

Numbers 22:13–35

13 So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, “Go back to your land, for the Lord has refused to give me permission to go with you.” 14 And the princes of Moab rose and went to Balak, and said, “Balaam refuses to come with us.”

15 Then Balak again sent princes, more numerous and more honorable than they. 16 And they came to Balaam and said to him, “Thus says Balak the son of Zippor: ‘Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me; 17 for I will certainly honor you greatly, and I will do whatever you say to me. Therefore please come, curse this people for me.’”

18 Then Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, “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. 19 Now therefore, please, you also stay here tonight, that I may know what more the Lord will say to me.”

20 And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, “If the men come to call you, rise and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you—that you shall do.” 21 So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab.

22 Then God’s anger was aroused because he went, and the Angel of the Lord took His stand in the way as an adversary against him. And he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him.

23 Now the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand, and the donkey turned aside out of the way and went into the field. So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road. 24 Then the Angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side. 25 And when the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord, she pushed herself against the wall and crushed Balaam’s foot against the wall; so he struck her again. 26 Then the Angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. 27 And when the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam’s anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff.

28 Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, “What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?” 29 And Balaam said to the donkey, “Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you!” 30 So the donkey said to Balaam, “Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?” And he said, “No.”

31 Then the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face. 32 And the Angel of the Lord said to him, “Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before Me. 33 The donkey saw Me and turned aside from Me these three times. If she had not turned aside from Me, surely I would also have killed you by now, and let her live.”

34 And Balaam said to the Angel of the Lord, “I have sinned, for I did not know You stood in the way against me. Now therefore, if it displeases You, I will turn back.” 35 Then the Angel of the Lord said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but only the word that I speak to you, that you shall speak.” So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

Lord of the Mouth, Eyes, and Heart

Main idea: our most basic faculties depend upon the Lord, Who sees and judges our hearts in all that we do.

Introduction: the difference between figuring out what we can get away with and trying to do whatever God wants. We must remember what/who we are... and therefore WHY we are.

1. **YHWH Who opens the mouth**

1. What Balaam could rightly say
2. What the donkey was able to say
3. What you can rightly say and are able to say

2. **YHWH Who opens the eyes**

1. What the donkey could see the whole time
2. What Balaam was enabled to see (cf. Gehazi in 2Ki 6:17–18; Heb 1:14)... and apparently the two servants never did
3. What we must see
 1. The Lord Himself. Not merely an angel. (cp. v20, 35, and the accepted worship in v31–32. We must see Jesus as the Lord Himself.
 2. With sword drawn. We must see Jesus as the rightful Judge and Executioner.
 3. But sparing/saving us! We must see Jesus as sparing/saving sinners. And each particularly.

Conclusion: YHWH Who looks on the heart. The difference between Balaam in v21 and Balaam in v35 is the attitude in v34. This must be your attitude: recognizing that the Lord has His sword drawn against all sinners (and you as a sinner), but that in the gospel He saves you—not so that you can continue indulging yourself, but so that you can live for what pleases Him.

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Numbers 22 verses 13 through 35. These are God's words. So balaam, Rose in the morning and said, to the princes of Moab Back to your land for Yahweh has refused.

To give me permission to go with you. And the princes of Moab Rose and went to Balaam and said balaam refuses to come with us. Then Balaam again, sent. Princess more numerous And more honorable than they. And they came to balaam and said to him, thus says Balaam the son of Beor Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me for, I will certainly honor you greatly.

And I will do whatever you say to me. Therefore, please come curse this people for me. Then Balaam answered and said to the Servants of Moab. The Moab were to give me his house full of silver and gold. I could not go beyond the word of Yahweh, my God to do less or more Now therefore please you also stay here tonight that I may know what and more Yahweh will say to me.

And God came to balaam at night and said to him if the men come to call you rise and go with them. But only the word, which I speak to you that you shall do. So balaam, Rose in the morning, saddled his donkey And went with the princess. Of Moab.

