

Balaam's Parables

Message from the DVD Archive

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If you will, turn with me in your Bibles at the end of Numbers 2. We've been looking at these chapters for a few weeks now and I'm sure there's probably some carpenters better than I am as far as driving a nail where they could just hit it once and put it all the way through, but if you've ever seen me with a hammer, I kind of tap at it a little bit and get it going right and then increase as I'm sure it's headed in the right direction, and that's a lot of the way I endeavor to go through Scriptures as well, lay the foundation, make sure we understand what it's all about, and then hopefully drive it home. But we've been looking here in these chapters, 22, 23 and 24, about Balaam and, again, one of these stories that we've grown up maybe hearing about and yet not really understanding the significance of Balaam's acts and his character.

As we've seen over and over again in Scripture, we're warned not to follow the way of Balaam and if I had to summarize the way of Balaam according to what I see in Scripture, it's his willingness to compromise the Truth when needed. Now that's a sign of a false prophet. You know, buy the Truth and sell it not is what the Scriptures say, and if the LORD has revealed the Truth of Christ and His righteousness to your soul, there's no price that a man could ever give you or that you would ever desire to sell that Truth for your own comfort's sake.

But that was Balaam's sin and if you look, keep your marker here in Numbers 23, but you look over to 2 Peter 2:15. Again, this is not my assessment of it, this is God's declaration of it. You know, He describes him here in 2 Peter 2:14 like those having "eyes full of adultery." David just read that about even these priests in Ezra's day that had taken strange wives and the law is given as a type of Christ and what it typified was their willingness to compromise the Truth for their own comfort's sake. And like preachers today having taken strange wives, in other words, their doctrine is not Christ's and that's to be renounced. As you said, the only sacrifice that God has ever accepted for the putting away of sin is the sacrifice of His Son. That's where we just keep coming back to over and over again.

But these have eyes full of adultery. You know what an adulterer is, it's someone that feigns love for a wife or a spouse, but ultimately has his eyes everywhere else and there's no true focus on that one love, one object of affection. And it says, "and that cannot cease

from sin." In other words, like wandering stars. And this is where people get confused because they'll hear a preacher one time stand up and say some good things and they think, "Well, how can he say that and then turn right around and be down another bunny trail apart from Christ?" Well, they can't cease from sin. They can't cease. There's been no revelation of Christ in their soul to where they can say with Paul, "I determine not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

And, "beguiling unstable souls." That's what it's all about, getting a following. And people, you wonder sometimes how can people follow some of these men? Well, beguiling unstable souls. They, themselves, have never had a true revelation of Christ and so they follow what appears to be a way of righteousness.

And, "an heart they have exercised with covetous practices," and then it says, "cursed children," because anything apart from the righteousness imputed of Christ is unrighteousness. I don't care how moral it looks in the eyes of men, or how, you know, how pristine it may seem, it's unrighteousness.

And it says in verse 15, "Which have forsaken the right way." Isn't that what most people keep getting upset at you about? You know, "You keep insisting on one way. One Way. Exclusive." Well, it's not me, it's the Gospel, it's the Word.

"The right way, and are gone astray." So any deviation from it is another way.

Then it gives an example, "following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor," and here it is, "who loved the wages of unrighteousness." Now you could interpret that as meaning he loved the money but he loved the way of unrighteousness. People can say what they want to but when they refuse this message of Christ and God's satisfaction with His death for His people, and that being the only account on which God accepts a sinner is the blood and righteousness of the LORD Jesus Christ, then they are following the wages of unrighteousness. It's true Spiritually as well as physically. So that's what we're dealing with here.

