

Helps for Young Christians.

No. 5

BALAAAM

OR

Sinners Wilfully

BY

G. F. VALLANCE

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PICKERING & INGLIS, Publishers

14 Paternoster Row, London, E.C.4

229 Bothwell Street, Glasgow, C.2

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“FOR if we SIN WILFULLY after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace.”—Hebrews 2, 26-29.



THE

Error of Balaam;

OR

Sinning Wilfully.

THERE are several persons very prominent in Old Testament history whose character and actions defy analysis. Take King Saul, Joab, and Ahithophel as illustrative instances. The changeful ways of King Saul amaze the minds of students of his life. Such modesty and maliciousness rarely ever were found in combination in any other man on earth. Joab, that cold, cruel, callous individual, knew apparently more of God's mind about the numbering of Israel than King David did. (2 Sam. xxiv, 1-10). Then Ahithophel, who possessed such wonderful powers of penetration and prediction, terminated his course in a suicide's grave! He has been aptly designated "the Old Testament Judas."

But of all the mysterious personages of Old Testament history who pass in review before our minds, surely Balaam out-mystifies them all.

Reading through the prophet's history, how we wonder whether he was really a true child of God or only a false guide. From the Old Testament record alone we could scarcely decide, but in the light of New Testament revelations we do not hesitate to say that Balaam was guilty of **SINNING WILFULLY** in the face of full knowledge.

**There are Three References to Balaam in the
New Testament :**

2 Peter ii, 14-16—"Cursed children, which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: **THE DUMB ASS SPEAKING** with man's voice, forbad the madness of the prophet."

Jude xi—"Woe unto them; for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the **ERROR OF BALAAM FOR REWARD**, and perished in the gain-saying of Core."

Revelation ii, 14—To the Church at Pergamos. "Thou hast there them that hold the **DOCTRINE OF BALAAM**, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to **EAT THINGS SACRIFICED UNTO IDOLS, AND TO COMMIT FORNICATION.**"

We thus have confirmation by:—

- (1) Peter: Of the Ass speaking;
- (2) Jude: Of Balaam's motive;
- (3) John; Of Balaam's evil ways;

setting the Holy Spirit's seal in the New Testament to the historical fact of this record and the hypocrisy of the Prophet.

To those who believe the Bible to mean what it says, there is no doubt that Balaam's ass spake with man's voice, that Balaam actually lived, that he uttered divine truths and prophecies, that he was controlled at those times by the Spirit of God, and yet **HE PERISHED**. Sad indeed, but verily true. Sadder still is it that Balaam's tale has been told many times since and is being enacted largely in this our day. Heb. vi, 4-5 contains very solemn words concerning some who are very similar in circumstances to Balaam, yet of whom the Bible says "it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance."

Balaam means "a destroyer of the people." He was a Midianite, and a direct lineal descendant of Abraham through his third wife Keturah. (Gen. xxv, 2.) Could Abraham have lived to see the race of evil-doers which his association with Hagar and Keturah produced, doubtless he would have repented in dust and ashes.

One stands amazed at the knowledge of Balaam regarding God and His people, at the statements he utters concerning them and yet his desire to curse them for momentary reward. Hired of Balak, he

disobeys divine warnings but can never fulfil his true heart longings, because they are opposed to God's counsels. Satan's many emissaries may scheme and plan how they will to destroy and harm God's children to-day, but "not a single shaft can hit till the God of love sees fit."

We will now consider a few things the Bible says about Balaam.

HE WAS A SPIRITIST MEDIUM

Num. xxii, 7; Num. xxiv, 1; Josh. xiii, 22.

He dabbled in that awful science of spiritism, which is not all tappings and dark room conjurings, but real communication with the spirit realm. It is, however, no new theme, for we find Balaam in his day was known throughout all his country as an enchanter and diviner, and when Balak sends his elders and princes to him, they come with the rewards of divination in their hand. We must not tarry here, save to say Balaam shared the awful doom of all those who will continue in this evil practice. He passed from time to Eternity—a lost soul—to stand before God as (we shall see presently) he himself foretold.

The second important thing to note concerning this "prophet" is

HIS REAL MOTIVE IN LIFE.

