



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Numbers 23: 13-16

“The Prophecies of Balaam, part II: Israel's Immutable Blessing”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we return to Thee with thanksgiving again for Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who is our great high priest who ever lives to make intercession for us and to secure for us all of the blessings which he has purchased for us in his death on the cross of Calvary. We give Thee thanks for him for and for all of the benefits that are ours. We thank Thee that by virtue of the doctrine of justification by faith, we stand before Thee declared righteous through the merits of the Son of God.

And we pray again, Lord that Thou give us understanding as we reflect upon Thy word in this hour may yet build us up in our faith and strengthen us and may it be useful for us also in the daily experiences of life. We ask that Thy wilt through the Holy Spirit be with each one of us in this meeting through these moments together.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Returning again to the prophecies of Balaam which were made to the children of Israel or concerning the children of Israel primarily to Balak, the King of Moab. While Israel was in the valley just before they were to enter the land, remember those three great geographical places in which significant things happened to Israel after they came out of the land of Egypt. The first Mount Sinai, where they received the law.

Then at Kadesh-Barnea, where they came to the borders of the land sent in spies, but refused to enter in through unbelief and were sentenced to disciplinary judgment for almost or about 39 plus years while that generation died in the wilderness.

And then the last of these times where they spent a considerable period of time in one place as far as we know from the Mosaic writings is this that is recorded for us in Numbers 22 through about 25 where the children of Israel are in the plains of Moab. Balak, the King of Moab, is very much disturbed over the fact that Israel has come because he fears for his own kingdom and in an attempt to have Israel cursed and to get the better of them because he is fearful of them. They have already defeated one of his neighboring nations and so he is disturbed.

He sends for Baalam, a well known Mesopotamian prophet, who had a knowledge of Jehovah and asks Balaam to come curse the children the Israel for him, believing, as many did in the East that time, that if a prophet could curse someone, they would really be cursed. So, Balaam had a good reputation. And Balaam, however, was so far as the New Testament is concerned, quite plainly a prophet who was a false prophet, but nevertheless who had an unusual knowledge of the things of Jehovah and furthermore was afflicted with a love of money and as a result of the love of money and other aspects of his character that will come out in the account. He came and now begins to prophesy. But unfortunately, so far as Balak is concerned, all of his prophecies come out as blessings rather than curses. And the Lord God has made not known to Balaam. He is not going to be able to say anything but what God wants him to say.

So tonight, we are going to look at Numbers chapters 23, verse 13 through verse 26, and this is a prophecy, the second of Balaam's prophecies in which the theme is Israel's immutable covenantal blessing. So I am going to read beginning at verse 13 through verse 26. And Moses writes: "And Balak said unto him, 'Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them; thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all: and cursed be them from thence.' And he

brought him unto the field of Zophim," that means something like watchers, "to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar." This was characteristic of the kind of necromancy and sorcery and that type of thing that was practiced in the East.

"And he said unto Balak, 'Stand here by Thy burnt offering, while I meet the Lord yonder.' And the Lord met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, 'Go again unto Balak, and say thus.' And when he came to him, behold, he stood by his burnt-offering, as Balak did, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said unto him, 'What hath the Lord spoken?' And he took up his parable." Remember we said that the term "parable", this term, this Hebrew term *mashal* does sometimes means something like that, proverb. But at other times it means a burden and then at times it means simply as "saying." And that seems to be the force of it here. It is a parable in the sense of a saying.

"And he took up his parable, and said, 'Rise up, Balak, and hear; Hearken unto me, thou son of Ziphor: God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent: Hath he said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: And He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob; Neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel. The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt. He hath as it were the strength of a unicorn."

Now that clause can be understood in two ways. It can be understood as if it is a reference to the strength of God manifested when he brought Israel out of Egypt. That would make perfectly good sense. "God brought them out of Egypt; He hath as it were the strength of a unicorn." On the other hand, due to the type of Hebrew construction, this can also mean that this is a reference to Israel. In other words, the "he" may be a reference either to God or to Israel and the language suits both and unfortunately, for a

certain decision the context suits both. Because what it would mean if this is a reference to Israel is God brought them out of Egypt. He that is Israel, has as it were the strength of a unicorn.

