

Balaam's Donkey

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 June 2018

Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[0 : 0 0] Now in this passage which we read from Numbers chapter 22, we have, as far as I can recollect anyway, the only instance of an animal, a creature, actually being given a mouth to speak in scripture here.

And we have the donkey of Balaam who falls down under him and he beats her of course the third time after she's turned aside first of all into the field and then crushed his foot against the wall which of course would not endear her to him and then finally falls down under him when she sees the angel up ahead.

And then she speaks, the Lord opened the mouth of the ass and she said unto Balaam what have I done unto thee. Now of course there are many people who simply take this incident and just discount it and say well that just proves it can't be a true to life wreck on the Bible.

I mean this is obviously just an ancient legend or a myth or something that's sort of found its way to the Bible. Do we believe the donkey spoke? Well come on, we believe the donkey breathed and maybe it said hee-haw and that was it and that's the way it spoke but you know we don't actually believe it had words in its mouth.

So okay let's go a little further. So do you believe that the donkey saw an angel there? Do you believe there was actually an angel there with its sword drawn in its hand?

[1 : 2 9] And of course then you probably say well you know we don't necessarily believe that maybe the donkey just stumbled and that's why it fell down and that's why Balaam was crossed after it had crushed his foot and everything but we don't actually necessarily believe there's an angel there.

So you know you see how it moves on from initially denying that the donkey speaks because animals don't talk as far as we know and then denying the presence of an angel there in the second place and then no doubt denying that any angel spoke to Balaam at all.

And then probably God didn't speak to Balaam either because he probably just kind of imagined it and so on and one thing leads to another. And really the denial of this incident that some people may be inclined towards because it's something we are not familiar with.

This root of unbelief. The minute you begin to push, the minute you begin to ask a little further, you find that the roots of that unbelief go an awful lot deeper and further than simply whether or not they believe that a donkey spoke.

But of course we'll come to what the donkey actually says in just a moment. But the point here is it's not intended to be an everyday occurrence. The fact that the donkey speaks is a miracle because we read that the Lord opened the mouth of the ass and she said unto Balaam, what have I done unto thee?

[3 : 0 1] It is only because the Lord enabled the donkey to articulate with human voice that which no doubt she felt within. God enabled her to speak.

She speaks almost exactly the same thing that the angel then speaks a little later on. Verse 32. Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times?

Behold, I went out to withstand thee because thy way is perverse before me. So what the donkey says, the angel also says just a few minutes later.

Do we deny them both? Do we disbelieve them both? Do we disbelieve the whole incident? Do we believe that God has included it by mistake? Or do we not really believe that God actually is responsible for what's in his word?

It's just human composition and then put together all these ancient myths and legends from long ago. And we just take them as sort of guidance and so on. And we've taken what we can and we sort of extract the bits that might be useful.

[4 : 03] So it goes against that. This is the classic stance of liberal unbelief. And that's what liberalism in theological terms actually is. Liberalism is unbelief.

It's a refined form of unbelief. But that's what it amounts to. Because if you think about it, a Christian is defined by what he or she believes.

And in theological terms, a liberal is defined by how much of it he or she doesn't believe. That's what it boils down to in the end. So we have here this incident of the donkey speaks.

Do I believe the donkey spoke? Absolutely. Why do I believe the donkey spoke? Because God's word says the donkey spoke. For the same reason I believe God parted the Red Sea.

For the same reason I believe that Jesus Christ rose the third day victorious over the grave. After he had been crucified. Do I believe he was well and truly dead upon the cross?

[5 : 01] Yes, I do. Why? Because the Bible says it. Do I believe the Spirit descended upon him like a dove at his baptism? Yes, I do. Because the Bible says it. At the end of the day, God's word is the rock upon which we stand.

Not human opinion or the flavour of the month or the passing fashions of men. Because at the end of the day, the passing fashions and flavours of men always come back to this same thing.

Unbelief. And unbelief is not from the Lord. Therefore, it can only have one ultimate other source. So let us then take it that the donkey speaks as God's word reveals and says it does.

That it is a miracle. That it is the Lord intervening in nature and overruling nature as he does in other places too. You cannot arithmetically feed 5,000 men plus women and children.