Peter says, "He loved the wages of unrighteousness," and Jude speaking of Balaam's successors declares they run greedily after the **ERROR OF BALAAM FOR REWARD**. This error consisted in a cunningly devised attempt to serve God and Balak at the same time in a way most advantageous to himself, but he found what all double-minded persons always find, that, "no man can serve two masters." It was the love of money which lured Balaam along the line of error. How many victims has that monster, the mammon of unrighteousness, crushed and strangled in its sprawling tentacles?

Balaam was one of the first. Would to God he had been the last; but alas, how many to-day are like Balaam. Gladly would they serve God and the world were it possible—but it is not, and never will be, for God says, “*ye cannot serve two masters, ye cannot serve God and Mammon.*” A choice must be made. Many choose Mammon; a few choose God and leave the rest with Him, only to find that seeking first His kingdom all else is added unto them. What is your choice, dear reader? Is it pleasure, worldly amusement, social standing and advancement, or is it Christ?

“What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Matt. xvi. 26

Balaam chose the reward of unrighteousness, and was

PERMITTED OF GOD TO CONTINUE IN
THE WAY OF HIS CHOICE.

Man is always allowed a free-will choice, but never without a full warning from God. So here, when first Balak's princes and the elders of Moab come to Balaam, God says, “**THOU SHALT NOT GO WITH THEM.**”—Num. xxii, 12. But the second time, when more honourable princes are sent, and very great honour is promised, he **DOUBTS** God's word, by again enquiring of Him after a definite command had been given, “**THOU SHALT NOT.**” What a comparison with Gen. iii;

“**HATH GOD SAID?**”

enquires the serpent. God **HAD** said, “Thou shalt not;” but Eve halted, hesitated, doubted and fell! Likewise Balaam halted, hesitated and was lost! He really wants to go with Balak's messengers, for he greatly desires honour and reward, so we find that God says to him, after his second request, “**Rise up**

and go with them.”—Num. xxii, 20. He needed no second bidding. In the morning he rose up and went, but v. 22 says, “God’s anger was kindled because he went.” Ah, someone says, “but did not God tell him to go?” Yes, but He had first said, “Thou shalt not go.”

Reader, there was a time in your life’s history when conscience pricked you concerning a certain sin. You knew before God it was wrong, but you loved that sin. You really wanted it, as Balaam wanted honour and reward, and you tried to think it was right. You tempted conscience many a time till conscience failed to arrest you, and to-day you are steeped in that sin which once the thought of, was repellant, and God has allowed you to go the way of your choice. God often allows us, after giving warning, to go our own way in order that we may find that whatsoever we sow that we surely reap.

Although God in His righteous anger permits Balaam to go

HIS LOVE MUST WARN HIM

once again, for although he was never a child of God, he was a sinner, and God loved him. The God of Love pleads with every sinner in time, not once, nor twice, but even when they choose their own evil ways and persist in sin, God still loves and follows them. May-be He has followed the reader just here to these pages, and would warn once again. Can you not hear the voice of the Lord as you read these lines? He may be now standing in your way to a lost Eternity, pleading with you to repent.

Sending His angel in the way before the ass Balaam rode, He caused it to first turn aside, then to crush the foot of the blind prophet and then to fall from under him, his only response being to smite her with his staff. How blind the eyes of those whom the God of this world hath blinded!

Three times we read “And the ass saw the Angel

of the Lord," but Balaam saw Him not until God permitted the prophet to behold the cause of his beast's stubbornness. There is nothing so blinding as wilfulness in a wrong course. The awful cataract of unrighteousness had formed a deadly film across Balaam's vision. Had Balaam a sword, *he would have slain his ass*, but now he sees the Angel of God standing before HIM *with* a drawn sword. He was more stubborn and wilful than any ass, and justly deserved that which he had promised his beast of burden. Having his eyes opened he exclaimed, "I have sinned," but it was not the cry of the penitent's heart, for he adds, "If it displease thee, I will get me back."—Num. xxii, 34: He knew full well that it DID displease the Lord, and that that was why the angel was there. Balaam was a CONVICTED SINNER, but he trifled with the position. He parleyed and avoided it and would NOT CONFESS his sin and retrace his step. Do not quibble, my reader, and ask whether your course in God's sight is sinful, or whether it displeases Him. **You know it does** if you are conscious of divine conviction. It is an awful thing to be convicted by God but never to repent and confess to Him on account of your sins. Worse is it, like Balaam, to *profess the name of Jehovah* and yet despise divine warnings. A professing christian who disobeys the known will of the Lord without confession of heart and contrition of soul is in a dangerous position, to say the least. May all who read these lines be honest with God and themselves, and not appear what they are not. Balaam professed to be a God-tearing man, whilst really his heart was not right with God at all. May be, the reader is the same.