Now having said all that, we've seen also just how Truth can come out of his mouth at certain times, you know, in certain places, and you're astounded. I'm literally astounded and I was telling a man that one time, you know, that it's not the instrument, it's not the messenger but it's the Word. God has brought Truth out of the mouth of many a reprobate. I think of Judas Iscariot, you know, not a whole lot is said about what he preached but I'll guarantee you, there wasn't anything in the way he was proclaiming the message as they were sent out 2 by 2 in different places, that ever even gave an inkling to the rest of the disciples that this was a son of perdition, even though Christ had said it, "One of you is a son of perdition." That's how close, that's how close a man can get to the Truth, using the same Words: Christ, redemption, grace, justification, and still be a lost man, and I believe that's what we have typified here in Balaam.

Now if you come back to Numbers 23 and 24. I think we've already seen the pattern of, you know, him wanting to please Balak and at the same time being restrained by the

LORD and all of this, God using every step and every Word to His glory. So there's a pattern but what I want you to see here in these chapters and I'm just gonna point them out to you rather than just read it and then come back, but there are four parables and you can underscore them here in your Bible, if you want. If you go back to Numbers 23:7, it says, "he took up his parable," and you could write in the margin there, this was the first pronouncement. The word "parable" is used, it actually literally is the word in Hebrew that means "a pronouncement as in a ruling from a judge." There's a reason why the Spirit of God directed this word to be used because a judge many times may have to hand down a sentence not because he feels that that's the right sentence but because the law says he has to hand it down. It's a ruling. It cannot be gone around. Here's Balaam, he's saying things that in his heart he's hating to say but he's having to declare it because God has ordered it, God has ordained it. God is gonna have His way. He's gonna accomplish His will.

So there's the first, "he took up his parable." Alright? So we're gonna look at that a little bit. If you look over in verse 18 of Numbers 23, "he took up his parable." Here's a second pronouncement. You can imagine Balaam standing here all the while in his heart wishing it otherwise, but still God putting this word in his mouth to where it serves to any who stand against the Truth or stand against a sovereign God or stand against the sovereign Christ, that even in this God's will and Word will be declared and that's the second one, verse 18, the second parable. If you go over to Numbers 24:3 and you'll see the third. So if you really want to study through this, this is the way to do it, take a look at each one of these parables that are described here. "He took up his parable and said." Alright? So that's the third. And then the fourth one we see over in verse 15 of Numbers 24, "he took up his parable, and said." Alright? So what I want to do is read those and just give you a summary of what he was saying in spite of himself and yet the very Truth of what we rejoice in and know today.

Now when you get to verses 20 through 25, there's actually three more parables there but you'll notice the difference. The first four parables that Balaam declares concerned the children of Israel. These last three, because there's seven in all, these last three in verses 20 to 25 really concern the nations around Israel and what Word God purposed to pronounce toward those nations, and we'll look at that next time, but let me just read you this first parable and this is a simple outline. I couldn't, I mean, it's pretty plain when you read these, there's not a whole lot to add because it's so plain. But here in verses 7 through 17 is the very first parable, and see as we read it if you can't determine what the theme is. There's a logic to these and even in the order, alright? It says here, "And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel." Now here it is, this is the statement. "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." Dwell alone. Be isolated out, separated out, and not be reckoned among the nations, that is, in judgment. There's a separating out here of this people that Balaam is having to confess to.

"Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" You know, there's a lot of people like Balaam who confess that they would like to be numbered among the righteous and yet they don't want the way of righteousness, you see. They have a hope of Heaven but it's not a True Hope. It's not based upon the righteousness of Christ alone. He's revealing Himself right here.

"And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether. And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD hath put in my mouth?" You see, like a judge having to make a pronouncement and yet saying, "This isn't my opinion. I'm just telling you, I have no choice, no alternative." But the thing that I see in this first parable, if I were to sum it up, is the election of God by sovereign Grace. You know, I've heard people say, "Well, a lost man can't declare election." Oh, yeah he can, if the LORD puts it in his mouth. You realize every time he stands and reads the word. I've heard men preach, I've heard men read Romans 9, Romans 8, the very words of God declaring our election in Christ, and yet turn right around and try to interpret it away. But they have still by their reading, by their reading they have declared the Truth of God. That's an amazing thing.