Then God's anger was aroused because he went. And the angel of Yahweh took his stand in the way as an adversary against him. And he was riding on his donkey and his two servants were with him. Now, the donkey saw the angel of Yahweh standing in the way. With his drawn sword in his hand.

And the donkey turned aside out of the way and went into the field. So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road. Then the angel of Yahweh, stood in a narrow path between The Vineyards. With a wall on this side and a wall on that side.

And when the donkey saw the angel of Yahweh, she pushed herself against the wall. And crushed William's foot against the wall. So he struck her again. Then the angel of Yahweh went further and stood in a narrow. Where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.

And when the donkey saw the angel of Yahweh, she laid down under belyam, So William's anger was aroused and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then, Yahweh opened the mouth of the donkey. And she said, to belyam. What have I done to you? That you have struck me these three times.

And blam said to the donkey, Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now, I would kill you. So the donkey said to belay him, am I not your donkey on which you have ridden ever since I became yours to this day, was I ever disposed to do this to you?

And he said, Then, Yahweh opened belyam's eyes. He saw. The angel of Yahweh standing in the way with his sword drawn in his hand. And he bowed his head and fell flat on his face. And the angel of Yahweh said to him, Why have you struck your donkey these three times?

Behold, I have come out to stand against you. Because your way is perverse before me. The donkey saw me and turned aside from me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely I would also have killed you by now. And let her. And belyam said to the angel of Yahweh.

I have. For I did not know you stood in the way against me. Now, therefore If it displeases you. I will turn back. Then the angel of Yahweh said to belay him, Go with the men. But only the word that I speak to you. That you shall speak. So belyam went with the princes.

Of black. Amen, thus ends this reading of Inspired and and Aaron twerked.

There's a great difference in the Christian Life. Between. Trying to do as much of what we want as possible. And trying to do as much of what God says is possible. As we're trying to do what we want as much as possible. Treat his law. Uh, like a A straight jacket or like boundaries that Keep.

Uh, hemmed in so that we can only do a certain amount of what we want. But if we are, Living according to or Desiring to do as much of what God wants as possible. Then we will see his law as liberating. Us showing us all the ways. That we may do.

As pleases him. Now, this is a great difference between belyam at the beginning of our text and beleleum. By the time we get to verse 35, And all those will come to discover especially when we get to chapter 26 and scripture's own explanation for how that came about. William was not cured.

By verse 35, he had just been Reformed somewhat in how he was going on his way to prophesy. We must remember. Who God is? And what and who we are, that we are, but creatures. And that the only thing that makes us different from a donkey. Is that God?

Has made us different from donkeys. That we were created to know the Lord. To see him. To worship Him. To serve him. And so the Lord is teaching this to belam and to us in the passage before us this afternoon. At least these three ways, two of which will take is main headings and the last of which we'll consider.

In what we're calling the conclusion. The first it is that it is Yahweh. It is the Lord. Who opens the mouth, the second that it is Yahweh, who opens the eyes? But the That the Lord who has given us our mouth and our eyes. He looks upon and he judges the heart.

And he does. So as one who ought to slay us, But praise God, he comes to us in scripture. Much as he came to belyam, not slaying. But sparing. And saving. So that we will consider our hearts before him. Who sees our heart? First then it's the Lord. Who opens the mouth?

This is what Uh, belyam. Begun to say to them. He says.

That he will bring back word to. Black and his princes and last week's portion. He said in verse 8 I will bring back word to you as Yahweh speaks to me. And we finished off last week with the Lord saying, you may not go with them and you must not curse them for.

They are blessed. Now black doesn't like that answer. He needs we considered last week how he has come to the conclusion that he needs divine intervention and he needs divine intervention. That works not some made-up religion of con artists Inventing spiritual things. Uh, but divine religion that makes a difference.

He needs the dude who When he curses people, they are cursed. And when he blesses people they are blessed but he wants him to come and curse. The people whom God is determined to bless which is a problem for black and as long as belyam wants Black's money, it's a problem for Belen too.