Which probably means, you know, 8,000, 9,000 people with five loaves and two fish ordinarily. You can only do it if there's a miracle. You can only do it if something supernatural has happened.

[6 : 15] Likewise, throughout scripture. When the axe head falls in the water and Elisha throws in the twig. And then the axe head swoops. The ironed did swim. It's a miracle.

No, it is intended to be a miracle. That on occasions when the Lord overrules his own laws of nature. This is one such occasion. Because the Lord opened the mouth of the axe.

And she said unto Balaam, what have I done unto thee? So, we have then the donkey speaking to him. And we have the reasons why he's angry with the donkey in the first place.

But let's just backtrack a little to where Balaam sets off with these messengers. Initially, another objection that people might have sometimes is, but surely God says to him to go with these messengers.

And then why, if God says go with the messengers, does God send the angel to stand in the way with the sword drawn and get close with him? That's just not logical. Look at what it says at verse 20.

[7 : 16] God came unto Balaam at night and said unto them, 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.

Now, previously, of course, when the men come to Balaam, he just said, well, no, I can't do anything for you. The Lord's told me that I've got to bless Israel and not curse it, so off you go back home.

And this then he says, well, stay the night and we'll see what the Lord says. And the Lord says, if the men come to call you, then go with them. And what do we find in the very next verse?

Does Balaam wait till they come to call on him? Does he wait for them to say, well, come on, what's the answer from the Lord? Because we need something when we go back to our master. You know, he doesn't wait.

He doesn't hold back. He just gets up, saddles his ass and goes with them early in the morning. No doubt, perhaps, the offer of what has been told, although he has answered, oh, if Balaam should give me his house full of silver and gold.

[8 : 16] I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God to do less or more. But there has been the enticement, I will promote thee. Verse 17, unto great honour I will do whatsoever thou sayest.

Unto me, come, therefore, I pray thee, curse me, this people. Now, of course, do we think that is Balaam getting a hard time? Because he's trying to be loyal, trying to be faithful.

Well, no, we're told in 2 Peter 2, verse 15 and 16, He speaks of those who are forsaken the right way and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bozor, who love the wages of unrighteousness, but was rebuked for his iniquity.

The dumbass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet. The dumbass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet.

In other words, you know, thousands of years later, it's still a one-off incident that is known to Peter and the apostles. It's known from the Old Testament scriptures to the Jewish Christians and to all those now who are believers in Christ.

[9 : 23] It's known as an incident, but it's not an incident that multiplies. It's a one-off. It's a miracle. Peter makes reference to it, and that clearly Balaam had been influenced by his desire for the material rewards that Balaam could offer.

He rose up in the morning. He didn't wait to be called. He didn't go by what God says. He didn't say, if the men come to call thee, but they didn't. And he didn't wait for them to come.

He just got to go. Oh, got to go and then say, well, whatever God says, of course, I'll say that, but I'm going to come. I'm going to come quickly. And maybe plug into this reward that is on offer.

Hence, we read, verse 22, God's anger was kindled because he went.

And the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now, he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him. It's not unlike the situation where Moses, having been summoned to go to Pharaoh in Egypt then, the Lord withstood him in the way.

And so it seems like it prevented, tried to prevent him from going, no doubt, a testing of his faith, a testing of his determination. But here, the angel of the Lord specifically says, So the suggestion is that without the donkey's intervention, Balaam would have been slain, killed by the angel of the Lord, because he doesn't draw his sword for nothing.

[11 : 00] If his sword is drawn, he intends to use it. This was a life-threatening situation. But the Lord revealed the angel to the eyes of the donkey that he didn't to the eyes of Balaam.

Now, you see the point here. Balaam is being approached and offered great rewards because he is a prophet renowned for wisdom, renowned for the ability to see things.

That's why Balaam sent unto Balaam, the son of Beor, to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children, his people to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt. Come now, therefore, I pray, decurse me, this people, for they are too mighty for me.