I don't know what Alexander Scourby believed but you sit and listen to him read the Scripture, he reads it with reverence but he well may have been a lost man, may well have been a lost man but someone liked his voice and for a wage, sat down and read through the entire Scriptures and it's being propagated throughout the world today. Someone might put that in sometime, a cd or tape in and listen to it and the LORD use it to convert their soul and send Alexander Scourby to hell. That's His sovereignty. It's His Word that God will honor. Not the message, the Word.

So I see that here when it says here, "Thy people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations," what it means is God separated them out. That's who Israel is here as a type, you see. And again, if you look in Deuteronomy 7, this is brought to bear, the LORD, none of us have anything with which to boast. And again, Israel being a type here of the LORD's church. In Deuteronomy 7 you can read here in verse 6, "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God." It wasn't in themselves but He set them apart unto holiness.

"The LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people," or that there was any goodness in you. These people that say, "Well, God looked down to see who would believe on Him and therefore chose them." No, that's not the way it goes.

"For ye were the fewest of all people." Less than the least. There was nothing in us that could recommend us to God.

"But," verse 8, "because the LORD loved you." That's a distinctive love. That's a distinctive Grace. That's the only kind of Love and Grace of which the Scriptures speak.

"And because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers." There was an oath sworn between God the Father and God the Son to save a people, and because He would keep that oath, He continued to love sinners, that He would send Christ to die for in spite of who they were, you see.

"The LORD hath brought you out with a mighty hand," but notice it's not just bringing you out by decree, brought you out with a Mighty Hand, "and redeemed you." There had to be a redemption. There had to be a just satisfaction for those that God purposed to save.

So that's basically the message that was declared, the very first point. The second one in the second parable, and that's why I say these are all linked, you know, where there's election in and of itself or by itself, is not salvation. That's what we're seeing all the way through. There's an aspect in each one of these that builds on the other like progressive revelation to show us the work of God in its entirety, and that's what we see here in verses 18 through 26. Here's a second parable. We'll not read all the way down to 26 but just the part of the message itself. It says, "And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it?" Now this is important because there are some that say, "Well, as soon as he said it, it's done." No, look how it's written there, "hath he said, and shall he not do it?" There had to be the outworking of what God purposed and that's really what we're dealing with in Scripture. All of this history, all of these types, all of these symbols, every little detail has that purpose to show that what God said, He has done. He has done.

"Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? You know, it's not just a matter of saying, "Well, He spoke and that's it. Deal with it." No, shall He not make it good? Shall He not honor His name? Shall He not prove Himself a just God and Savior? How? In the just sacrifice of His Son. Those sacrifices of the Old Testament couldn't put away sin. Even there in Ezra when they offered no sacrifices, there wasn't any, that was the forbearance of God, that was a covering of that sin until Christ should come and put it away, you see? And that's what we read on here.

"Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it." Now that's what the purpose of God does. We're not denying the purpose of God, we're saying that what He has purposed to do, He shall do and it cannot be reversed but nonetheless it shall be done.

What shall be done? Verse 21, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt." How did He do it? By a Passover lamb. That's how He brought them out of Egypt.

"He hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said

of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought! Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain." You say, "Well, what is this all about?" Well, I see here the justification of the LORD's people before God and before men.

That's really, you know, when you read that word "justification" in Scripture, it's used in two senses. There in Romans 4, it has to do with our justification before God, but then when you read over in James, it has to do with what it is that justifies our justification before God that justifies us before men. And when people ask you on what ground do you think that you have any claim to glory? Well, I don't have any claim to glory. All of my hope is based upon that work of the LORD Jesus Christ and what He has accomplished but if He's accomplished it for me, there's gonna be that evident direction in my life away from the works of men, away from works religion, a renouncing of it, and a looking to Christ alone.

