

What Road Am I on?

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Date: 09 December 2007

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to Numbers and look at two parts of verses.

I want to look at Numbers 23 and at the end of verse 10, we find Balaam saying, Let me die the death of the upright, and let my end be like his.

And then again in Numbers 31, we read there that they also killed in verse 8, at the end of verse 8, And they also killed Balaam, the son of Beir, with the sword.

Now, you don't need me to tell you that you cannot go in two directions at the same time. It's an impossibility. And I think the mind boggles.

If you tried to see somebody walking in two opposite directions at the same time, you'd say to yourself that this is somebody who had completely lost their mind. Because it's really a physical impossibility.

[1 : 17] We can run on the spot. We can do some quite strange things. The body's able to do quite amazing things. But to walk in two different directions at the same time as in the realms of the impossible.

And yet, that's the very thing that many people try and do at a spiritual level. They try and go in two different directions at the same time.

Where on the one hand, there is the call of God and what God requires of us. And on the other hand, there is what we want and the way that we want to go.

And often, there are these two huge powers, two huge forces. And there are so often that there's this, as it were, pull.

And people find that they're pulling in opposite directions. Some people try and serve God and also serve themselves and the world in the sense of what we would call, not the world, just simply the creation of it, but in living to the world and for the world.

[2 : 26] And people sometimes try and do both things. And that is an impossibility. And that's what this man here, to a certain extent, we have in his life and in his death, a kind of a pictorial representation of the absurdity and the folly of somebody who is trying to go down two different roads at the same time.

You cannot do it. Every person in this world is walking down one of two roads. Tonight, you are either walking down the broad road or else you're walking down the narrow road.

There is no in-between. The Lord sets it out very clearly in his word, that it's either the broad road that leads to destruction or the narrow road that leads to eternal life.

Now, that doesn't mean to say that every person who is walking on that narrow road and that person who is walking on the narrow road has gone through that narrow gate, who is Jesus Christ. That doesn't mean that every person who walks down that road walks down perfectly. It doesn't mean that there aren't times when they're walking on that road when they are battling and times where to other eyes they may almost appear as if they're walking down a broad road.

[3 : 49] And it also doesn't mean but that there are sometimes people who are walking down the broad road who may appear to other people to be walking down the narrow road.

But the fact is, God who knows every heart and knows what is within the heart, God who knows all who are united to Jesus Christ by faith, know which road a person is on.

We're either walking down one road or another. And I would like you to ask yourself that very question tonight.

What road am I on? And to be reminded that you cannot walk down both roads at the same time.

Well, this man, Balaam, was a man who really, in a sense, tried to do both things because I find Balaam actually a real challenge because he was a man who spoke God's word.

Remember that? He was a man who spoke God's word. He was a man who prayed to God. He was a man who discovered what God's will was for his life and for the future of Israel.

[5 : 08] So, in a sense, this man, Balaam, was a man who had tremendous opportunities and tremendous privileges. So, we see, a man who prayed to God, a man that God spoke to, and a man who discovered God's will for his own life and Israel's.

And yet, he was a man who preferred another way to the way of God. Now, as we know the background, if we had a time to read right throughout the whole thing, which takes up, really, chapters, the background is very simple.

Balak, who was the king of Moab, was worried that Israel were going to destroy Moab. They had destroyed the Amorites, and he was now afraid that there would be a similar fate who would come on his own people.

So, he had formed an alliance with Midian. He had got the, enlisted the help of Midian, and he thought, right, I'm going to go a wee bit extra, go the extra mile here, and I'm going to enlist the help of this man, Balaam, who seemed to have been, I suppose, kind of a legend in his own time, a man who seemed to be involved in being able to tell things, or kind of a, I suppose, today you might call him to a certain extent, a kind of a medium.

I don't know. But, anyway, this was what Balak wanted to do. And so, Balak wanted Balaam to come and to curse Israel, because he knew, Balak knew enough of the history of Israel to know that they were a people who were blessed.

[6 : 46] So, he wanted that blessing reversed. So, he was going to employ Balaam to come and to put a curse upon Israel in the hope that this would help him defeat in battle.