And apparently belyam was willing to send them away. He rises in the morning in the beginning of our passage, And he says to the princess of black go back to your land. Yahweh has refused to give me permission to go with you. But then black doubles down and he makes sure.

He, he puts on the full presentation. It's like when a top rated recruit Visits a college campus. For whatever sport it is and they bring out the very best athletes who have become the very most wealthy, and well, treated what, our passage would call honored for the more honorable princes of Of Moab here and he sends them.

Belyam can see how wealthy they are and he can see how well they are served. You can see the status, they have and part of their message to him from black. Let nothing hinder you from coming to me, verse 16 for, I will certainly honor. You greatly. You could end up like this.

It's kind of like When there was that delegation from, From Babylon and Hezekiah was dealing with the Assyrians and Babylon was looking to enter into some alliances. And, And Hezekiah showed them what he had as kind of an application. This is how great of an ally I could be to you.

Well, black is is pulling out all the stops to show blam, how wealthy he could be. Belam answers pretty well at first. Verse 18. The black were to give me his house full of silver and gold. I could not go beyond the word of Yahweh. My God, To do less or more.

Okay, so he's a believer in God. He's a true Prophet. He understands this point in the passage, That it is the Lord who opens the mouth. But, He really wants. The moabite. The mo. Richest. He wants the honor from black king of Moab black, son of zippor. So he says He doesn't say go away.

I've already told you And the Lord is not a man that he should change his mind. William is actually going to say that when he gets to his second prophecy, that is something that he

learns by painful experience. And then the Holy Spirit puts into his mouth for us for Others for us to learn.

Uh, that's what he should have said. But, uh, He becomes a process Theologian. And decides that God is maybe God's initial word to me was just setting the wheels in motion, so that I could ask again and he says, Uh used also stay here tonight that I may know what more Yahweh will say to me.

And the Lord gives him. Instruction that corresponds to what the Lord is going to have him do. Because it is actually the Lord's will through all of the different mixture of intentions and motivations of what Moab wants and black Kingdom, Moab wants and of what belyam, the greedy Prophet, who becomes a proverbial example of greed and second Peter and in Jude Will come to you, Lord willing next week in the book of Jude.

Within the mixture of what everyone else wants, what God intends is that a prophet is going to look over his people and bless them a bunch of times. And we, Get into the Lord helping us. We'll take all of All of those blessings, hopefully. Next. Lord's Day. Uh maybe not.

It depends on how we'll do but that's what God's intention is. And so yes, God says go with them but you may speak only what I say to you. The problem is, Balaam does not want to go. Because of, What God has intended to put in his mouth so that God can accomplish his purposes?

Bellaam wants to go because he's hoping To change what God is going to put into his mouth so that belyam can get his purposes. But at least he understands this so far. That it's the Lord who opens the mouth and that as a prophet he could only rightly say whatever the Lord put in his mouth.

What he didn't understand is that he already had more honor than he deserved. And that the Lord is able even to open a donkey's mouth. Which we see amazingly In this passage. Uh, the donkey Uh, having done what she could just seeing Uh the angel of Yahweh who is Yahweh himself appearing as a messenger with a with a sword in his hand.

And at first, she's able to get off of the path and so she goes she veers off of the path and what does belyam do to his donkey then? Beats her. And then, She's in a part of the path where she can't get off of the path. They're they're growing, uh, grapes there and the grapes are trellised over a wall.

And so there's a little bit of wiggle room just enough for her to, to wiggle away from the angel and to Smash Williams. Wall. And what does he do? He beats her. And then, It's not just a path where Where there's a Vineyard, it's a place where it's really narrow.

And there's no room at all for wiggling, even. And, The it may even be applied, that belyam is writing in such a fashion that his legs are kind of on top of her. And she sits down underneath him. And praise God, the donkey is saving belyam's life. Bellaim doesn't understand that she's saving his life.