You know, what set Abraham apart? A lot of people like to talk about his obedience. Well, he actually took his son up on the mountain and was ready to offer his son and Abraham is built up as being some example to follow. No, the reason he did that was because he was looking beyond Isaac. God had given him eyes to look to the death of the LORD Jesus Christ and all that that represented, and that's what directed his steps in life. You stop and think about what it is right now that has brought us apart. There's plenty of more comfortable places that we could be meeting right now. You say, "Well, here I am." Why? Some of you have moved to be sitting under the Gospel. Why? Well, it's because of that persuasion that the LORD Himself has given you that this the way of righteousness, but the work of the LORD Jesus Christ alone.

So the point here is that Israel's blessedness and security wasn't in themselves but it is in what God purposed for them and accomplished for them through the LORD Jesus Christ, and that's why it says here, "he hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." For all we know, Israel was probably down there in the valley cavorting and carrying on and all the tendencies of the heart had not changed, and yet here was God justifying them, declaring them righteous. Why? Because He was not looking at them, He was looking at His Son, the LORD Jesus Christ, and what He would accomplish. Alright?

That's an important theme, not just their election by sovereign Grace but their justification before God. That's what justification means, it means to be acquitted of any accusation, of any. And that's before God and that's before men. Even Satan himself cannot find one loophole in this whole work of redemption of Christ whereby God would then have to cast off a people. No. It says here, "neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel. The LORD his God is with him."

And that's really in Scripture if you look over in Isaiah 1:18, that's where, you know, we're called upon to reason together and that's what I would encourage all of us to do. There's a reason, there's a logic in every aspect of this salvation that God has wrought because that's what was declared, what hath God wrought? And if you'll study it, and it

takes study. I don't pretend to think that somehow this just, you know, as the LORD teaches us, these things become more and more plain, they become plainer to our own souls and that's where persuasion comes from. You know, you pick up some people, they've not even given this thing a look but they need to. They need to.

That's what it says here in Isaiah 1:18. These are the Words of the LORD. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD." It's not reason alone. You can have all the logic in the world and still not see Christ but there is a logic. Just like in justice, if you sit down and explain the law and how it's been satisfied, there is a justice to everything God does with regard to the salvation of sinners. I'm glad it's so. I don't want this thing hinges on feeling or experience or what So-and-so thinks. I want it to be on a just satisfaction, don't you? I mean, that's my Hope.

And the LORD says, "Come now, and let us reason together," and here's the reasoning, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Now how is that gonna be? Just by Him declaring it? No, there had to be the shedding of blood. Without the shedding of blood, there's no remission of sin.

And, "though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." That's the LORD, and notice it's in the future tense. He's causing these to look outside themselves to an event that was yet to take place, and as you continue to read the book of Isaiah, you get to Isaiah 53, that's the one we know the best but all the way through, read those chapters, it's pointing forward to the cross. It's pointing forward to the death of the LORD Jesus Christ because that's where God justified His people, Old Testament and New, justified them through the work of His Son, the LORD Jesus Christ. But our blessedness, if Christ died for us, it's based on the Truth and faithfulness of God in justifying for Christ's sake, not anything in us. Alright?

The third parable we see is over in chapter 24, and again verse 3, "And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said." You know and it's interesting, his eyes were open, in a sense, illuminated. I think of Hebrews 6 where it talks about people that have tasted. They've heard some Truth and for a while they're focused on it, but then all of a sudden they're right back to where they were. I mean, it's just all they are is like a sleeping man turning over in the bed. He's slept on this side a while, now you say, "Oh, he's awake." No, he's not, he's just turning over. He's out, alright?

"He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open," and here it is, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the LORD hath planted," again, which the LORD hath planted, "and as cedar trees beside the waters. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted." And again it says, "God brought him forth out of Egypt." Again, how? The Passover lamb. The Passover lamb. That's the basis of God's blessing.