That is, by virtue of God's undertaking for them. So both of these make sense and if you will read the translations, modern translations of this you will find they are rather evenly divided. Some of them take it as a reference to God. Some of them take it as a reference to the Nation Israel. In fact, my recollection is and I will not take the time to look at my notes to refer this out because I was not thinking about doing this, but this is one of the instances as I remember where the NIV and the NASB differ on this particular point, which only goes to show you there is no inspired translation of the Bible. That is why we studied Greek and Hebrew.

Verse 23, "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob; neither is there any divination against Israel according to this time." That probably means either now, as some translations render it or according to the proper time. That is according to the time is the time that is proper. I rather like the latter, so I will take it in that sense. "According to the proper time it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, what hath God wrought! Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion and lift up himself as a young lion. He shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain." And Balak said unto Balaam, "Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all." But Balaam answered and said unto Balak, "Told not I thee," saying, "All that the Lord speaketh, that I must do?"

We know from the study of the Bible and we have said this a lot in our Tuesday evening studies in recent years because we have spent a little time studying the minor prophets, particularly where we have a great deal of Messianic prophecy that Abrahamic covenant blessing is the source and foundation of the history of salvation. Upon reading in the New Testament, noticing the references to Abraham, the frequent references to Abraham and hearing that the church is called individually sons of Abraham, it's not

difficult to see how important the New Testament writers thought those fundamental promises that God made to Abraham are in the unfolding of the divine program.

So, here we see it again included within this Abrahamic Covenantal blessing is justification by the imputation of righteousness. That's very plain from Genesis chapter 15, verse 6. "Where God said that Abraham should look up and see if he could number the skies. And then He was told, 'So shall Thy seed be.'" And we read Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him for righteousness. So, right in the beginning, the doctrine of justification by faith is linked to Abraham and the promises that were given to him.

Paul in the Epistles to the Romans, and to the Galatians, spells this out in a great bit of detail. But not only do the Abrahamic promises concern justification by the imputation of divine righteousness, but those covenantal promises also have to do with the union of believers with the Lord God. We sometimes are told that it is the church that alone has union with the Lord God. I don't think that is true; I think a careful study of the Old Testament will reveal that that is part of the Abrahamic Covenant blessing.

Now, the sense in which the church is united to the Lord Jesus today, by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that is something that one cannot find in the Old Testament. But in the covenantal blessings were those fundamental promises, "I will be their God. They will be my sons." And furthermore, that he would be with them and that they would be united together in the divine purposes. So we can say that union with God and Christ is within the Abrahamic covenant blessing revealed in its fullness in the time of the Christian church.

The gift of the Spirit is said to be part of the blessing of Abraham in Galatians 3, verse 14. So when the Holy Spirit came on the day Pentecost and began to dwell every believer that is part of the fulfillment of those fundamental Abrahamic covenant blessings.

And then one final thing that the Old Testament speaks about so frequently is the ultimate blessing of the Nation Israel as pre-eminent among the nations in the Kingdom of

God upon the earth. So all of those things are part of the Abrahamic covenantal blessing. And those covenantal blessings we know are immutable. They depend not upon men, but they depend upon God ultimately. Now in the Old Testament revelation of them, it is specifically said that if Israel is disobedient they will lose the enjoyment of those blessings. But they do not lose the promises. And furthermore in the Old Testament God says: "He will ultimately fulfill them by His sovereign affection and grace manifested to them."

Well, a number of these themes appear in embryonic form in Balaam's prophecies. We have to remember that when we are dealing with the prophecies of Balaam we are dealing with the prophecies of a Mesopotamian false prophet who had a lot of knowledge of God but whose tongue and man came under the control of God the Holy Spirit. But we also have to remember that this was a particular stage in the unfolding of the whole program of God as revealed in the Bible and the stage is obviously in its earlier stages, the Book of Numbers. The children of Israel are not even in the land yet.

So, what we have is Abrahamic Covenantal blessing in embryonic form. So we should not expect to find the fullness of the truth in Numbers from Balaam's mouth at this stage in Israel's history, as we will later on when we read the prophets of the Old Testament and then particularly when we come into the New Testament and read in the gospels and in the apostles, the fullness of the divine revelation.