Now, it's not really the donkey that's saving belam's life, is it? Who's saving belyam's life children. Who put the donkey there. And let the donkey see. Yes, it was God. Who was saving bellium's? Life? And God opens the donkey's mouth to tell belem exactly what God was going to say to him.

So in verse 28, Yahweh opened the mouth of the donkey. She said to blame what have I done to you? That you struck me these three times. Well, when God, when God finally gives belem

to to see the angel of Yahweh And he worships the angel of Yahweh. What does the angel of Yahweh say to him?

Verse 32, why have you struck your donkey these three times? And so you see, even In the two speeches there that the Lord is communicating to blame and communicating to us that he had not just enabled there to be a talking donkey and And everyone's like, oh, Narnia or no.

Not at all. What's being done? Here is not merely that there's a talking animal. It's that the Lord is putting his saving word in the mouth of a creature. Which is what the Lord had done for Balaam. This is what he was, as a prophet. He was a mere creature.

A mere man into his mouth. God was putting his saving words for his people. Which are saving words for us. The blessing that was pronounced upon Israel, was not a merely National or ecclesiastical blessing for them. It was a blessing that they had covenantally as God's people and God's nation at the time but it's a blessing that is especially in Christ and is fulfilled finally and fully in the Lord Jesus.

And for his people, his church, his nation. People whose church whose Nation you are? By faith in him. And so does the Lord, who opens the mouth? Now, this is true for us generally as speaking creatures, We're not surprised when we hear a person. A boy or a girl.

Uh, open their mouth and and talk. Why? Because God ordinarily gives to boys and girls to be able to open their mouths and talk. But remember, That it is God, who gave you? To be able to open your mouth and talk. That your mouth was especially made to talk.

You are given to talk, especially for the praise of God. And that the one who speaks the praise of God should not at one point, use his mouth to praise God and then use his mouth at another time to curse his brother or sister. Doesn't the scripture tell us?

That this is like having salt water and fresh water come from the same spigot or or two opposite, kinds of fruits grow on the same tree. That's not what mouths were made for. The mouths that are made for the praise of God are made to be used for the blessing and help the building up.

Of our brother and sister to make to help them be praisers of God and doers of good to others. Also, with their mouths, And so the scripture tells us to let our speech always be with Grace seasoned with salt. So that we may be a help to those to whom we speak and the Lord Jesus even puts it this way.

When he's talking about how out of the Overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks in the same context, the Lord Jesus says. That we will give an answer to God for every idle word. That all of our words should be spoken usefully. And so this is what we can rightly say.

And what we are able to say we this is we should use our mouths that God has opened in order to serve him and serve our brother love our brother and love our neighbor as well. But let us remember, then when we hear the word of God in the mouth of someone else, as we're going through Proverbs, and we get it again.

In in this Wednesday, evenings. This coming Wednesday evening's passage where this time, he doesn't say my son. He says my children. My children here, my instruction. Oh, what a blessing, it is to have Christian parents, a Christian dad, or a Christian mom, who opens his mouth or opens her mouth to you with the words of God, It's God who opened their mouth.

It's God, who gave them the Bible to teach you. And even when you are being corrected and you're about to be disciplined, God is opening their mouths to save you. Like he opened Balaam's. Donkey's mouth And to save him. And then when you come and you hear preaching and one of your elders or appointed teacher and in the church is opening their mouths with what the scriptures say.

It's God, who has opened their mouth, it's because he loves you. Yes, he could be standing with a sword to slay you, but then he wouldn't have had to tell you about it. Would he? No, he comes and he tells us Because he's sparing us like he was doing for William.

It's Yahweh who opens the eyes. Is a wonderful. He opens the donkey's eyes first. The donkey. Can see the The angel of Yahweh with the sword drawn, it tells us here that Balaam Scott has Servants with him, the two servants who by the way, There's no indication in the passage that the two servants were ever given to see the angel of Yahweh.