Balaam now goes on to Balak and from the following

THREE VIEW POINTS

beholds the people whom his hirer wishes him to curse

1. HIGH PLACES OF BAAL—where he beholds the fourth part of Israel.
2. MOUNT PISGAH (part view)—he sees the utmost part of them.
3. TOP OF PEOR—he beholds the whole camp.

More pious words than those uttered in Balaam's parables it would be difficult to find, for they are absolutely true, and form

DIVINELY INSPIRED PROPHECIES,

yet they were TOLD FORTH BY ONE, A SERVANT OF SATAN. From this we learn that Jehovah uses whomsoever He will to work His purpose. A Judas, a Simon the Sorcerer, or a Balaam can all be used by God to speak His words. How solemn to remember I may be the one so used and yet LOST for eternity. I may speak for God, work for Him and yet never really a child of God at all. Have you pondered this, my reader? Busy as you may be in your Sunday School class, Gospel preaching, Open Air Work, and yet never God's child. This incident shows that this is possible. Let us beware, lest we are building on a false hope. Nothing but faith in the Blood of Christ will avail before God.

Another interesting observation is that on each occasion it is recorded

GOD CAME TO BALAAM.

Num. xxii, 9 & 20; xxiii, 4 & 16; xxiv, 2.

The Prophet had no way of access to God; God must come out to him. Every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is privileged to *draw nigh to God* within the holiest of all, but to every one outside and afar off, *God has come out*, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ—His Beloved Son—to save and deliver.

“If we **SIN WILFULLY** after that we have received the **KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH**, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain **FEARFUL LOOKING FOR OF JUDGMENT.**” Heb. x, 26.

That Balaam **SINNED WILFULLY** we have shown above, it now remains to observe

- (1). The fulness of his **KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH.**
- (2). The **CERTAIN FEARFUL LOOKING FOR OF JUDGMENT.**

There are four important verses setting forth Balaam's knowledge, to which we will next give attention: —

- (1) **HE KNEW** the fulness of salvation
Num. xxiii, 21.
- (2) **HE KNEW** of a promised Saviour
Num. xxiv, 17.
- (3) **HE KNEW** of a lost eternity
Num. xxiv, 17.
- (4) **HE KNEW** he was not ready to die
Num. xxiii, 10.

(1) Balaam knew the fulness of the blessing of being one of God's people, when he testified

“He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel.” Num. xxiii, 21.

There is no doubt that Balaam well knew of the murmurings and complainings in the wilderness.

“Our soul loatheth this light bread,” and “wherefore hast thou brought us up out of Egypt to kill us with thirst”

were words that fell from the lips of these very people in whom, Balaam prophesied, God had not beheld iniquity nor perverseness.

Doubtless to many these words and facts seem a paradox, for surely the God whose Omniscient eye beholds all we say and do, must have seen the many sins of the children of Israel. How then could he use such words as our verse declares? That God *did*

see Israel's sins is beyond question, and further, the record of Exodus plainly tells that He dealt with them accordingly with the hand of chastening; indeed their very forty years wandering was but a judgment for their complaining. **BUT**, and here is the whole point at issue, whatever God may see in His people, and do with them in consequence, let another who is their adversary oppose and charge them, and God at once is for them. They were *His* people and He had brought them out of Egypt by an outstretched arm, and in spite of their failures by the way He had pledged Himself to bring them in. All their shortcomings came in God's sight

BEHIND THE BLOOD,

in which they had put their trust in Egypt (Ex. xii). That memorable night when the firstborn were slain, they were redeemed by precious blood, and by mighty power brought through the Red Sea. Now, as God's redeemed people, none could lay ought to their charge for "'tis the Blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." In exactly the same way is this true of the believer to-day. Having taken Christ as Saviour, believing in the value of His precious blood, he is now no longer afar off, alienated and without hope, but is "complete in Christ." As a son he may stumble and fall, but he is still God's child through faith in Christ. It is possible for a believer even, to sin, and in consequence the Lord often places His chastening hand upon him, but let another point a finger as to his eternal security and standing before God, and what do we read? "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth! Who is he that condemneth?" Rom. viii, 33.

"Clean every whit, Thou saidst
it, Lord,
Shall one suspicion lurk?
Thine surely is a faithful word
And thine a finished work."

