

AVOIDING THE BALAAM STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

We began the year with a study on spiritual warfare. We then went out on the streets of Krugersdorp and witnessed, leading some to the Lord, praying for some and inviting others to join us. This is our year to take this city.

The enemy has had to sit up and take note because his realm is being plundered, and we have noticed that the intensity of attacks on our congregation has increased. But we will always win. **Psalm 108:12-13** says: "Give us help from trouble, For the help of man is useless. Through God we will do valiantly, For it is He who shall tread down our enemies."

When the enemy cannot harm us through attack, he uses the "Balaam" strategy", coming in with guerilla warfare, setting ambushes for us. If he can get us to sin or to backslide, we move out of the place of the Lord's protection into a place where our defenses are compromised and then he can attack successfully.

We need to keep this in mind and stay focused so that we can win this war. Psalm 107 describes four of the devil's strategies against us and I want to encourage us this morning to avoid these snares and remain victorious.

MESSAGE

THE BAALAM STRATEGY

What is the Balaam strategy?

Balaam was a Syrian diviner hired by the kings of Moab & Midian to place a curse on Israel during their time in the wilderness. When the king of Moab, Balak, learned that the Israelites had defeated both the king of the Amorites & the king of Bashaan, he was terrified that they would invade his own territory at some point. Cursing the Israelites was his war strategy of choice. However, the diviner, Balaam, was repeatedly warned by God not to curse His chosen people, and every time he tried to curse them, he blessed them instead.

As an alternative, Balaam devised a highly effective strategy of corruptive seduction which I call the "Balaam Strategy". He advised Balak to allow the women of Moab & Midian to camp next to the Israelites & to lure the men into fornication & marriage so as to corrupt them and get them to sin against God.

Numbers 25:1-3 (NKJV) Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. 2 They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to

their gods. 3 So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel.

Christ spoke to the church in Pergamos in revelation, warning them to come out from being under the Baalam strategy. **Revelation 2:14** (NKJV) But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put **a stumbling block** before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

He warned them **Revelation 2:16** (NKJV) Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

If we want to be successful in our battle with the devil and his forces, its clear we need to avoid the "Baalam strategy"!

THE FOUR DANGERS TO AVOID:

WANDERING AND LOOSING OUR WAY

Psalm 107:1-5 Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. 2 Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy, 3 And gathered out of the lands, From the east and from the west, From the north and from the south. They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way ; They found no city to dwell in. 5 Hungry and thirsty, Their soul fainted in them.

The enemy's plan had scattered God's children and the wehnt through a wilderness experience. God had to gather these people back, He had to redeem them from the hand of the enemy. He gathered them from every direction.

The Bible describes us as sheep. Sheep know how to scatter, that's why a good shepherd is always alert. When the sheep scatter, they don't know how to come home. They are then in grave danger!

What happens when we wander?

- We find no safe spiritual place to stay! When we start wandering, we drift away from the church where God has planted us and we move out from under the spiritual covering He gives us at that church. It doesn't matter where you go, you will never feel comfortable.
- It becomes a wilderness experience – we are dry and thirsty in our spirit.
- We don't get proper spiritual food – we know you need it, but the word loses its impact and we start to starve spiritually.
- Our soul grows weak and faints within us!
- We are in real trouble!

How do we deal with it?

Psalm 107:6-9 (NKJV) Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, And He delivered them out of their distresses. 7 And He led them forth by the right way, That they might go to a city for a dwelling place. 8 Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men! 9 For He satisfies the longing soul, And fills the hungry soul with goodness.

Call on the Lord in your trouble, He will lead you back, He will satisfy your hungry soul and fill you with Good things.

Have you perhaps started to wander? Your church attendance has slacked off and you don't find God's word inspiring and life-giving any more? That's Balaam's strategy at work. Call on the Lord to deliver you!

WE OPEN THE DOORS TO SOME KIND OF SPIRITUAL BONDAGE

Psalm 107:10-12 (NKJV) Those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, and Bound in affliction irons— 11 Because they rebelled against the words of God, And despised the counsel of the Most High, 12 Therefore He brought down their heart with labor; They fell down, and there was none to help.

How do I know this is bondage? There are some telltale words here:

- Darkness and the shadow of death.
- Rebellion against the words of God and despising His counsel.
- No help – this is typical of the demonic realm – the devil won't help you, he wants to destroy you.
- Bound in affliction with irons! Gates of bronze and bars of iron are symbolic of demonic strongholds. The devil wants to hold you captive!

