

Numbers 24:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the LORD saith, that will I speak?

Analysis

Balaam's declaration 'what the LORD saith, that will I speak' sounds like prophetic faithfulness, but the narrative reveals this as selective obedience. He spoke only what God forced him to speak in the moment, but his heart remained mercenary. His later counsel to Midian showed he would harm Israel if he could find a method God hadn't explicitly forbidden. This teaches that true obedience encompasses both letter and spirit, both explicit commands and underlying principles. The Pharisees similarly obeyed the letter while violating the spirit (Matthew 23:23).

Historical Context

Balaam became a proverbial example of false prophecy motivated by profit. Peter calls his way 'the way of Balaam...who loved the wages of unrighteousness' (2 Peter 2:15). Jude warns of those who 'ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward' (Jude 11). Revelation condemns 'the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel' (Revelation 2:14). Balaam's legacy is cautionary—outward prophetic gift does not equal inward transformation.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How do we obey the letter of God's law while violating its spirit?
2. What does it mean to have prophetic gifts without genuine conversion?
3. How can we avoid selective obedience that technically complies while practically rebelling?

Interlinear Text

אִם	יִתֵּן	לִי	בְּלֹק	מִלֵּא	בֵּיתוֹ	כֶּסֶף	וְזָהָב	לֵא
H518	would give	H0	If Balak	full	me his house	of silver	and gold	H3808
	H5414		H1111	H4393	H1004	H3701	H2091	
אֲנִי	לֹעָבֵר	אֶת	פִּי	יְהוָה	לַעֲשׂוֹת			
I cannot	go beyond	H853	the commandment	but what the LORD	to do			
H3201	H5674		H6310	H3068	H6213			
טוֹב	אוֹ	רָע	מִלִּבִּי	אֲשֶׁר	אֵדָבָר	יְהוָה		
either good	H176	or bad	of mine own mind	H834	saith	but what the LORD		
H2896		H7451	H3820		H1696	H3068		
אֵדָבָר	אֶת	וְ						
H853	saith							
	H1696							