It's not surprising then that Balaam's prophecies contain Israel's immutable covenantal blessing, Israel's coming worldwide sovereignty. And those two things are said out right here, in verse 19 through verse 21. We have Israel's immutable covenant blessing. Notice just for example, immutability. God is not a man that he should lie neither the son of man that he should repent hath he not said and shall he not do it or hath he spoken, and shall he not make good. And then verse 21, "He has not beheld iniquity on Jacob, neither has he seen perverseness in Israel." So you can see that is covenantal blessing and then as far as worldwide sovereignty is concerned listen to what he says in the closing words in verse 24 for example. "Behold, the people shall rise up as

a great lion, lift himself up as a young lion. He shall not lie down until he eat of the prey and drink of the blood of the slain." So in a very forceful and vivid figurative language, he says that Israel is going to ultimately overcome as a sovereign nation.

Now remember the prophecy last week, Balak hoped that Balaam would curse Israel. He found out otherwise. Instead of cursing, Balaam blessed Israel. So he's very disturbed over this. He spent a good bit of money to get this prophet to come from Mesopotamia and he is hopeful for a cursing of the nation, and instead Balaam has blessed them, and so thinking that perhaps the reason existed in an unfavorable locality, he suggests a change. Verse 13: Balak said unto him: "Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place from whence thou mayest see them. Thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all, and curse them from thence."

Now, I am going to only say this about this text. We do not have time to talk about the Hebrew text, but it's possible that this is understood in a different way. I am just going to expound it as it is here in the Authorized Version because it is very close to the truth and it does not affect the ultimate exposition of the prophecy. If we stop and we talk about the way they render these particular words, the end of them and the utmost part that would delay us too much.

Verse 14: And he brought him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars and offered the bull and the ram on every altar and he said to Balak, "Stand there by the burnt offering while I meet the Lord beyond there." So Balak wants a new prophecy from a new place and so they go up to the top of Pisgah. This is not the highest part of Pisgah, probably or later referred to.

In fact later on, in this particular chapter, it's probably the highest place, but they go up to the top of Pisgah and there Balak hopes that he can get a better perspective of Israel and perhaps the prophecy will come out as a curse this time. Balak, still using the language of the diviner so he says, "You stand here while I meet the Lord yonder." That word used in the Hebrew text is a technical term for going out for auguries or for

supposed divine revelation. So he is still using the language of a Mesopotamian false prophet, but he has a lot of knowledge of Yahweh, the covenant keeping God of Israel objectively, just like a lot of people in our Christian churches today have a lot of knowledge of Christianity.

Do you know that there are actually people in Christian churches that are clearly not believers, they say they are not, but who can express the doctrine of justification by faith more clearly and more accurately than 75% of the believers in our evangelical churches? Do you know that? That is true. All you have to do is to read a little bit of secular literature of New Testament scholars and you'll see that's true, because they will not understand precisely the Evangelical viewpoint and then they will attack it and acknowledge they do not believe that, give their reasons for it. So it's not surprising Balaam would have a considerable knowledge of Yahweh and yet be a false prophet.

Now turning to the prophetic declaration itself, verse 18 through verse 24. Balak, of course, he is a man of darkened understanding. He doesn't understand anything that can compare with Balaam. He stumbles from one blunder to another, from one human opinion to another, but Balaam is a different person. First of all, his prophecy has some things to say about God. Verse 18 through verse 20 and what he begins with is what you might expect him to begin with. He begins with a critique of Balaam's theological presuppositions because Balak is asking him to do some thing that God has already told him he couldn't do. So what Balak is saying is, change your mind. Prophecy differently. Give me a good reliable divine prophecy that will be a curse instead of a blessing. Even though he has already been told by Balaam that God told him that he could only bless them but he wants the Lord to change his mind.

So what he is doing first of all here is to say to Balak, look and imagine this is the word the God put in his mouth. So it's not so much Balaam critiquing Balak's theology as it is Yahweh critiquing his theology. But Balaam utters it, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent. Hath he said and shall he not

do it? Or hath he spoken and shall he not make it good?" In other words, God does not alter his purposes like fickle men. Immutability by divine nature and that's what God is. "I, the Lord, I change not," he says in Malachi. The immutability of the divine nature means that his purposes are immutable as well.

Now that's plainly stated in the Bible but it's hard for people to accept it. Now I guess that if I were to turn to these passages and read them you would have to say "Well, yes I believe that." But it is not long before we express opinions that are contrary to it. For example, Isaiah 46:10 says "Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not done," saying "My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure." So in other words, everything that the Lord God determines to come to pass will come to pass. Whatever he desires and determines to do, he will do.