Here are some examples of bondage Christians can slip into:

- Pornography, hatred, unforgiveness, any kind of occultic act such as reading horoscopes, playing demon inspired games, watching TV programs that glorify the demonic!

Paul warns about this: **Galatians 5:1** (NKJV) Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

How do we get free?

Psalm 107:13-16 (NKJV) Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, And He saved them out of their distresses. 14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, And broke their chains in pieces. 15 Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, And for His

wonderful works to the children of men! 16 For He has broken the gates of bronze, And cut the bars of iron in two.

- Cry out to the Lord in their trouble, ask Him to save you out of your distresses, ask Him to bring you out of darkness and the shadow of death, and to break your chains in pieces.
- Submit yourself once more to the truth and power of god's word. **Psalm 107:20** He sent His word and healed them!

Have you perhaps compromised God's word and messed with things of darkness? Do you feel like you can't experience the joy of your Christian experience? Does it feel like your prayers hit a brass ceiling? That's Balaam's strategy at work. Call on the Lord to deliver you!

FOOLISHLY LIVING IN A SINFUL WAY

Have you ever just sinned, you knew it was wrong, but you sinned anyway? Thinking that after all, our God is gracious, and Jesus did die for our sins...

This is such foolish thinking! Proverbs speaks about this kind of thinking: **Proverbs 14:12** (NKJV) There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

Psalm 107:17-18 (NKJV) Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction; 18 they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death.

God is merciful, but if we embrace sin, it will not always lead to sickness, but her it is clear that, **"because of their iniquities suffered affliction"**.

The reality is that sin is dangerous, grace or no grace and we must not mess with it!

How do we turn this around?

Psalm 107:19-22 (NKJV) Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. 20 He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction. 21 Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!

This morning we need to ask ourselves: Have we been tolerating sin in our lives? Have we been foolish? Could it be that our illness is a consequence of us disobeying the Word of God? That's Balaam's strategy at work. We need to on the Lord to deliver us!

Let us cry out to our merciful God this morning and ask for Him to send His word and heal our disease.

DISTRACTED BY MONEY MAKING

There are many examples in the Bible of people who prospered. But there is a key to prosperity – it's the realisation that we cannot achieve anything except with the Lord's help. **Psalm 127:2** tells us that it's in vain that we rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil.

When we get so involved in our work or our business that we run out of time for God, we are caught in Balaam's strategy. Without God we can't do it, we should be spending more time with Him, not less!

In the Bible, ships symbolise trade and doing business.

Psalm 107:24-27 (NKJV) Those who go down to the sea in ships, Who do business on great waters, 24 They see the works of the Lord, And His wonders in the deep. 25 For He commands and raises the stormy wind, Which lifts up the waves of the sea. 26 They mount up to the heavens, They go down again to the depths; Their soul melts because of trouble. 27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, And are at their wits' end.

Here are the symptoms:

- They see the works of the Lord, And His wonders in the deep – these people start by experiencing God moving and doing wonders for them.
- But then they forget God is with them, and doing business becomes a time devouring thing where personal effort is king and God is forgotten.
- They mount up to the heavens, They go down again to the depths; Their soul melts because of trouble – The storms come and trouble puts them at their wits' end.

How can it be sorted out?

Psalm 107:28-30 (NKJV) Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble, And He brings them out of their distresses. 29 He calms the storm, So that its waves are still. 30 Then they are glad because they are quiet; So He guides them to their desired haven.

By remembering the Lord! We cry out to the Lord in our trouble, and He will bring us out of our distresses. He will calm the storm, so that its waves are still. He will guide us to our desired haven.

Have you possibly forgotten God in your quest for wealth & riches? Is your world suddenly a series of ups and downs which has left you in trouble and at your wits end? Then it's time to come back to God this morning – callout to Him for help!

CONCLUSION

The "Balaam Strategy" cause man to sin and drift from God, bringing defeat. We must be careful of these four things:

- Wandering away from the lord and losing our way.
- Opening the doors to spiritual bondage and rebelling against His word.
- Foolishly living in a sinful way.
- Being distracted by money making.

We have a good, good Father, whose mercies never cease. Psalm 107 is not a Psalm of judgment, but a Psalm of deliverance. In every case, the people cried out to God and He helped them.

We have the powerful name of Jesus and His shed blood that results in our forgiveness. All we need to do is turn back. I close with the Psalmist's words in verse 1-2 of Psalm 107: **Psalm107:1-3** Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. 2 Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy.

May the Lord our God be our Merciful Redeemer today!

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