was distressed by inhabitants of Israelites, and he thought they would come to destroy his nation like an ox licks up the grass in a field.

This is where King Balak and elders of Midian, looked for help and twice sent delegates to a sorcerer turned prophet called Balaam, he was well-known for giving blessings and cursing's that worked.

Not much is mentioned about Balaam, he is kind of an enigma in scripture, we read in 2 Peter 2:15-16 They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the [son] of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. We read here of "the way of Balaam", "who loved the wages of unrighteousness" he was scheming to profit from the gift that God had given him.

This will help us to give an idea of the actions of Balaam as we look at his experience with the donkey and the angel of the Lord.

So, let us look at Balaam's journey on his donkey and we see how the angel of the Lord STANDS in the WAY. The angel of the Lord works to change Balaam's mind and focus on turning from being greedy for rewards to curse the Israelites, to drive them out of the plains of Moab.

We read in **verse 20 and 21**, The Night before, God had told Balaam he could go to Moab but to only speak what God commanded.

So, Balaam gets up and saddles his donkey to travel back with the Moabite princes and this is where the anger of the Lord is festered up.

Let us look at **3** different aspects of **Verses 22-35** and see where the Lord **stands** and obstructs the path of Balaam's greedy sin and then shows the path to go on the right **way**.

**1. Let us look at point 1 Verses 22-27 The Lord can make it hard by standing in the way**

If you look down at **verse 22**, we see God is angry with Balaam, so outraged that Balaam was going to journey, Balaam desire of greed and riches overwhelmed him, this was where he was going to curse the Israelites and cast them out.

This is when the angel of the Lord appeared as a theophany of our Lord Jesus, we read three times the angel of the Lord with a drawn sword standing in the way of Balaam, his two servants and the donkey.

In **verses 23, 25 and 27** the donkey saw the angel of the Lord and we see the donkey trying to save Balaam's life by turning aside off the path into a field, by pushing herself against the vineyard wall which was crushing Balaam's foot and finally she had enough and lay down. Each of the three times the donkey saved Balaam, Balaam struck her.

I always thought donkeys were stubborn grumpy animals, but they are great for sensing danger. *If you ever travel up to the Mount Everest base camp, you will get donkeys carrying heavy luggage and food supplies, but they can sense more than horses the danger around them from rock falls to unstable paths.*

To get back to this devotional, have you ever felt tempted?

Do you desire material things that your obsessed to have, such as the latest fashion clothing, the latest running shoes (this is me), the new car or the latest electronic gadget? Etc.

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians is so helpful, though this chapter speaks of idolatry we read in Colossians 3:5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

These attributes can provoke temptation as we read in 1 Corinthians 10:12-13

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God [is] faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear [it].

**Let unpack these verses.**

**Verse 12**, is telling us if a person stands, standing strong and confident in their walk with the Lord. It's good to be like this, yes?

In **verse 13** Paul tells us temptation may come and he is encouraging the Corinthians. He says "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man;" meaning temptation can happen to anyone, do not feel you are the only one that has these compulsions? That tempt you, beyond what you can endure.

It is not a sin to be tempted, but if you yield to the temptation, it is sinful. We read "but God [is] faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear [it]. We may not totally escape temptations; but with the help of Jesus, He will give you provision be able to stand up under it or bear under it!

**You know I am nothing without Jesus but with him all things are possible.**

**2. Let us look at point 2 Verses 28-33 The Lord can make you think by reproofing and convicting you.**

Have you ever heard a donkey speak?

Well, I have on the Shrek movie which is based on a true story! I am kidding!

As we read and look down at these **verses 28-30**, we see that the Lord opened the donkey's mouth, donkeys usually make a Hee Haw sound, but this she-donkey was able to talk.

The donkey asked Balaam why he struck her three times and Balaam responds by saying, because you were trying to kill me, and if he had a sword in his hand, he would kill her because she made him look foolish!

Finally, in **verse 30** she said "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?" And he said, "No." Disposed here is "not made a habit of" or "not done anything like this before"

Donkeys even with their sad-looking long faces are versatile and very dependable, and therefore Balaam was so mad as she would not move. It is interesting when the Donkey said, "I became yours, to this day?" Balaam could of rode this donkey most of his life.

Donkeys make great pets they are sensitive creatures and make good companions and startle less than horses. I am sure Pastor David will get one for the grandchildren!

We read in **verse 31** that the Lord opened Balaam's eyes so that he could see the angel of the Lord, standing with a drawn sword. Then Balaam bowed his head and fell on his face!

You can see the angel of the Lord, angry, sword ready to strike. The angel of the Lord said "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before Me." He continued "The donkey

saw Me and turned aside from Me these three times. If she had not turned aside from Me, surely I would also have killed you by now, and let her live."

Balaam started to think what he had done to the donkey and with the angel of the Lord appearing to him, with his head bowed and flat on his face, the Lord reproofs Balaam for his behaviour.

The angel of the Lord said to Balaam your way is perverse before Me, Balaam was being reckless on a journey of greed to get wealth for cursing the Israelites.

**3. In our last point in Verses 34-35 The Lord can forgive and set you on the right way.**

As we look down at **verse 34** And Balaam said to the Angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know You stood in the way against me. Now therefore, if it displeases You, I will turn back."

Balaam is remorseful, exposed for hitting his donkey and for his greedy reckless attitude.

As Balaam did wrong, he offered to return home, but the angel of the Lord in **verse 35** told Balaam to carry on travelling with the princes of Balak. The condition to keep going was that he was to speak only what the Lord communicated.

In later **chapters 23-24** Balaam did as he was told and went to three high places looking over the Israelites with Balak where he was hoping Balaam would curse them.

But Balaam did not and did what the Lord told him to do.

But sadly, Balaam in later chapters fell away from the Lord, he was killed in chapter 31 and pointed out in Revelation 2:14 for corrupting the Israelites through sexual immorality and eating sacrificial foods given to idols.

But to finish off, for us Christians when we confess our sin just like Balaam, for he had sinned against the Lord.

We must turn from sin and put it behind us, Paul helps us in his book to the, Philippians 3:12-14 12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing [I do], forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

**Let's unpack these verses and get some encouragement.**

**Verse 12** Paul is saying that he has not attained or perfected his goal for what Christ has in store for him, but he "presses on" to possess that perfection.

When Paul says, "but I press on" "It is like a sprinter on the racetrack, at the gunfire they push off the blocks to race with full power and use all their energy to get to the finish line."

What is Paul chasing at the finish line? Look up at **verse 11**, he's wanting to attain or experience the time of the resurrection of the dead, that's when we are glorified.

You see as we grow in our faith and knowledge of God, the Holy Spirit begins in us the process of sanctification, progressively making us holy like Christ.

**Verse 13** he says "I do not count myself to have apprehended;" meaning he hasn't achieved his perfected goal for what Christ had in store for him.

He struggles like us, as we remember the sinful things of the past, we read "one thing I do" Paul is single-minded, determined to forget the past and move forward to the things in the future.

**Verse 14** He presses towards the goal, being watchful and not distracted to get the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, which is when we receive our crown of righteousness *2 Timothy 4:8* at the resurrection of the dead, the day of Christ's return.

I pray that this devotional message will be a blessing to you and give you thoughts on Balaam's temptation, the way Balaam was reproofed for his behaviour and decision of sin when he repents.