

Numbers 22:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

Analysis

Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab—After God gave grudging permission (v. 20: "If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them"), Balaam rushed ahead without being called. The text doesn't say the princes summoned him; he proactively saddled his donkey and departed. His eagerness exposed his heart—he wanted to go all along.

God's anger kindled (v. 22) precisely because Balaam went, even with permission. This paradox reveals that God sometimes grants requests in judgment, giving us what we demand to expose our hearts. Romans 1:24, 26, 28 describes God "giving them up" to their lusts. Balaam got permission but lost God's pleasure—a terrifying distinction.

Historical Context

The journey from Pethor (near the Euphrates in Mesopotamia) to Moab was approximately 400 miles, requiring weeks of travel. Balaam's willingness to undertake this arduous journey for payment contrasts sharply with his unwillingness to simply obey God's first word.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. When God grants permission for something you demanded, but His anger burns against you for doing it, what does that reveal about the difference between His permissive and perfect will?
2. How does your eagerness to exploit God's grudging consent expose whether you're seeking His will or your own desires?
3. What blessings-turned-judgments have you experienced by insisting God give you what you wanted rather than what you needed?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּקָּם	בְּלָעָם	בַּבֹּקֶר	וַיַּחַבֵּשׁ	אֶת	אֲתֹנֹו	וַיִּלָּךְ	עָם
rose up	And Balaam	in the morning	and saddled	H853	his ass	H1980	H5973
H6965	H1109	H1242	H2280		H860		
שָׁרֵי	מוֹאָב:						
with the princes	of Moab						
H8269	H4124						

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