And so, it's the, the donkey's behavior is, is strange enough. And they're probably like cheering for Balaam, and it's a long walk of servants, or maybe they're glad for the break, who knows what servants are thinking. But the donkey's acting strange, and Balaam is acting Human. At least until the donkey starts talking.

Which seems crazy. But that's not nearly as crazy as when the master starts talking back to the donkey. I mean, what's more amazing? A donkey talking or a man? Arguing with the talking donkey? And so the the Lord gives the the donkey to see and it must have got super strange for the for the For those servants, because When the, when billions having the argument with the donkey, then, what does the Lord do in verse 31, he opens Balaam's eyes.

And now the master falls on his face in the middle of in the middle of this narrow path. The. Sometimes does things in a way in such a way as to get our attention, doesn't he? To remind us that it is he Who must open our eyes. You know Hebrews 1 verse 14 tells us that all angels are ministering Spirits set forth.

To serve those who are inheriting salvations, who are inheriting salvation, So the tens of thousands of tens of thousands of angels, Are continuously. Doing things. We don't know what we know. We know why they're serving those. Who are inheriting salvation? John Calvin? Commenting on Hebrews 1 verse 14. It says it's the mercy of God.

He keeps our eyes shut. Because if we could see the number of these, these powerful Spirit being and beings and the great flurry of their continual activity and uh, and then the the third praise God, they're outnumbered two to one of uh of the Angels who had fallen that are uh continuously active and enraged.

Uh against us we'd just be utterly paralyzed by the amount of activity.

But here, just this. Particular time. God gives the donkey at first to see and he gives Balaam to see and I I couldn't help but Uh, but remember or think about

Worship chorus. That. Uh, we're used to sing the church that I grew up on. Saying such things. And we were saying, open my eyes Lord. I want to see Jesus to reach out and touch him and say that I love him. Which is all good. And well, if you're a Believer, You want to see him by faith and you're looking forward to the resurrection and The, the union and interaction will have with with Christ at the time and That's fine.

But Just to sing or think that apart from remembering who he is, and what we are as Sinners. And what is necessary? In order for us to be reconciled to him, In order for it to be a pleasant thing. To. Uh, to see Jesus by faith. When the Lord opens belyam's eyes.

He does not feel. All mushy and gushy and sappy and happy. He feels utterly terrified. Because the way that the Lord had displayed himself, Is as a mighty Angel. About to slay him and it is the Lord. We know that for a couple of reasons. One is That. He accepts Williams worship, he doesn't rebuke him for worshipping him.

When Angels get worshiped, they say stop that. Yeah, I'm just a creature like you. When the angel of Yahweh outside. Of Jericho which again just across the river from where we are right now in this passage. Appears to Joshua and Joshua worships him. The worship is affirmed, not refused.

That's an appearance of God. Here is an appearance of God and it's especially, it's reinforced the end of the passage when he says, the same thing in verse 35, as he had said, in verse 20, only the word that I speak to you that you shall speak is identifying himself as Us God in that case.

So, belyam was Enabled to see. Uh the Lord himself. And this is what we must see, not with eyes of Flesh. But with eyes of faith, This is what you must see. You must see the Lord Jesus Christ. The one whom you owe worship. So that you would live your life as before God, and before Christ in worship and service of him in obedience to him.

But you must also be brought by the spirit's help to see the Lord Jesus as it were with sword drawn. To know that he is the just and righteous King and Warrior. Who shall and will destroy all Sinners. And that it is his judgment and Vengeance upon sin that has fallen upon him himself at the cross.

In order that he might save us. And we must have the eyes of our faith. Opened to see him sparing us saving. Putting things in our way that make us mad enough to beat a donkey. And yet doing it in. Putting us through experiences that are like having your leg crushed against a wall.

And yet doing it in love. Opening your eyes to see with horror. What you deserve from the Living God? And yet. Doing it. And, How mercifully the Lord was sparing belyam here? And we see that in the last place because he exposes to William that he's looking on the heart.

