

Counting On God's Protection

Message 07 of the series, "Numbers: Counting on God"

I. Balak, king of Moab, wanted to pay Balaam, a corrupt prophet, to get God to curse His people.

"Then the people of Israel traveled to the plains of Moab and camped east of the Jordan River, across from Jericho... when the people of Moab saw how many Israelites there were, they were terrified. The king of Moab said... 'This mob will devour everything in sight, like an ox devours grass in the field!' So Balak, king of Moab, sent messengers to call Balaam son of Beor, who was living... near the Euphrates River. His message said: 'Look, a vast horde of people has arrived from Egypt. They cover the face of the earth and are threatening me. Please come and curse these people for me because they are too powerful for me. Then perhaps I will be able to conquer them and drive them from the land.'... They went to Balaam and delivered Balak's message to him. 'Stay here overnight,' Balaam said. 'In the morning I will tell you whatever the LORD directs me to say.' ... That night... God told Balaam, 'Do not go with them. You are not to curse these people, for they have been blessed!' The next morning Balaam got up and told Balak's officials, 'Go on home! The LORD will not let me go with you.' So the Moabite officials returned to King Balak and reported, 'Balaam refused to come with us.'" Numbers 22:1-14 (NLT)

Life Application: God protects his people from curses.

"No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their vindication is from Me," declares the LORD." Isaiah 54:17 (NASB77)

"If God is for us, who can ever be against us?" Romans 8:31 (NLT)

Note: We are involved in a real spiritual battle. "For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places." Ephesians 6:12 (NLT)

II. The second time Balak requested his help Balaam went.

Then Balak tried again. This time he sent a larger number of even more distinguished officials than those he had sent the first time... But Balaam responded to Balak's messengers, "Even if Balak were to give me his palace filled with silver and gold, I would be powerless to do anything against the will of the LORD my God. But stay here one more night, and I will see if the LORD has anything else to say to me." That night God came to Balaam and told him, "Since these men have come for you, get up and go with them. But do only what I tell you to do." So the next morning Balaam got up, saddled his donkey, and started off with the Moabite officials. But God was angry that Balaam was going, so he sent the angel of the LORD to stand in the road to block his way. Numbers 22:15-22 (NLT)

Note: God knew that Balaam had mixed motives and would obey only as long as he could profit from it. "Like Balaam, (ungodly people) deceive people for money." Jude 1:11 (NLT)

Life Application: God knows the secret motivations of our hearts. "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable." Hebrews 4:13 (NLT)

"Balaam's donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand. The donkey bolted off the road into a field, but Balaam beat it and turned it back onto the road. Then the angel of the LORD stood at a place where the road narrowed between two vineyard walls. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, it tried to squeeze by and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall. So Balaam beat the donkey again. Then the angel of the LORD moved farther down the road and stood in a place too narrow for the donkey to get by at all. This time when the donkey saw the angel, it lay down under Balaam. In a fit of rage Balaam beat the animal again with his staff. Then the LORD gave the donkey the ability to speak. "What have I done to you that deserves your beating me three times?" it asked Balaam. "You have made me look like a fool!" Balaam shouted. "If I had a sword with me, I would kill you!" "But I am the same donkey you have ridden all your life," the donkey answered. "Have I ever done anything like this before?" "No," Balaam admitted. Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the roadway with a drawn sword in his hand. Balaam bowed his head and fell face down on the ground before him. "Why did you beat your donkey those three times?" the angel of the LORD demanded. "Look, I have come to block your way because you are stubbornly resisting me. Three times the donkey saw me and shied away; otherwise, I would certainly have killed you by now and spared the donkey." Then Balaam

confessed to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned. I didn't realize you were standing in the road to block my way. I will return home if you are against my going." But the angel of the LORD told Balaam, "Go with these men, but say only what I tell you to say." So Balaam went on with Balak's officials.

Numbers 22:23-35 (NLT)

Note: The donkey had more spiritual sensitivity than the corrupt prophet!

Life Application: Sometimes God protects us from our own foolish choices by rebuking us. "But (Balaam) was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey--a beast without speech--who spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness." 2 Peter 2:16 (NIV)

"Let the godly strike me! It will be a kindness! If they correct me, it is soothing medicine. Don't let me refuse it." Psalm 141:5 (NLT)

III. Instead of cursing the people of Israel, Balaam ended up blessing them three times.

"King Balak flew into a rage against Balaam. He angrily clapped his hands and shouted, 'I called you to curse my enemies! Instead, you have blessed them three times. Now get out of here! Go back home! I promised to reward you richly, but the LORD has kept you from your reward.'" Numbers 24:10-11 (NLT)

Life Application: God not only protects us, He blesses us. "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." Psalm 23:5-6 (NIV)

IV. Balaam was crafty enough to get his money anyway by instructing Balak in how to tempt God's people to sin and bring God's punishment upon themselves.

"Balaam... showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel. He taught them to sin by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin." Revelation 2:14 (NLT)

"While the Israelites were camped at Acacia Grove, some of the men defiled themselves by having sexual relations with local Moabite women. These women invited them to attend sacrifices to their gods, so the Israelites feasted with them and worshiped the gods of Moab. In this way, Israel joined in the worship of Baal of Peor, causing the LORD's anger to blaze against his people... those who died in the plague numbered 24,000." Numbers 25:1-3 (NLT) 25:9 (NIV) (See also Numbers 31:16)

Life Application: We can be protected from false teachers by the truth of God's Word. "...there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them. In this way, they will bring sudden destruction on themselves. Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of these teachers, the way of truth will be slandered... They commit adultery with their eyes, and their desire for sin is never satisfied. They lure unstable people into sin, and they are well trained in greed. They live under God's curse. They have wandered off the right road and followed the footsteps of Balaam son of Beor, who loved to earn money by doing wrong."

2 Peter 2:1-2,14-15 (NLT)

"I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They do not belong to this world any more than I do. Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth."

John 17:15-17 (NLT)

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Gideon was a coward.

Rahab was a prostitute.

Esther was an orphan.

Balaam's donkey was...well, a donkey.

Yet God used each one to impact His Kingdom.

"God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong." - 1 Corinthians 1:27 (NIV)

Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. Do you believe that God protects his children from evil people? Share an experience or story you know about God's divine protection.
2. Read Acts 16:16-18. What are some things you see about the young girl that encountered Paul in Philippi? How would you have responded to her?
3. When you read Ephesians 6:12, what thoughts come to mind? How true is this verse today?
4. Read Numbers 22:23-35. Unfortunately, is it not uncommon for us to miss seeing what God is doing in our life even though it is so incredibly obvious even a donkey can see it. What causes us to miss seeing God in our lives?
5. Read 1 Peter 5:6-11. In your opinion, how does a believer stay alert, stand firm, and be strong in their faith?
6. Read Romans 8:31-39. What are the promises we see in this passage that encourages us as we endure spiritual battles?