Better then should I who shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may dry them out. For I want that he who now blesses is blessed, and he who now curseth is cursed. Now, this is not because there is power in Balaam, in and of himself, but clearly if Balaam is, albeit not as holy a prophet of the Lord as he should be, but if he takes his direction from the true God, and if his habit is not to speak anything except what God gives him, then when he pronounces blessing in the name of the Lord, the person will indeed be blessed, because God intends to bless him, and he tells Balaam to pronounce that blessing.

But that's what he's doing. He's pronouncing the blessing. He's not giving the blessing. He's not conferring the blessing. He's just articulating it. And who he curses, because God has told him to curse, then he will pronounce it, and they will end up cursed.

[12 : 30] And this gives him a reputation, a reputation of power, a reputation of wisdom, a reputation for spiritual strength. And yet the Lord does not reveal his messenger, his angel to this prophet.

He reveals it to a donkey. He reveals it to a beast of burden. In order to humble the prophet, the dumb ass speaking with man's mouth, forbade the madness of the prophet.

What is the madness of the prophet? It is to go against God. What the Lord has said, bear on thanks, but I can do better. I can get away with it.

I can find a way through. I can get the rewards. And still not get, not get into trouble with the Lord. Because he said, after all, you can go with these people as long as you only speak the word that I say.

But God had not said. He said, if they come to call thee, and maybe they would have done later in the morning for all that he knew, but he didn't wait. They all rose up in the morning and saddled his ass and went with the princes of war.

[13 : 36] He didn't wait to find out if they were going to call him. He didn't wait to see if they would hang about and come again. No, he just went with them straight away. And so the Lord withstood him in the way.

And no doubt would have slain him. But perhaps his purpose of mercy was in there already insofar as he did open the eyes of the donkey. And the donkey, which gets a beating for her trouble, is in fact seeking to save and spare her master.

Because when she sees the angel standing in the way, the ass turned aside out of the way and went into the field. And Balaam smoked the ass to turn her into the way.

Now, it would imply, given that the third time, it says, you know, when she falls down under him, it says, he beat her with a staff. It says that in verse 27.

The fact that it specifies that, that he uses a stick, the third time, that probably implies he probably just uses his hand, or his fist, the first couple of times.

[14 : 38] Because it doesn't specify a staff, but it does say it the third time. It doesn't say beat her again with a staff, but rather he smoked the ass with a staff. Because his anger was kindled.

Verse 27. So probably he's just using his hand the first time, but still it would have inflicted pain, and perhaps some injury on the animal. So he turned into the field of Balaam smoked the ass, to turn her into the way.

So she's back in the way again, but the angel of the Lord stood in a part of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side. There is nowhere to turn, except to face the Lord's angel, the Lord's messenger, sword drawn in his hand.

And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself into the wall, trying to make herself as small as possible, to sort of hide as much as possible from the angel, but you can't, because he's right there in the way, and it crushes Balaam's foot.

So then he smoked her again. And the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in an old place, where there was no way to turn, either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam.

[15 : 44] And Balaam's ankle was kind of, and he smoked the ass with a staff. So she's actually been trying to spare him. And the angel says, you know, if she hadn't done these things, and turned out of the way, you'd be dead now.

So you've really got your donkey to thank, for the fact that your life has been saved. You could preach a whole sermon, a mini-series of sermons, on the humility that is brought upon the prophet, that way, necessarily by this humble donkey.

But what I really want us to recognize, at the focus of what she actually says. And she doesn't say an awful lot. You know, the Lord does not put into the mouth of this donkey, a long soliloquy of eloquence, and of, you know, grace and articulation.

It's simply, she says, what have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?

Now, also, we get Balaam doesn't say, my goodness, the donkey's talking.

Isn't that incredible? But rather, perhaps he's in such a rage, he just answers her right back, and because thou hast mocked me. And probably what he means is, here I am with these princes of Balak, the king of Mord, there have been all of me great rewards, and I want to look good in their eyes, and there's my own servants here too.

[16 : 58] And the fact is, I look now like I can't even control my own donkey, because he's turned into the field one day, you've crushed my foot against the wall, now you've fallen down under me. I look like I can't afford a decent beast, I'd be better off with a camel or something else.

