

Talking the Talk and Walking the Walk

Ponder: Saying and doing.

Scripture: “Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more” (Num. 22:18, NKJV).

Balaam’s words were spot on! The Moabite king Balak had promised high honor to Balaam, undoubtedly including great financial reward, if the prophet would come with the king’s messengers and curse Israel. The Lord, however had already told Balaam, “You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people” (22:12). Now Balaam pledged to do only what the Lord said.

But Balak didn’t give up easily. He kept coaxing Balaam, and four more times the prophet stuck to his story (Num, 22:38; 23:12; 23:26; 24:12-13). Truly, Balaam talked a good game! Unfortunately, his heart wasn’t in it. He really wanted the money! Despite God’s clear command, “You shall not go with them,” Balaam asked again for permission to go. Upon arriving in Moab, he kept asking and asking for permission to curse Israel. If we could speak with him today, we might ask, “What part of ‘NO!’ did you not understand?”

Balaam never did verbally curse Israel. However, he figured out another way to accomplish the same goal. He counseled the Moabites to invite the Israelites to an idolatrous feast. When the Israelites joined in the pagan worship and fornication, 24,000 of them perished in the resulting plague (Num. 24:9).

The early church suffered from false teachers like Balaam, and the danger still exists. Peter warned, “They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness” (2 Pet. 2:15). Jude exclaimed, “Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah” (v. 11). And Jesus rebuked the church at Pergamum for harboring “those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality” (Rev. 2:14).

The love of money and pleasure is rife in modern American religion. Let each of us take heed lest we find ourselves like Balaam, talking the talk but not walking the walk!

Song: “More Holiness Give Me”

Prayer: Father in heaven, You have blessed us richly in every way. Help us not to love the material wealth you have supplied, but to use it to Your glory. Help us not to be greedy for more, but to be true to our duty to trust and obey You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.