

## **The Day a Donkey Needed a Donkey**

<sup>9</sup> Do not be like the horse *or* like the mule, *Which* have no understanding, Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, Else they will not come near you. (Ps. 32:9)

Today we wish to look at the topic of resisting the will of God. Are you in the will of God? There is much confusion today about the will of God. Some people think that the will of God is some secret thing that no one can ever know. The truth is, there is a part of His will that is secret, but there is a part that is clearly revealed. Ephesians 5:17 tells us that God wants us to know His will. God has a revealed will for everybody. If you are unsaved, it is His will that you be saved (2 Peter 3:9). Nothing secret about that. God's will is for you to turn from sin and turn to Him. If you are saved, His will for you is that you be sanctified (Romans 12:2), satisfied (I Thes 5:18), sacrificial (I Peter 4:19, Phil 1:29) and submissive (I Pet 2:13-15). That's His revealed will. God in His kindness uses many things to get us to walk this way, which is His will. If you can imagine a river flowing, to illustrate God's will. God wants you in that stream. He will use various things to get you into that stream. We confuse ourselves because we are trying to work out the small details of every turn in the stream's course, instead of simply making sure we are in the center of God's revealed will.

God will not show us His secret will. He instead expects us to obey His revealed will, and allow Him to unfold His secret will in its time. We want to look at the character of Balaam today, to see the stages of resisting God's revealed will. God wants you to obey His revealed will, it's the safest and best thing for you.

Who was Balaam? Balaam was a prophet, he knew the true God, but was not a believer. He lived at the time of Moses. He was not a Jew, he was from Mesopotamia. A king called Balak was threatened by Israel, and so hired Balaam. He wanted Balaam to curse Israel. At first Balaam refused, but at last agreed. It is this incident that we want to look at to see how Balaam resisted the will of God.

Firstly, God used

### **I. The Plain**

The plain, the obvious, the clear. God was plain and clear to Balaam. He said, "don't go with these men, don't curse Israel". At first it looks as if He is obeying God, but in truth, Balaam always listened with half an ear; he was greedy for money and wanted to go.

God will firstly speak plainly to us through the Word. Any good parent first speaks plainly to his child. You do not spank first, you speak first. To the unsaved, God speaks plainly, 'ye must be born again'. You must be saved. To the saved, God speaks plainly, be satisfied, sanctified, submissive, sacrificing.

We focus on questions like "Whom must I marry? Where must I go?" First ask, am I obeying the revealed will of God? When decisions come up, ask, will this glorify God? God will speak plainly to you through Biblical precepts or principles. He will speak to

you through Biblical wisdom. As we apply these, He will providentially arrange the circumstances.

We need to simply focus on obeying what we know, not trying to get the unknown details of every thing in our lives. Can you imagine what would happen if God showed us His plan for us? We'd pick and choose which parts we'd like.

Remember Jonah? God told him plainly, go to Nineveh. Remember Pharaoh? God told him plainly, let My people go!

Too often, we are like Balaam. We don't like the plain, revealed will of God. We'd like a second opinion. If you are truly interested in the will of God, you'll love His Word, it's the only way to know Him, if you're unsaved, and become like Him if you are saved.

So Balaam resists the plain and goes off. He doesn't take God's commands seriously. So the second means God uses to urge you back into His will is

## **II. Pressing Circumstances**

Balaam is ignoring the plain and going his own way. The angel of the LORD stands in his way, the donkey sees Him and refuses to go further. Balaam can't see Him. The donkey is turning away, but Balaam is trying to force her to go the original way. God is now working on Balaam's circumstances. Balaam has his heart set on that money, and his only means of transportation is not co-operating.

God is sovereign. Proverbs 16:9: "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps." Remember, God is not forcing anyone to obey, but in His love, He is making it difficult to continue to disobey.

God can put pressure on you to live that holy life. He can arrange situations that emphasise, the way of the transgressor is hard. Remember Jonah, when he refused the plain, God caused a storm to come up when he was at sea. For Pharaoh, God caused the plagues of blood, frogs, lice and flies.