Chapter 55 in verse 11 says, "So shall my words that goeth forth out of my mouth. So shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth. It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and it shall prosper to the thing whereto I sent it." Now you can see from this that if God has a purpose, he fulfills it. Now this lies fundamentally at the bottom of the discussion of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God in the atonement of Christ, because if it was the Son of God's purpose to die for men then those for whom he dies shall receive the benefits of his death.

So you can see that this is a statement and this is a reflection of the divine person that affects all of the doctrines of the Bible and, in fact, ultimately affects our concept of God himself. If he is a person who determines one thing but cannot bring it to pass, cannot pull it off as we would say, he is a frustrated deity. He is not really a sovereign Deity, and so if that is the kind of God you have your concept of God is different from my concept of God and though we worship as Christians who believe in Jesus Christ the same God our concept of God is quite different. And ultimately, it will have some effect upon our Christian lives.

That is always true. So first of all, says "Balak, your theology is wrong." God is not fickle in his purposes. He said he is going to bless and he will bless. You cannot change his mind. I think this is the fundamental error of universal redemptionists. It is the fundamental error of some of my good friends who are four-point Calvinists too. This is the fundamental error; it is a different concept of God.

Now having said that; we will not labor the point. Notice now what he was saying concerning Israel in verse 21 through verse 24. Now here we have some further remarkable Messianic prophecy unfolding further the divine history of salvation. And first of all, there is a word of divine acceptance of Israel. This is a magnificent statement. Look at it. "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob; neither has he seen perverseness in Israel." Now this particular statement is a statement of course that acknowledges that Israel is a sinful company of people. Notice, he hath not beheld iniquity on Jacob; neither has he seen perverseness in Israel. He is not saying that Israel does not have perverseness and he is not saying that Jacob does not have iniquity, but what he is saying is that he has not seen it.

Now we are thinking about does God really see us when we sin? Of course he does. He has the knowledge of our sins long before we ever commit them. In fact, from ages past, he knows all of those little secrets since that you commit and have committed and, in fact, will commit. He knows them. So in the sense of seeing in that sense he knows them all, but the text says "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor has he seen perverseness in Israel." So it is quite obvious that he is not talking about the knowledge of sin but he is talking about the knowledge of their sin in the light of the way in which he looks at them. So what he is saying is that while Israel is sinful and while Jacob is iniquitous, their sin and their iniquity has not been charged to them by the Lord God.

Now we know this is the doctrine of justification by faith, that is, that we are declared righteous on the basis of the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, one by way of the blood that was shed on the Calvary's cross and as result of the substitutionary death by

which he has borne the judgment of the people of God, they are free from divine judgment, declared righteous by God in the divine court of law.

As Luther said, we are sinners but yet at the same time we are righteous. We are sinners in the sense that we still have the sin principal dwelling within us, but our standing before God is that of perfection and righteousness. We have become accepted into the love by virtue of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done. So he has not beheld iniquity in Jacob; neither has he seen perverseness in Israel, now what does that mean?

Does that mean that every single Israelite is justified? Probably not. Probably, he is speaking nationally in the sense that he is looking at Israel as a covenant people and so he is talking about what they are by virtue of the Abrahamic promises. "The time is coming when the nation....." as Paul puts it in Romans 11 ".....will be saved." That is what he is talking about and he is saying by virtue of what the Messiah would ultimately do, that is not unfolded here, you will notice. Those Messianic promises are in their embryonic form. He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob; neither has he seen perverseness in Israel.

This is one of, to my mind, one of the really magnificent prophecies of the Old Testament with reference to the nation Israel and I think it's startling that it emerges from the mouth of a false prophet, but it is a great truth and it expresses what God does by virtue of what Christ does in substitution for us. I would like to lay stress upon the fact that he does acknowledge that they are sinners. He does not say they are not sinners.

These past few days I have been reading a little book. That is a book on Evangelicals and Jews and in this particular book there are articles written by both Jewish men and Evangelicals and it is entitled by the way evangelical and Jews in an Age of Pluralism and in it there is an article by Seymour Siegel who is the professor of theology at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City. And his article is entitled Sin and Atonement. So I read the article and these are some of the things that this Jewish rabbi and teacher of theology makes: Universally, men have the *yitzab harrah*; that means the

evil inclination. As well as a *yetzah batov*; that is, a good inclination. So all men sin.