"He hath," as it were, "the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." What is this all about? Well, it's their sanctification in Christ. We talk about justification but sanctification is being set apart in Christ.

And again, these are all tied together. You say, "How do you get that out of this?" Well, look at verse 5, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob." Now let me ask you something: have you ever lived out in a tent very long in the middle of the wilderness? I mean, after about three days, you're ready to wrap it up and head home. Some people kind of like that sort of thing but others, I mean, one day is enough, half a day. There's nothing goodly about a tent. There's nothing goodly about it and yet it says, "How goodly are thy tents." Here they are in the middle of the wilderness and the pronouncement is, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob." The tents of themselves are not glorious but only as seen with eyes open as God sees it. As God sees it, and that is, what? Clothed with all the comeliness of Christ. That's the only way it can be.

I think about that in this flesh. There's nothing good about this flesh. I know we keep trying to keep up with it and fix it up, but every day you get up and look in that mirror, there's some change and there's nothing goodly about this flesh. It's a downhill slide but Spiritually as God sees us, even in this flesh now, here, presently in this world, going through this wilderness, how comely it is to God. Not based on anything in the flesh but based upon that imputed righteousness of the LORD Jesus Christ. We've been set apart in Him, set apart in election in God's purpose, set apart at Calvary in His death, He shall see His seed and be satisfied, and set apart in our calling, calling unto Christ, and looking forward to that day when we shall be set apart in our glorification, completely rid of this flesh, changed forever, you see.

But again, this is a Truth that Balaam was declaring, God putting His words in his mouth of which he would never enter in. Never enter in. He could speak of the bread but he never tasted it. Never tasted it. And that's what we see here. You know, that's what the work of Christ has accomplished. If you're looking at this tent for any goodness, there's no goodness there. That's not what it's talking about, how goodly are thy tents and thy tabernacles, O LORD. Their Tent was Christ. Their Tabernacle was Christ and that's the only place where there can ever be goodness is in Him.

Let me just point you to Hebrews 10:10 where we see this Truth brought home. It says, "By the which will we are sanctified," that's set apart in Christ, that's all our goodness is in Him, "through the offering," again it points to the cross, doesn't it? The offering "of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Once. I mean, that's where it took place. That's how it could be declared, done, is through the death of Christ.

Well, the last parable here is in verse 15. "He took up this parable," Numbers 24:15, "and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High,

which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh." It's looking forward in time.

"There shall come a **Star** out of Jacob." You know, someone standing around looking at this people and saying, "Why is God blessing this people?" Well, there's no Light in them. The Star coming out of Jacob, that's where the victory is, that's Christ.

"And a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel." You mean that little motley crew? Yes. "And shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion." It's not in them but it's the One Who should come out of them. "And shall destroy him that remaineth of the city." What do I see there but their victory in Christ, God's Grace. That's where victory is. It's not in our overcoming sin, it's in Him having overcome sin on our behalf. It's not in our working out a righteousness. That's why He's the Star of Jacob. He's the Sun that rises. His having worked out that perfect righteousness and because of that a people is blessed and abides fast by God's Grace.

Well, a lot there to consider but if you're looking anywhere else but to Christ and Christ alone, you're still in your blindness, still in your unbelief. May the LORD grant us eyes to see Him.

Our Gracious Father, I do thank You for this time in Your Word. How needful we are to hear it again and again, that Word that sets Christ forth as all Your Glory and that sets Him forth as the Savior and that One by Whom You have justified forever a people, sinners, yes, ones that are undeserving of any Grace or Mercy, yes, but nonetheless justified because of Christ and His finished work. I pray for any here, Dear LORD, that Christ has redeemed and yet still wandering sheep, lost in ignorance in their own works religion, LORD, that like the prodigal son, you'd bring to their senses and cause them to be drawn home to You because of the work of Your Blessed Son accomplished for them. We pray that You would keep us, LORD, and continue to teach us of Your Son and we give You the praise in His blessed name. Amen.