And so, Balak sent a deputation to Balaam to come offering wealth and riches and all these things. And God said to Balaam, no, you're not to go.

And then, Balak sent another deputation, promising this time greater riches and greater honor if only he would come and curse Israel. And Balak, Balaam, and when you read about it, initially, you think, well, this man is doing very well.

And again, he said to them, well, he said, I can't really go because God doesn't want me to go. But in a sense, when you look at it more closely, he then says to the Moabite people, well, if you will wait here tonight, I'll ask God again to see if God has anything else to say.

In other words, he's hoping that God might change his mind because Balaam is seeing the money, seeing the wealth, seeing the honor that could come to him.

[8 : 02] And he would much prefer to go that way rather than to go God's way. So he's kind of hoping that if he goes back to God, that God might indeed change his mind and say, right, on you go and you're free to do what you want to do.

And in a sense, Balaam is really showing his true colors. And yet, Balaam is here, he's trapped between the demands of Balak and the command of God.

And you know, it's a very clear picture of where people so often find themselves. Between the demands that this world and our own human heart put upon us and the command of God.

In fact, tonight, we're all in that place where we're caught, as it were, between the demands that our own human heart, the demands that the world placed upon us, all these demands which are drawing us in a particular direction and the commands of God which are calling us and drawing us in a totally different direction.

Now, this is a struggle that goes on. It goes on in the life of the unbeliever. If you're here tonight and you do not know Jesus Christ as Savior, it is a struggle that is going on in your life.

[9 : 26] On the one hand, you know what the Word of God is saying. The Word of God is saying that you're to repent and to believe. You know it. You've heard it so often. You know that tonight you need to have Jesus Christ as Savior.

In fact, you know it sufficiently well that you don't need anybody to tell you. If you went out tonight and somebody said to you, a complete stranger, what must I do to be saved?

I'm quite sure that you could say to them, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Because you know it. That is the command of God.

And yet, the demands in your own heart, the way that life is working in you, you are on the other side of it is saying, oh, but if I became a Christian, that's going to jeopardize life as I know it.

It's going to throw me into a world that I'm not ready for. It's going to take away all the things that I'm familiar with. I might lose my friends. I might lose things at home.

[10 : 34] How it's going to affect me at work, in my neighborhood, my circle of friends, my whole social structure. All these things are going to be so radically altered if I become a Christian.

And so, straight away, even here, you're going through this tugging and this pulling between the demands of your own heart and the command of God.

But you know, it doesn't even stop when a person becomes a Christian. Because there is still within us the old. There is still within us what is drawing us and inclining us away from God.

And that is why God has given us his word. God has revealed to us who he is and revealed to us what he expects and commands from us.

Because we can't work that out ourselves. Sin has clouded our judgment so that we do not know what is good and evil of ourselves. That's why we need God's word.

[11 : 45] Because it is possible for us to call evil good and good evil. That's what sin does. Sin distorts, sin perverts, sin twists. And that's what happens in the human mind and that's how we are by nature.

and we're incapable ourselves of working out exactly how it should be. And that's why God has revealed to us who he is himself and revealed to us what we are required to do.

And so there is this conflict, there's this battleground and that is why it goes on even in the Christian life. And my friends, we need to pray for God's grace and for God's help.

First of all, to know what his will is and then for the grace to do it. Because remember, God knows best. God knows best.

Just like parents know what's best for their children. I'm sure there are many times over the years, children have desperately wanted to go somewhere or to do something.

[12 : 53] To them it just seems so right. But you as parents know that for them on this particular occasion it is wrong. Or it wouldn't be good for them.

There might be loads of different things and factors in it. Taking it in its simplest form. You might have a little child who's full of the cold.

And that little child is wanting to go out somewhere. And you know and you say to them, look, it's not going to be good for you to go. And they insist on going and they go. And they become desperately ill.

And afterwards they're saying, oh, my parents knew what was best. And in a similar way, God knows what is best for us. And that is why he has revealed his will and his way for us.

