

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Donkey Sense

Most of us are probably familiar with “horse sense,” but what about “donkey sense?” We see a case of donkey sense in the Bible, where a donkey has more sense than a man. While we do not know the name of the donkey, the man's name is Balaam; and we read the account in Numbers 22.

Balaam's donkey knew to turn from trouble. When the donkey saw the Angel standing in the road with a drawn sword, she “turned aside out of the way and went into the field” (v.23). She knew better than to continue on the path toward trouble. If only Balaam had as much sense. When the Lord told him not to go curse the Israelites, His blessed people (v.12), Balaam again asked if he could go (v.19). He does go and takes advantage of several opportunities to possibly curse the people. While his donkey turned from the path of danger, he chose to go headfirst into it.

Do we ever do this? Do we ever know that there is danger on a path we are taking, yet we stay on that path anyway? We need to heed the words of the wise man when he says, “Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on” (Prov. 4:14-15).

The donkey knew that temporary discomfort was better than permanent death. When the Angel stood in a narrow path, the donkey pushed against the wall to get around Him (v.24-25). While Balaam was the one who complained about having his foot crushed, it could not have been very

comfortable for the donkey, either; but she had enough sense to endure the discomfort to avoid the death. Balaam, on the other hand, was focused on what would make life more comfortable. He only saw the earthly riches and honor that he stood to gain if he took the dangerous path of trying to curse God's people.

Are we ever like Balaam? Do we make decisions based more on what we stand to gain physically than on what we stand to lose spiritually? Do we ever get caught up in the comforts of this life to the detriment of our spiritual life? Paul warns us against this when he says, "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:9-10). He later says that some become "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:1-4). We cannot love both at the same time (Matt. 6:24). Do we have enough donkey sense to choose to forgo some of the comforts in this temporal life in order to preserve our eternal spiritual life?

The donkey knew when progress was dangerous. When she saw the Angel standing in a narrow place with no room to pass on either side, she lay down rather than go forward into danger (v.26-27). Balaam, who was blind to the Angel, would have ridden right into his death (v.33). A little donkey sense saved his life.

A lot of people in the religious world see the traditional (biblical) way of doing things as stagnant or out of date, a hindrance to what could be. They turn to more "progressive" ways of doing things, ways to help them "move forward" and draw bigger crowds. Like Balaam, they are blinded to the cost of their so-called progress. They fail to see the need and value of remaining on "the old paths, where the good way is" (Jer. 6:16). We all need to learn to have the attitude of Moses when he said, "Stand still, that I may hear what the Lord will command" (Numbers 9:8). Standing still in the right place

is far better than moving forward to the wrong place. If more people only had the donkey sense to be content where God wants them to be!

Each time the donkey avoided danger, Balaam struck her. It turned out that the one who really needed a good whipping was Balaam. He eventually reaped what he had sown when he was killed by the Israelites whom he had tried to curse (Numbers 31:8), all because he did not have the sense of his donkey. We all need to have the donkey sense to avoid the dangers that plague our path, before they cost us our lives.

- Troy Nicholson

Loving To Have It So

Concerning the sins and unfaithfulness of Judah, the Lord had this denunciation against them: "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jeremiah 5:31). The prophets were prophesying false things and the priests were following their directions. What was the attitude of the Lord's people? They loved to have it so! They were rejoicing in hearing false things rather than hearing the truth. The prophet Jeremiah was true to God. He called upon the people to turn from this wickedness. "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein." (Jeremiah 6:16). The people would not walk therein because they loved the false things which were being taught. When digression and apostasy come, there are brethren who are ready to dump the responsibility of such in the laps of preachers and elders. I have heard some brethren say that if the church could get preachers and elders to contend for the truth, and do right, digression and apostasy would not ever exist. It is not to be denied that a certain amount of responsibility is to be found in such categories. However, no departure from the truth is going to exist without God's people permitting it to happen. Yes, prophets spoke false things and the priest sanctioned

such, but the people loved to hear those things. They loved to have it so! They encouraged the preaching of false things. The basis of the charge which Paul gave to young Timothy is very similar to this passage in Jeremiah. "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." (II Timothy 4:1-5). He speaks of those who would not endure sound doctrine. After their own lusts they would listen to teachers who would turn away their ears from the truth. They would prefer fables rather than the truth of God's word. The teachers and preachers would be fruitless without the itching ears to hear their false messages. As in days of Jeremiah, there are those who today support such teachers because they love what they hear. "They love to have it so!" Why is it that they love to have it so?

It May Be Because: It may be easier to obey. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16:24). There is a class of people who profess to be Christians, but they want to be Christians without being told to deny themselves. Denial is no part of their philosophy of life. They want to do what they want to do, and they love preaching which does not disturb them by speaking of denial and sacrifice. They have visions of floating to heaven on a bed of ease without making denials and sacrifices a part of their lives. They encourage preaching which omits such because they love to have it so. Why is it that they love to have it so?

It May Be Because: It doesn't condemn them. When we are wrong, we need to be told. So much preaching today is that which makes brethren feel good without any condemnation. Sins are not being mentioned which are condemning. Preachers do not condemn practices because they know

what the people want and they are people pleasers. "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." (Galatians 1:10). Rather than concentrating upon pleasing God, we can find ourselves thinking more of what pleases men. "This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;" (Titus 1:13). I was told by a brother that he could not remember when the word "fornication" was used in a sermon from the pulpit of a certain congregation. If people are trying to please God, doesn't this seem strange? It is often mentioned in the scriptures, and we are told to flee fornication. (I Corinthians 6:18). Perhaps some preachers have concluded that they were to flee from mentioning the sin in their messages. Fornicators love to have it so, and they may exist in congregations. Why is it that they love to have it so?

It May Be Because: It is popular. The messages of the prophets, who spoke falsely, may have been more appealing. So many times, the truth is not. Few are those who will walk in the strait and narrow way. In quests for numbers, congregations want to hear that which attracts the worldly minded. They want to hear that of which they will not be ashamed. But remember, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." (Mark 8:38). We need to love what pleases God rather than what pleases us! We need to love and demand true preaching.

- Bobby K. Thompson

- > "Satan will use 99% truth to float one lie!"
 - > "The man who rows the boat doesn't have time to rock it!"
 - > "God does not look for great ability, but usability!"
 - > "A good marriage is like a casserole: only those responsible for it really know what goes into it!"
 - > "Strange, is it not? Everybody wants a harvest, but few want to plow!"
 - > "Doing nothing for others is the undoing of ourselves!"
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