

3 Treacherous Traits That Led to Balaam's Destruction

I've heard the faulty theology countless times and it disturbs me.

"If God didn't want me to have this, He would take away my desire for it."

Nowhere in the Word do we see our desire for something as an indicator of God's will. I suppose people arrive at this conclusion because of their own mistaken application of the verse, "Delight yourselves also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart."

We see the latter part of that verse and completely ignore the most important part, which is, "Delight yourselves also in the Lord".

We can only apply this verse to our lives when our desires are no longer based on our own worldly passions but on all that God has for us, so that His desires for us literally become our desires.

But what happens so often is that we become so consumed by our worldly passions, knowing full-well that they do not line up with God's will for our lives, that we find a way to manipulate God into giving us what we want anyway.

You may say, "But God wouldn't do that! He won't give me anything that's not in my best interest."

That is also untrue.

We have already seen how in Numbers 11 God gave the Israelites what they wanted, even though it wasn't His will or in their best interest. But they pushed God until He gave them what they wanted.

But we see again in Numbers 22-25 this same scenario repeated, but this time in a much more conniving and manipulative manner.

Balak, the king of Moab, saw how God was giving the Israelites favor over their enemies and was afraid that they would defeat him, too, so he went to a pagan prophet named Balaam to hire him to prophesy a curse on Israel.

I imagine Balaam must have had quite the reputation because Balak was prepared to pay a nice sum for this curse.

We see something very interesting in this story: Although Balaam was a pagan prophet, God still spoke to him. Throughout the story, we see that he uses sorcery to connect with God, and God actually speaks to him on a number of occasions, but what is most important is that the first very thing God says to Balaam is, ***“You shall not go with them ... ”***

This is where the story should end.

Balaam should have allowed that command to become his conviction. But instead he did what so many of us do.

1. He was petulant. *“So Balaam rose up in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, ‘Go to your land, for the LORD refuses to give me permission to go with you.’”*

Instead of making God’s command his conviction, he chose to whine about God’s refusal to let him go, saying, “God won’t let me go.”

Make no mistake about it, Balaam **wanted** to curse Israel because Israel would eventually defeat his people and he was greedy and wanted the money. But he had just enough of the fear of God in him to keep him from pronouncing a curse on a people whom God had blessed ... just not enough to keep him from manipulating God.

2. He was persistent. After the princes of Moab and

Midian, with whom Balak had formed an alliance, returned to Balak unsuccessful in their mission, Balak sent another delegation to Balaam. At first Balaam warns them that no amount of money will change *his* mind, but maybe it will change *God's* mind because he once again inquires of God *just in case God decides to let him go anyway*.

This is a typical adolescent trick.

Dad said no the first time, but maybe if I ask again I'll get a different answer.

And Balaam *did* get a different answer. But lest we think that God sometimes changes His mind, we need to take the whole story in context. This wasn't God changing His mind; this was God giving Balaam what he wanted ... at a price.

3. He was conniving. Balaam goes with the second delegation of princes and it's on that journey that we find the familiar story of his donkey actually speaking to him.

God sent an angel to prevent the journey He never wanted in the first place, because while Balaam had said with his mouth that he wouldn't curse Israel, he apparently hadn't ruled out that possibility in his heart, because that's exactly what he intended to do. That is, until his donkey refused to budge, an angel was revealed to him in the flesh and his donkey started talking like a human.

And just when you think that such an event would have struck a terrible fear of God in his heart, let's look further.

Balaam arrives at Balak's place and Balak takes him to a place where he can see Israel's camp from afar and asks him to curse Israel.

Now, God had already told him no twice. But apparently to Balaam *no* really only means *maybe*, because he has to check again to see if maybe God has changed His mind.

And this happens no less than three times, and all three times Balaam speaks God's words, and in the end actually prophesies Christ's birth.

And just in case you think that the story of Balaam ends with this amazing prophecy by a pagan prophet who uses sorcery to connect with God, and who repeated his failed attempts to get God's permission to curse Israel so he could get the money he wanted, you're wrong.

No, Balaam gets what he wants in the end.

In Numbers 25 we see that some of the men of Israel took Moabite wives—yes, *the same Moab of whom Balak is king and who wanted to curse Israel*—and began mingling the worship of Ba'al with the worship of God.

This angered God and he sent a plague that killed 24,000 people.

But when we turn over a few pages to Numbers 31, we see something very interesting.

Israel goes to war against Midian, with whom King Balak has an alliance, and conquers Midian, but they do not destroy all the women. The army comes back to camp and instead of cheering their victory, Moses demands, "Look, these *women* caused the children of Israel, ***through the counsel of Balaam***, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD."

In the end, Balaam got his money.

How?

He convinced the women of Moab to infiltrate the camp and do to Israel what he himself couldn't do.

His manipulation got him what he wanted.

But the wages of his sin was death: *"They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of those who were killed—Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. **Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword.**"*

"Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart." May our hearts delight in Him, and in nothing else: not money, not new cars, not new furniture, not a nice job, a nice house, a nice vacation ... not in anything other than Him.

Because what we delight in becomes our god.

And when our hearts are consumed with another god, when our passion for those things that God has not destined for us moves us to push God's hand and manipulate Him until He gives us what we want, the end is always destruction!

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