**Balaam’s Lip Service**

‘Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything contrary to the command of the LORD, either good or bad, of my own accord. What the LORD speaks, that I will speak’? (Num.24:13). This sounds so virtuous, true, and the way a prophet or preacher should be. We don’t want doctors to lie to us. No. Nor do we want preachers to lie to us either. Balaam comes close to saying, “We will speak what the Bible speaks, and be silent when it is silent”. So why isn’t it virtuous coming from Balaam’s lips?

When Balaam says, “What the LORD speaks, that I will speak’?” he is under duress when he says it. Balaam’s donkey saved his life three times for he turned away from the angel who had a sword in hand to kill Balaam. The angel says to Balaam, “But the donkey saw me and turned aside from me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, I would surely have killed you just now, and let her live.”Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, “ I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the way against me. Now then, if it is displeasing to you, I will turn back.” (Num. 22:33-34). From this point on, Balaam knows if he misspeaks God’s word, the angel of the Lord could appear at any moment. So Balaam doesn’t haver much of a choice because he is scared to death if he does’t faithfully repeat God’s message.

So when he does speak, he is under duress to speak clearly, accurately, and not more than what God has put in Balaam’s mouth. Balaam doesn’t behave like this because he loves God, respects God. It is only convenient for the moment. A few chapters later we find out what kind of a person Balaam really is, “Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the LORD.” (Num. 31:16). Balaam counseled the Moabite women to get the men of Israel to worship idols and commit fornication (Num. 25). Balaam’s counsel was then approved and practiced by the Moabites, So “those who died by the plague were 24,000.” (Num. 25:9). How terrible of a person was Balaam who caused so many to fall.

From the outside, Israel won two victories, over the Amorites and Og of Baashan (Num. 21), and from the outside Balaam couldn’t curse Israel. But from the inside of their hearts, being tempted to lust for these women & Idols they fell. Let us be on our guard against lip service to God that is not followed by the heart, on the inside. Dan Peters