

"The Words of His Mouth"
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(Numbers 22:36 -23:30)

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In Numbers 22:37, Balak gives Balaam a little attitude that discloses why he thinks Balak didn't drop everything he was doing and come immediately when Balak called. He thought that Balaam didn't think he could "honor" him and by "honor" Balak probably meant pay Balaam off to do what it was that Balak wanted done, namely to curse Israel so that misfortune might fall on them and allow them to be defeated by Balak's army. How do I react when someone doesn't get something done as quickly as I want it done and why?

Balak believed that the higher someone is physically, the closer they were to their gods. When a Christian has had an encounter with his Savior, it is oftentimes said to have been a "mountain-top experience." The world defines omnipresence to mean a "widely or constantly encountered; common or widespread. 'The omnipresent threat of natural disasters'". But there is nothing "common" about God's omnipresence. In Jeremiah 23:23-24 (ESV), I read: "Am I a God at hand, declares the LORD, and not a God far away? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD." From 1966 to 1969, every radio episode of "Chickenman" which was a spoof on the Batman TV show, began with an overly-dramatic theme, a four-note trumpet sound echoed with Benton Harbor's (the shoe salesman who, on weekends, fought criminals as Chickenman) the "Buck-buck-buck-buuuuuck" chicken call, which is followed by a rousing cry of "Chicken-mannnn!" and voices shouting, "He's everywhere! He's everywhere!" R.C. Sproul described God's omnipresence in one of his daily Ligonier's Tabletalk devotionals: "Like divine infinity, however, divine omnipresence is a difficult concept to grasp. It would be a mistake, for example, to conceive of omnipresence as God's being like a gas that is diffused throughout the entire universe. Omnipresence is altogether different because it means that the fullness of God is present everywhere. Everything that God is is fully present at each point in a given room, at every point in the building outside the room, and at every point outside the building. "More" of God is not found at point A than at point B. God and His attributes, including His holiness, wisdom, goodness, justice, knowledge, power, and so on, are fully present in His creation at every point. We often forget that the Lord is right at hand wherever we are, but our forgetfulness does not indicate His absence...God's omnipresence is a comforting truth. If God is everywhere, then we know He is never far away and can come quickly to our aid. Because He is present everywhere, we can know that He is acting in each and every place according to His holy will for our good and to achieve His purposes. This is true even when He seems to be far away." Does God's closeness to me 24/7/365 tend to give me pause or great joy and why?

When it comes to the power of a “Balaam” curse versus the power of God’s curses apparently Balaam, who practiced divination and sorcery, had a pretty good track record for Balak to have sent for him, but God has an even better and much more effective track record. Check out Genesis 3:16-19, Matthew 25:41, and Mark 11:12-14,20-21. Balaam eventually came to the stark realization of the utter futility of any attempt by him to “curse” Israel in Numbers 23:8 (ESV) “How can I curse whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?” The only option Balaam saw was surrendering to God’s will and doing what God commanded. In 1896 Judson W. Van DeVenter wrote “I Surrender All”. The first verse says: “All to Jesus I surrender; All to Him I freely give; I will ever love and trust Him; In His presence daily live.” How about me? Should I sing the hymn “Most of my stuff to Jesus I surrender”? Explain.

Pastor Wally referenced the most recent Ligonier/Lifeway survey on “The State of Theology” (<https://thestateoftheology.com/>). The survey defines “Evangelicals” as people who strongly agreed with the following four statements: The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe; It is very important for me personally to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior; Jesus Christ’s death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin; Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God’s free gift of eternal salvation; as well as by their church affiliation. The 2022 survey result says that 53% of all people and 26% of Evangelicals agree that “The Bible, like all sacred writings, contains helpful accounts of ancient myths but is not literally true.” 38% of Evangelicals agree that “Religious belief is a matter of personal opinion; it is not about objective truth.” 43% of Evangelicals agree that “Jesus was a great teacher, but he was not God.” 46% of all people and 28% of Evangelicals agree that “The Bible’s condemnation of homosexual behavior doesn’t apply today.” 48% of Evangelicals agree that “God learns and adapts to different circumstances.” They concluded that: “The 2022 State of Theology survey reveals that Americans increasingly reject the divine origin and complete accuracy of the Bible. With no enduring plumb line of absolute truth to conform to, U.S. adults are also increasingly holding to unbiblical worldviews related to human sexuality. In the evangelical sphere, doctrines including the deity and exclusivity of Jesus Christ, as well as the inspiration and authority of the Bible, are increasingly being rejected.” Is it possible to curb these trends? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Pastor Wally called Balak’s repeated solution to Balaam’s problem was that they just weren’t high enough “persistent ignorance”. I just need to get closer to God so that I can get a “stronger” signal and He can hear me more clearly. His actions also reflect the notion of insanity...doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. Do I, at times, reflect that attitude when it comes to my worship? If so, how so? If not, why not?

How about my prayer life?

It's been said that the only constant in life is change. But then we must deal with the immutability of God...the unchangeability of God. As Pastor Wally stated, "History doesn't change God. God changes history". Malachi 3:6 (ESV) reminds me "For **I the LORD do not change**; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed." Psalms 102:26-27 (ESV) points out "They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but **you are the same, and your years have no end.**" And then there's James 1:17 (ESV), "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom **there is no variation or shadow due to change.**" (Emphasis added.) This is the God that is...but is it the God that I really, really want? Explain.

R.C. Sproul once said: "Does prayer make any difference? Does it really change anything? Someone once asked me that question, only in a slightly different manner: "Does prayer change God's mind?" My answer brought storms of protest. I said simply, "No." Now, if the person had asked me, "Does prayer change things?" I would have answered, "Of course! The mind of God does not change for God does not change. Things change, and they change according to His sovereign will, which He exercises through secondary means and secondary activities. The prayer of His people is one of the means He uses to bring things to pass in this world. So, if you ask me whether prayer changes things, I answer with an unhesitating "Yes!" How often do I pray that God will change His mind about some pending outcome in my life as opposed to the number of times that I ask God to change me, to change my attitude, my perspective, my will?"

C.H. Spurgeon preaching on the immutability of God on January 7, 1855 said: "The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, "Behold I am wise." But when we come to this master-science, finding that our plumb-line cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought, that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass's colt; and with the solemn exclamation, "I am but of yesterday, and know nothing." No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God...But while the subject humbles the mind it also expands it. He who often thinks of God, will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe...Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity. And, while humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently consolatory ["Tending to give comfort; refreshing to the mind; assuaging grief." Webster's 1828 dictionary]. Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief; and in the influence of the Holy Ghost, there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrows? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated." Has this been my experience when considering God's immutability? If so, why so? If not, why not?