You've made me look a fool in front of these people that I want to impress. That's why I have smitten you, because thou hast mocked me. I would, there were a sword in thine hand, for now would I kill thee.

So having initially asked, what have I done unto thee, thou hast smitten me these three times, the only other thing she says is, am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast written ever since I was thine unto this day?

Was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, now we don't know for sure that, yeah, this donkey has been with him from Boyhood or whatever, but certainly since he ever got it as a beast of burden, all the time he's had it, which by implication is a long considerable time, it's always been faithful, always been obedient, always done the right thing, always done exactly as it was told, until suddenly now, he says, this is out of character for me, isn't it?

Have I ever done anything like this before? And he says, well, no, you haven't. So, rather than flying off the handle to attack this faithful beast, should he not thought, what's wrong with her?

[18 : 19] Why is she doing this? She almost never does this. She never goes out of the way. She never crushes my foot against the wall. She never falls down under the burn. Is she sick? Is she not well?

Has she done something wrong? What's the matter? Instead of which, she just flies off the handle and beats the animal. Why? Because he wants to look good today in front of the princes of Moab. He wants to impress his own servants and them from whom he hopes to receive the reward. Instead, he's made to look stupid as though he can't control his own donkey.

And then the donkey speaks. And this is her point. I'm not I, I ask, upon which thou shod never since I was dying until this day, was I ever wont to do so unto thee?

Have I ever done anything like this before? Do you not think maybe something is different?

Something is wrong. Have I ever been anything other than faithful? He says, well no, you haven't done anything other than faithful.

[19 : 20] You've never done anything like this before. And then when the angel speaks to him, he sees the angel and spells it out. If she hadn't turned aside out of the way, you'd be dead now. So in other words, having been faithful all through her life of servitude and carrying her master who's written her all these years, all she was doing is continuing to be faithful.

All she's doing is trying to protect her master. All she's doing is acting consistently. for his safety and good and protection.

Now, I don't want us to think in terms of any kind of irreverence, but I think that the Lord would intend that we recognise something here, a certain parallel between this donkey on the one hand who is faithful to this wayward prophet, because it's not a wayward donkey, it's a faithful donkey and a wayward prophet, and the Lord who remains faithful to his children, despite the fact they are more ready to blame him when things go wrong.

And if they could smite him, they would. And as somebody once said many years ago, you know, man's hatred of God is such, if he could get at him, he would kill him.

And of course, that is true. The reason we can say that definitely is because the one time he did appear on earth, that's exactly what they did. Man's hatred against God, his rage against God for not doing what man wants, is such that if he could get his hands on him, he would kill him.

[20 : 55] But God is in heaven and we are upon earth. And yet, nevertheless, we still rail against God time and time again because he ends up making us look stupid.

He makes us look foolish because we're not able to do what we want to do. We set out in this quest for glory. We go with the people that we thought it was okay that we could go with. And here we are being made to look fools.

And we rail against God for it. And yet, the Lord will speak straight to our hearts. Might he not say, as he puts his words into the mouth of the stone gate, have I ever done anything to justify your rage against me?

Have I ever done anything other than provide for you and protect you? Yes, your foot may be crushed against the wall, but hey, you're still alive. If you'd gone plunging on under the sword of that angel, you'd be dead by now.

If I hadn't fallen down just now, when I did, you'd have gone riding merrily onto the point of a sword. If I hadn't done as I have done, you'd be dead.

[22 : 04] And the Lord has preserved and kept and looked after his children, not as a beast of burden, in all fairness, no, but certainly as a humble servant.

He has served his people he has provided for his people, he has looked after his people, and what is their response so often they're right against him? They would beat the life out of him if they could. This is a recurring theme. God's trying to call his people back to the reality of how consistent and how faithful he has always been.

Deuteronomy chapter 8, famous chapter that we often use in terms of thanksgiving, verse 2 onto verse 6. Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or no, and he humbled thee and suffered thee to hunger and fed thee with manna which thou knewest not.

Neither did thy fathers know that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.

[23 : 24] Thy raiment wax not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forty years. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.

Therefore, thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God to walk in his ways of the fear. And you see the point God is making here. He's saying, yes, you were hungry. I allowed you to

become hungry so that you would be dependent on me for your food.