Now to us sometimes, we don't comprehend it, we don't grasp it, and we sometimes think, oh no, my way is better. But you know, we always find out it's not.

[14 : 00] As for God, perfect is his way. That's what the word of God tells us. And that's what we need to be reminded of. And that's what we need, the grace that we will seek to walk in his will and in his way.

Anyway, to get back to this man, Balaam, just to cut a long story short, we find that Balaam who employs Balaam to curse Israel finds that Balaam in the end is blessing Israel.

And you see, the thing was that Balaam found that he was compelled to give God's word. That he was in a sense powerless but to give God's word.

He had to give what God had said. But we know that although this man, Balaam, spoke God's word and was a mouthpiece at this particular time for God, he had no great love for the Lord or God's people.

Because that is shown out because afterwards, even although he blessed Israel, his kind of parting shot to Balaam was he gave Balaam advice on how to destroy Israel by leading them into sin and into idolatry.

[15 : 34] And that's exactly what happened. Balaam's strategy proved successful. And that is why God's judgment came down upon this man.

So here's this man, Balaam, who lived one way and yet the amazing thing is he declares something else.

That he wanted, he saw that God was blessing Israel and yet he would like some of that blessing himself. Let me die the death of the upright or the righteous.

But the problem was that he didn't particularly want to live the life of the righteous. And you know, I believe that this prayer or this declaration, this oracle that Balaam gives, and of course it is in relation to Israel, but as he is speaking it, I believe that there are many people who sit in church that would give their amen to that.

Let me die the death of the righteous. But if the truth be told, may not want to live the life of the righteous.

[16:49] In other words, what they're saying really before the Lord, maybe they're not spelling it out exactly like that, but really what they're saying is this, you know Lord, the way I want to live according to the way that I want to live.

I don't want to become a Christian, I don't want to become involved in these things until the very end, but Lord, you make sure that I'm safe at the end of the day. save me at the end before I leave this world.

I want to have a high old time living in this world, I don't want to get caught up in Christian things until the very end and before I die, Lord, I want to get it right with you.

I wonder if there's anybody in here tonight, and if you're to be brutally honest, that's kind of the way you're thinking. You're looking at it as a kind of like an insurance policy that you'll be able to cash in before you die, and that everything will be all right, but right up until then, just you want to call the shots, you want to live according to your own way, and then at the end, that it'll get sorted out.

That's this philosophy. It doesn't work like that. It doesn't work like that. And the thing is, I do not believe that the Lord would answer that kind of, I don't think, that, well, it's not a God honoring prayer.

[18:12] That is not a God honoring prayer. Because really what you're saying to God is, leave me Lord for years to live in total defiance and disobedience to your way and will.

That's really what you're saying. And then it's like a PS at the end, Lord, by the way, save me before I die. I don't believe that the Lord is going to answer that kind of prayer.

If you were to say in here tonight, Lord, please have mercy on me. And please, before I leave this world, save me. But you're saying it in such a way that you wish it was now that the Lord was saving you.

That you're wanting it now, then that's a different thing. But may I say one other thing. A totally different side to this. Some people think that if a person was to live like that, to live any old way they wanted, in defiance of God, and then, as it were, at the last moment, a life belt be thrown on them just before they drown and to be saved, that that would be the best of both worlds.

Well, you know, actually, it's not. It's not. Because salvation is not just a deliverance from. But it's a deliverance to.

[19:37] It's not just that we're saved from hell and saved from eternal damnation and saved from the result and consequence of sin. But we are saved to a new life.

A life of peace and of joy and of love. A life that begins, a new life that begins here. life. And you know, all the people that I have known and the people that I have heard of who have been converted very late in their life, before they died.

And it's a wonderful thing when we see it happen. And we've seen it happen. Do you know, although these people are so thankful to God for saving them, they're so thankful to God for his mercy, they also cannot but tell, cannot but witness to what God has done in their heart and life. But the one thing is that they wish that the Lord would give them a little more time in order to serve him here in this world. that's it.

That the Lord would give them a little more time to speak for him or to live for him in this world. And it just shows that things change.