They are divided men.

One thinks of Paul in Romans 7, an evil inclination, a good inclination. Sin, if not original in the Christian sense, he says it is ubiquitous; that is, it is everywhere. The Jew does not fulfill the Torah and the Christian does not fully follow Christ. Of course, that's true. And he goes on to say there are three words principally describing sin, the word *chata'ah*, the word *avon*, and the word *pesha*. These are the words that mean missing the mark, and *avon* means iniquity, and then *pesha* means essentially rebellion. He discusses those. He says, "Sin results in alienation and disorder resulting in at times in illness. Fellowship with God is disrupted by sin, and what men need is *teshuvah*. Now *teshuvah* is the word for repentance in Hebrew. It is a noun built on word *shuv* which means "to turn." So what we need is repentance. And he said it equals being born again. So repentance equals being born again. It removes guilt and it liberates the person.

"Well how is this atonement to be attained?" the rabbi asks. "Well, the conquest of sin," he says, "comes from God. In the end, it can only be overcome by the grace of God." It sounds as if any good Methodist could be talking, who is an evangelical, not a Calvinist but a Methodist, he could be talking and within that professing Christian company.

Well, listen to him when he says more carefully what he means by how this is achieved. It's something that "requires great effort." The evil *yetzah* inclination when overcome is the result of the study and practice of Torah in God's grace. So repentance comes from studying the law of Moses and from God's grace.

Now there is a short paragraph in this article which reveals what this man really believes and it is very telling, and I think if you have a good theological mind, you will catch immediately where he has gone wrong. Listen to what he says. He is talking about how atonement is gained and this is what he says, "All of this comes through an act of will on the part of the sinner." Now you wouldn't believe he was Jew. You might think

he was a Methodist, an evangelical, a member of the Bible church. You might think that he was a member of the Christian church, Church of Christ, even some Presbyterians who do not know their own doctrine. All of this comes through an act of will on the part of the sinner.

Of course as we said previously, the sinner is helped by God's grace. But this grace is extended only if the movement toward God has already begun. Where does salvation begin? Martha [laughter] you said with God, but you meant, in reality, where does his salvation begin? His salvation begins with man. This grace extended only if the movement toward God has already begun. Then he goes on to say he who comes to cleanse himself, say the rabbis, he is helped from above. So you see it all comes down fundamentally to the beginning of salvation by man and God lending a helping hand.

Now my dear Christian friend, that is exactly the theology of Arminianism, as spoken by a Jewish rabbi. The only difference is this, Arminianism of the evangelical kind acknowledges that the grace by which we are helped, sufficient grace is given all men by virtue of what Christ did on the cross. That the rabbi leaves out. But, of course, that's not stated in the Bible at all, that is just Armenian doctrine. That's Arminian speculation. But otherwise it is precisely the same doctrine. So I am not surprised at all at those individuals who say Calvinism is a sheep in wolf's clothing. Arminianism is a wolf in sheep's clothing. Or Arminianism is the religion of common sense. But Calvinism is the religion of St. Paul. You can see the difference in this statement. It is so plain, and so clear that I am only astonished that individuals do not sense it.

Now coming to the Westminster Confession of Faith, now listen to what he said in the Westminster confession on the doctrine of justification by faith. "Those of whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth, not by infusing righteousness into them but by pardoning their sins and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone. Not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing or any other Evangelical obedience to them as they are

righteousness, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them.

They're receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith, which faith they have not of themselves, is the gift of God."

That's why it's a sanctifying thing to read some of the great statements of faith. People tell us, we should not have any creed but the Bible. But you know, it's a good exercise to read what the Christian church has been taught by the Holy Spirit down through the years. We always hold the Bible up as the final authority, but there are great marvelous spiritual men down through the years who have debated and studied and thought through some of the great doctrines of the faith and have expressed them beautifully. That's one.

Now there is a further in the word of divine union; I think you can get this very easily. Notice verse 21, after saying He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob; neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel, "the Lord his God is with him." Now this points, this goes to the fundamental covenantal promise of Abrahamic covenantal promises. It is that God will be Abraham and his seeds God and they will be his children. The Lord his God is with him, divine representative union. That's what Christianity rests upon, the fact that the Lord Jesus has represented certain people, has borne their judgment and by bearing their judgment has also made it possible for God to reckon to them the righteousness of God through his saving work on Calvary's cross.

