

Balaam's new request for knowledge of God's will was due only to his greed for the rich gifts that the men had brought. How careful we need to be that we do not let our judgment as to God's will be swayed by ulterior considerations. 'He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul' (Ps.cvi.15). Instead of repeating what Balaam already knew, God apparently granted Balaam's desire. He said: If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do (20). This is the determination of many a Christian who allows himself to be inveigled into compromising associations. He does what he knows to be contrary to God's will, intending, in the course of it, to remain true to God. Such intentions usually fail. God is not satisfied with partial obedience. In this case, Balaam did carry out his intention, but only the supernatural power of God enabled him to do so. Since said only what God desired, the expected profits did not materialize. He would have been better off if he had stayed at home.

d. The incident of the speaking donkey (xxii.22-35)

We have noticed that the divine word which Balaam received at the second inquiry was not the whole story, but simply a response to Balaam's failure to obey what was already known to be God's will. If this inference seemed unwarranted before, verse 22 proves it to be true: God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him.

God wanted to drive home to Balaam's mind the necessity of standing by his determination to speak only the message that God desired. Since his going was contrary to God's clearly revealed will, such a result was hardly likely. Many a man has started with a similar intention, and ended by becoming a useful tool in Satan's hand. This time God miraculously intervened to strengthen his erring prophet, since it was necessary to God's plan of redemption that the Israelites should settle in Canaan, and the weakness of a prophet must not be allowed to injure this vital part of the divine programme. Therefore an incident followed