[21:12] You see, God gives new, although there's still the old, God gives new appetites, new inclinations, new desires. There is a new way. And when a profession comes into the light, they want to live in that light.

Even although there is so much that is still corrupt within us, yet there is this growing desire to serve. But here is Balaam.

Balaam is talking about these two masters. He loved, as Jesus uses the word mammon, he says you can't serve God and mammon. He loved his riches, he loved what his world would give.

And yet he feared the Lord, but he couldn't serve both. He wanted two kinds of wages. He wanted the wages of righteousness, but he also wanted the wages that this world would give him.

But you know, Balaam stands out as a warning to us. Peter, writing in his letter, in 2 Peter, he says, about Balaam, this is what he says, forsaking the right way.

[22:23] He's talking about people who have the spirit of Balaam, forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, they have followed the ways of Balaam, who loved gain for wrongdoing.

So Balaam is a warning to us of a man who is going, or as we say, he's trying to serve two different masters at the same time, he's trying to receive two different wages at the same time, he's following, as it were, two different religions at the same time.

But of course it doesn't work. And inevitably God's judgment falls upon Balaam. It's very interesting, with a list of these kings that were killed, we find that Balaam was killed by the sword.

you see, it won't work. What about you in here tonight? Remember Elijah made a great appeal on the top of the mountain, and he said to Israel, how long do you halt between two opinions?

If the Lord be God, follow him. What about you tonight? And I'm sure there might be people in here, and you are, this is the way you've been trying to go down two different roads at the same time, which you can't do.

[23 : 49] There are two powers that are calling for your attention all the time. One day you feel you're going this way, and the other day you feel you're going that way. There are times you feel that the Lord is so close.

There are times you feel that you really want to be a Christian, and then these times dim, and they go away, and then you become cold and hard. You still come to church, but it just goes over your head.

You remain untouched, and unmoved, and week follows week, and then again something happens. And again you find yourself drawn, and you're being sucked back, as it were, with that drawing power.

And so it's going on. Year in, year out. But here's the challenge, the command, just as Elijah said, how long are you going to halt between two opinions?

If the Lord be God, follow him, and you know the Lord is God. That's why you're here tonight. If you didn't believe that the Lord was God, I don't believe you'd be in here tonight.

[24 : 54] So are you going to halt any longer? Please, my friend, don't hide behind the great doctrine of election, which is a wonderful doctrine.

You know, I believe there's a lot of people within our own culture and within our own way of thinking. And they've got this idea, well, salvation is of God.

That's true. That's a great thing if you know that. Then you say, well, if I'm going to be saved, I'll be saved. And there's nothing I can do about it.

And an awful lot of people, that's what they hide behind that. And they have the idea that at the end of the day, that they will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and they will say, you didn't save me.

My friend, it won't work like that. You know, when Jesus walked this world and Jesus taught, he was always finishing his talk, his lecture, with an appeal to people.

[26 : 07] There is human responsibility. We will be accountable before God for what we have done with Jesus Christ.

Please accept your responsibility tonight. And go to him and ask him to have mercy upon you and to save you.

Because it's only God who can save you. You can't save yourself. If you could save yourself, there would be no need for this gospel. But it's because you can't save yourself, and I can't save you, and I couldn't save myself, that we have to go to the Savior for the salvation.

His work is to save. Your work is to seek. And it is through this seeking that we will be saved.

So you go to him. I'm sure there are some here who have already halted long enough. Let us pray. Lord, our God, we ask thee that we may indeed discover this salvation tonight.

[27 : 25] we pray that we might know that God is the one who can save. We pray, Lord, to open our hearts in order to know the Lord Jesus as Savior.

We pray that any in here tonight who don't know Christ as Savior, give them, Lord, a prayer. May there be a genuine seeking and searching for Jesus.

And we give thanks, O Lord, that the word assures us that those who truly seek will find. We ask thee then that thou bless us, take us all home safely, be with us wherever we go and whatever we have to do.

May we know thy presence and peace and pardon our sin for Jesus' sake. Amen.