Notice Williams response to. I have come out to stand against you because your way is perverse before me. And imagine what that must have been like to the man who had just said, I wish there was a sword in my hand and I would kill you. And the Lord opens his eyes.

To see that. There's a sword in his hand. But he's not killing him. Bloom doesn't argue. What do you mean? My way is perverse. You said I could go. No, he's just had the mouth of a donkey opened in order to talk to him and he's just had his eyes opened to see this.

This appearance of the Lord this theophany this christophany. An appearance of Christ. He's not going to Monkey around. He realizes God sees the heart. God knows belyam isn't going because he thinks God. God has a word of blessing for him to pronounce upon his people which will not be changed and belem already knows that.

He knows that what God sees is that Belen is hoping that somehow he can get a word to curse the people so that he can get the money of Moab. And notice. The way he changes his tune

then When he realizes that God gave him. This faithful donkey for all of these years that he has had her so that when she did, which is pretty amazing by the way.

To have a faithful donkey. Um, There's a reason why stubbornness is associated. With them, and I don't know if I think donkeys and mules are different, but You can. Ask me or Mrs. Hakeem sometime about bringing stubborn donkeys in Israel. Um, But he had given him this faithful donkey, that would be faithful, all those years.

And then on this particular day would suddenly appear to be To be stubborn like a donkey and then That she would talk. And That she would turn him aside. And then she would talk all of this in order that the Lord would not kill him. Verse 33. And he says, I have sinned.

For, I did not know that you stood in the way against me. Well, he'd sinned against the donkey. But even more than that, he'd sinned against God. Hadn't. He knew that God was against him going. He knew that God was against him cursing and still is against him cursing.

And yet he wanted to go and he wanted to bless So listen to the way he changes his tune. Now therefore, if it displeases, you, I will turn back. There's some question, isn't there? If him going and him speaking. Is. Something that the Lord is not going to do that that the Lord does not want him to do.

Then why did the Lord in his Sovereign? Overruling of it. Permit him to get this far. And so now he puts it. In the Lord's hands. And he says, If it displeases you. I will turn back. So now when the angel of Yahweh says, to balaam, go with the men, the implication in response to if it displeases, you is no, it pleases me for you to go.

Because it pleases me for you to speak particular words that I have you for you to speak. And now balaam is going with the purpose. Not of saying, hopefully saying what balaam wants him to say But going with the purpose of saying, what the Lord Wants him to say.

He said the Lord looks on the heart. The direction that he and the donkey and the two servants are going in verse 20. Sorry in verse 21 is the same geographically as the direction that they're going in verse 35. So to the outward appearance, they both look the same.

But one God is angry with and is going to kill him for. And the other God is pleased to do. What's the difference? Well, the difference humanly speaking is that when God looks at balaam's heart. He sees balaam going, Because it pleases God. And that's what you want God to do in your own heart, isn't it?

That's why you pray with him and sing to him like the psalmist. See, search me and show me if there is any unclean thing in me. Asking God to help you live, not In order to get away with as much as you can, so long as the rules aren't technically broken.

Which is a way of pleasing yourself. But granting to you to live. According to that, which pleases him. And praise God in his gospel. He has not just opened the mouth of creatures. He himself has opened his mouth. In his son. And he has spoken to us the gospel of his salvation.

Where we may be forgiven for our sin, where we may have him as our righteousness. And by the same words, We may have our hearts changed. So that we will come. To live as pleases him. May God. So grant it to us. Let's pray. We do ask. Oh, God.

That you would Open our eyes by faith. That we would see your son. Our Lord Jesus Christ. So that we would hate our sin and shrink from it. That we would know the wrath of Vengeance that

we rightly and justly deserve. So, we would see how you have spared us and ordered all things in our lives.

To bring us to hear your work. And to respond rightly to your word. Grant to us, that he would be. Our righteousness and our atonement. And so work in Us by your word. That we would live not as pleases ourselves. But as pleases you, Make this indeed to be our pleasure.

To please you For, we ask it through Christ who did. So, Amen.