Don't press the circumstances, instead make sure, am I in the stream? Our biggest problems are not around us, they are inside us. But Balaam blames the circumstances and whips the donkey. He tries to change circumstances, not his attitude. He continues to resist God. Well, God's third stage is

## **III. The Painful**

The donkey sees the angel and tries to avoid him. Balaam can't and tries to force the donkey. The donkey refuses, and ends up crushing Balaam's foot. For Balaam, this was truly a painful experience. If we ignore the plain, and ignore the pressing circumstances, God can use the painful. God sometimes has to use extreme measures to get through to us. "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back." Proverbs 26:3. The thick-skinned need a harder wallop.

God is a good Father, He doesn't hit us before having warned us. God speaks before He spansks, but eventually, He will spank.

With Jonah, the lot fell on him, and he was thrown out the boat. With Pharaoh, it was the painful plagues of boils, hail, darkness and the death of the firstborn. Hebrews 12 teaches us that God will chasten His children. It can be tragedy, personal loss, financial problems, broken relationships. Very often, God will discipline us by simply allowing the consequences of our sins to catch up with us. It may hurt intensely, it may even scar. The point is, get into the will of God.

But the stubborn heart presses on. Balaam is truly a donkey. As he is whipping the donkey, God opens its mouth and it speaks. God is now using

#### **IV. The Peculiar.**

The donkey speaks and explains what her fellow donkey cannot see: the angel of the Lord is standing there. Amazingly, Balaam does not even seem phased by the fact that this donkey can speak. He is so mad he simply tells the donkey he would have killed it had he had a chance.

God is using the peculiar. It's extraordinary. God continues this by opening Balaam's eyes so he can see the angel. The peculiar is God's final attention-getter with Himself. With Jonah, it was being swallowed by a great fish. With Pharaoh it was the parting of the Red Sea. You will know it if it happens to you, an event which should have killed you, a remarkable and unbelievable coincidence of timing, an event which leaves you stunned, and aware of God.

Suddenly, like Balaam, you are aware that God has been there all the time. God confronts you shockingly with your own mortality, His power to take your life, and how gracious He has been with you. If God had not done this, Balaam would have walked into the sword of the angel.

Did Balaam repent? No, he simply admitted he had sinned. There's a difference.

Revelation 2:14 tells us that Balaam ended up teaching Balak that a way to hurt Israel would be to get them to commit fornication. This he did, and God plagued Israel. So Balaam didn't curse Israel, but he found another way to get his money. Balaam tragically reached the end of the road.

#### **V. The Passive**

The passive is where God gives you up. It is the worst thing God can do: release you to your own sin. God fights against your own inclination to destroy yourself. But eventually, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with men'. God gives men up at some point. As C.S. Lewis put it, there are only two kinds of people ultimately, those who say to God, 'thy will be done', and those to whom God eventually says, 'thy will be done'.

In Romans 1 we see this clearly. Paul tells us that the Gentiles knew the truth. He uses words like 'clearly seen', 'understood', and 'suppress the truth'. They knew the truth and refused it, so God gave them up. Likewise Israel. Psalm 87:12, God gave them up. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. With reverence, we say it is more frightening to fall out of the hands of the living God, so to speak. Remember, the wages

of sin is death. You have enough sin inside you to destroy yourself if not kept in check. If God releases you to your own heart, death is inevitable.

Isn't it loving of God to look past our stubbornness and try to win us over?

We've seen God first uses the plain. The will of God revealed in the Word of God.

If we disobey, God will use pressing circumstances. In the midst of those, don't press the circumstances, return to the Word.

If we persist in disobeying, God uses the painful. It hurts Him to hurt us, but He'd rather do that than allow us to destroy ourselves.

Only a real donkey will ignore these three, God's Word, God's Ways and God's Walloping. The last 'danger-ahead' sign is the peculiar, where you are confronted with God's power to have taken your life, your own humanness and frailness.

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Don't be a donkey that needs a donkey; be like Christ "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:9)