

Removing the Blinders

Balak, the king of ancient Moab, was terrified of the Israelite nation as they made their way to the Land of Canaan after escaping slavery in Egypt. So, he sent for a prophet named Balaam to curse the Israelites. With wisdom Balaam consulted God. (Read the entire event in Numbers 22-24.)

God refused to allow Balaam to curse the Israelites so Balaam sent word back to King Balak to that effect. Not satisfied with the response, King Balak offered great wealth to Balaam if he would curse the Israelites. Balaam responded that he had already received an answer from God, but he asked the king's messengers to stay overnight so that he could consult God once again. This time God told Balaam to go to King Balak, but *to do only what he was instructed*. Balaam joyfully left with the king's messengers. However, God became angry with Balaam.

It might seem odd that God would first refuse to allow Balaam to go, then give Balaam permission to go, yet would ultimately become angry when Balaam did go. The instruction that comes later gives us insight...

As Balaam was on his way to King Balak an angel of the Lord, sword drawn, blocked the road. Three times Balaam's donkey turned away, and three times Balaam became angry at the donkey's *stubbornness*. Finally, God opened the mouth of the donkey and a brief conversation followed between man and beast. Only then were Balaam's eyes opened. He saw the angel and he realized that he was in the wrong. The angel then repeated God's message to Balaam: Go to King Balak, but *do only what God tells you to do*.

The fact that God repeated this part of His instruction is a strong indication that Balaam's motives were not pure. When God gave him permission to go, Balaam responded more to the *permission* to

go than the *instruction* to do only what God instructed. God must have been angry with Balaam for only half-listening to what He had said.

This is much like a teenager who asks permission to attend a party with friends. Initially the parents refuse, but later give in after continued pleading on the part of the teen. As soon as permission is granted the teen bolts to the phone to tell her friends the good news. The parents then regret having given permission.

They gave permission to attend the party, but not permission to engage in questionable activities. They realize that their teen had merely heard the *permission* to go but had given little thought concerning moral character and integrity. At that point the parents recognize the need for a serious conversation with their teen regarding her moral behaviors, responsibility, respect, curfew, and example.

Balaam most likely found the permission very gratifying because of the wealth being offered him by King Balak. He appears to have been consumed with the desire to satisfy himself. God had to remind Balaam of His own desire for His people. He had to take the 'remove the blinders' from the man so that he could see the will of God.

Sometimes the distractions of this life and its thrills blind Christians to the will of God. It is only when the blinders of selfishness, pride, and stubbornness are removed that the will of God can be clearly seen and carried out.

May we keep our focus diligently trained on our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, so that we will not be blinded by the attractions of the world or our own stubborn will.