Now notice the conclusion where we have a word of divine dominion, Israel victorious and preeminent. Notice verse 22, God brought them out of Egypt. He hath as it were the strength of a unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob; neither is there any divination against Israel. No word of the sorcerer shall prevail against Israel.

By the way those texts have a great deal of application to spiritualism and the occult, and all of the things that even believing Christians get entangled in. None of that prevails in divine things. He says according to this time or according to proper time, it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel what hath God wrought. Behold the people shall rise

up as a great lion. Lift himself up as a young lion. He shall not lie down until he eat of the prey and drink the blood of the slain.

Now these words are remarkable but the burden of them is very plain. It is simply that Israel is to overcome, is to have her kingdom, she is to be preeminent in the earth. The shout of the king is among them. That is a reference of course to the Messianic figure, ultimately the Lord Jesus Christ who is in them. The tabernacle in one sense is a picture of them because the tabernacle was a portable kind of palace, because remember in the holiest of all, there God dwelt at the arc, and so it was a kind of portable palace with the arc, the throne of God. God with his people bound up with them, their history and his history.

They have the strength of the unicorn. We are taking that as a reference to what God does for them just as Paul will tell us in the New Testament, "I am able to do all things through Christ who keeps on pouring his power into me for we have the power of the Holy Spirit." No enchantment against Jacob shall prevail. No magical influence can keep us from the fulfillment of the promises of God. The time is coming when the whole world shall say what hath God wrought in the work that he will do among the nation and the nations in the last days and the people shall rise up and overcome.

And that word, eat of the prey. One of the commentators says...I cannot remember who this was. I read this so many years ago, but he says the prophecy closes with a growl. And so the picture is Israel as a lion tearing up the opponents and the enemy and finally victoriously entering into the Kingdom that God has promised to them. I think that historically, this points to the future and the statement made in Revelation chapter 11 in verse 15, "The world kingdom of our Lord and of His Messiah has come and He shall reign forever and forever."

Now, I'll close with just a couple of comments. Reformed, not regenerated men. Reformed not in the historic sense, but reformed in the sense of not a perverse sinner like Balak. But a reformed, but not a regenerate man like Balaam, miss reward both from

God and the world. Balaam received no reward from Balak because he could not curse Israel. And he didn't receive any reward from the Lord because he wanted to curse Israel, but he wasn't allowed to. So we cannot serve God and mammon. We cannot run with the hare and the hounds. We cannot have two interests ultimately and Balaam beautifully, I think, illustrates that.

And one last comment, the absurdity, the unreasonableness of unbelief. We say how unreasonable for Balaam to think he could get away with it. But that's precisely what we often do. We know that the Scriptures have said that certain things are going to transpire if we take a certain action. And so what do we do? Do we pay attention to what the Scripture says? No, we so often think that we are going to be able to get away with it. And Balaam illustrates you cannot, and Balak illustrates that we cannot. The wages of sin is death. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord and that principle pervades the Christian life.

Bishop Joseph Butler, who wrote one of the great rationalistic defenses of Christianity, says really what we need is only plain dealing with ourselves. Just respond to the plain teaching of the word of God. If you should happen to be here in our meeting tonight and you have never believed in Christ, you are not justified. When God looks at you, he sees perverseness and he sees iniquity.

But for those who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and by virtue of the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ that have the righteousness of God reckoned to them, when God looks at them, he sees them in Christ. He sees them accepted and loved. Those sinners, he does not see their sin and iniquity and perverseness. For Christ has borne their penalty and their suffering. And as a result of that, even heaven itself can bring no further judgment upon them. He has paid it all. We invite you to come to Christ, acknowledge your sin, receive it as a free gift because it's a free gift, eternal life. You cannot begin salvation like those Arminians, like our good rabbinic friend. Only God

can begin salvation. That's why Jonah says "Salvation is of the Lord." Let us close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Thy Word and we thank Thee for these ancient prophecies because they touch some of the most relevant of all the truths in the year 1985. In itself, an evidence of the inspiration of holy Scripture. Lord, how blessed we are to be able to read and ponder the word of God. May it change our lives as Thou hast promised.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.