"What though the accuser roar,
Of sins that I have done,
I know them well and thousands more
Jehovah findeth none."

“ It shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, ‘ What hath GOD wrought ? ’ ”—Num. xxiii, 23.

(2) Balaam knew of
A PROMISED DELIVERER.

“ There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel ”—Num. xxiv, 17.

A Star to guide and a Sceptre to rule. Salvation and judgment. The twofold aspect of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. First as a Saviour and a guiding light, to be complete when He returns to receive all those that look for Him, and Second as a Judge with the Sceptre of universal sway, when He comes with ten thousands of His saints. Whether this false prophet knew this promised One would be the Son of God we do not know, but he was well aware that a mighty deliverer *would* come, and exclaims, “ Alas, who shall live when God doeth this ” (Num. xxiv, 23). At the birth of the Saviour His Star was seen in the east (Matt. ii, 2), (east being typical of man’s departure from God). He is spoken of in Luke ii, 32, as a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel,” and in the last book of the Bible, we read, “ I am the root and the offspring of David, and the

BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR.”

Rev. xxii, 16

Malachi closed the Old Testament with a prophecy concerning the Sun of Righteousness rising with healing in His wings, but the Book of Revelation closes with the promise of the Star, the Lord Jesus Christ for Whom we daily watch and wait. He may come forth at any moment to complete the salvation of all the redeemed of God.

Balaam lived before the Cross, you and I look back to it. If he could only look for judgment, who **sinned wilfully** with a *knowledge of the PROPHECY* of Christ, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted

the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace? Many who in this favoured land so readily profess the name of Christ should heed these words and see to it that they are not drawing back, and by their life denying the Lord whom they profess to follow.

Not only is Christ the Star out of Jacob, but also the Sceptre out of Israel, as we read, "Unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of Righteousness is the Sceptre of Thy Kingdom."—Heb. i, 8. God's beloved Son, my Saviour, is one day to be the universal Ruler of this vast universe. He, the Prince of Peace, shall reign in righteousness and equity. Happiness will then be man's portion for a thousand years at least, and after that He will still have the sceptre and as a Judge, all outside of Christ will be called before Him at the Great White Throne, some from the tomb, some from the sea, some cremated and some swallowed by earthquakes. All and everyone will that day appear before Him to be judged and condemned. This Balaam seems to know of too, for in this very same verse we see that

(3) BALAAM KNOWS OF AN HEREAFTER.

He says, "I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh."—Num. xxiv, 17.

Words awful and solemn. May they never be true of one who reads these lines. From the high places of Baal, Balaam in his first parable said

"From the tops of the rocks I see Him, and from the hills I behold Him;"

but this was now past, and he could only look forward to a meeting—NOT NOW AND NOT NIGH! Balaam rejected his opportunity, knowing he must one day meet God again in Judgment. A great gulf would separate and separate for ever. This is the doom of all those who in view of all their knowledge and profession of the things of God—SIN WILFULLY.

We read of Balaam,
 HE HEARD the words of God;
 HE KNEW the knowledge of the Most High;
 SAW the vision of the Almighty;
 Having HIS EYES OPEN—Num. xxiv, 16.
 YET WENT HIS OWN WAY.

Many to-day have heard, time and time again, these truths and professed faith in them; they have a wonderful knowledge, having seen with opened eyes, and yet—SINNED WILFULLY? Can this be said of you, my reader? Living the Christian life is far better than profession remember.

We draw to a close by observing that Balaam had
 A CERTAIN FEARFUL LOOKING FOR OF
 JUDGMENT.

- (4) He knew he was not ready to die; for he says
 "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Num. xxiii, 10.

Like Balaam all who read these lines will wish their end to be as the righteous. Then in time they must be made righteous if throughout eternity they are to dwell with those who are such. This is now gloriously possible, for there is One Who will receive all who come to Him and perfectly cleanse from all sin. This One is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, God's beloved Son, who said,

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Matt. xi, 28.

"Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out."—Jno. vi, 37.

Do not put this paper down nor give your eyes sleep to-night, until you KNOW with assurance that you have peace with God, and can read *your* title clear to Mansions in the sky, for

"It may be at mid-day, it may be at twilight,
 It may be perchance, that the blackness of midnight
 Will burst into light in the blaze of His Glory
 When Jesus receives His Own."

G. F. VALLANCE.

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