I fed you with manna, but I fed you one day at a time so that you knew you'd have to depend on me and still you didn't always learn the lesson. Thy raiment wax not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forty years.

Did you even notice? Did you notice that garments that normally would become worn and mock-eaten and shoes that would wear out suddenly didn't? That they lasted all this time?

That you managed forty years? That I kept that miraculously? Did you notice? Well, no. They didn't actually notice because we don't tend to notice when things are done for us.

[24 : 30] We only tend to notice when they stop being done for us. In a former age when, of course, it tended to be more the husbands that would go out to work and wives that would stay home.

The story is told of how a husband came home one day and he found that the house was cold and the baby was screaming in its cradle and the place was dirty and everything and he went through the bed.

The beds were all in that estate and there was dirt everywhere and the grate was cold and there was no fire in it. There was nothing cooking or tea and he picked up the baby and tried to calm it down.

It was soaking wet and stinking and so on. He went through the house and eventually he found his wife sitting in the sitting room just with her feet up taking it easy and he said, what's going on? What's happened?

And she said, well, you're always asking what I do all day. Well, today I didn't do it. Now, often, of course, people don't realize when everything is done for them and here we have Israel almost certainly not realizing that the Lord kept their shoes, the Lord kept their clothes, the Lord provided the food day after day and they didn't really appreciate it.

[25 : 43] They didn't realize that they were being spared and kept and looked after all this time. The dumb ass forbade the madness of the prophets as Peter says.

What was the madness of the prophet? To go against the Lord to fail to recognize that God was the provider of every word of wisdom he'd ever had.

But, as we saw there in Deuteronomy, the Lord does sometimes, yes, chastise. We're not pretending it wasn't sore when Beryl's foot got crushed against the wall. We're not pretending it wasn't awkward when the ass fell down under them.

But it happened for a reason and the reason was the sparing of his life. the Lord is consistent in his care for his children.

So you read in Lamentations, you know, reasonably again familiar passage we take from in chapter 3 from verse 17. Okay, we'll take it from there.

[26 : 45] And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace. I forgot prosperity and I said my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord. God has forgotten me.

He's turned his back on me. There's no hope. The Lord doesn't love us anymore. Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance and is humbled in me.

this I call to mind. Therefore have I hope. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not.

They are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul. Therefore will I hope in him.

The Lord is good unto them that wait for him to the soul that seeketh them. Now you see what is being described there is a hope of that which has not yet come to pass but a trust that because despite all the evidence of suffering and sorrow and difficulty because the Lord is consistent in his care for his people that therefore the sufferer has hope.

[28 : 01] Jeremiah has lamentation Jeremiah has hope again. This I recall to mind therefore have I hoped. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. Bad things have happened. Things have gone wrong.

Things have gone difficult. Things are troubling us but we're still here. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning.

Great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul. That's the one whom I trust. He's good. That a man should hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

See Manachai tells us chapter 3 verse 6 I am the Lord. I change not. Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. It is because God is faithful.

God protects. God provides. God upholds. That's why we're still here. That's why he has spared us. As the donkey says, have I ever done anything in the past to cause you to beat me now?

[29 : 02] Have I ever been unfaithful? Have I ever failed to obey your commands? Have I ever done anything like what is happening just now? No, you haven't.

Therefore, there must be a reason for it. Isaiah tells us in chapter 12. It says, In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee.

Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid.

For the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song. He also has become my salvation. See, that key word there is trust.

Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid. It's because I trust that I'm not afraid.

Because although I can't see why things are happening the way they do, although I can't see why, there may be this injury, there may be this suffering, there may be this illness, there may be this difficulty.

[30 : 13] Why is my foot crushed against the wall? Why is my donkey falling down? Why are things making me look foolish? why is this happening to me? There will be a reason and a purpose.

And almost certainly it will not be to make you look stupid. It will be to save you from something much, much worse. In Ruth chapter 2, where she has this conversation with Boaz, he says to her, the Lord recompense thy work.

And a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

Now, Ruth had to trust the Lord, because although we think, oh yeah, there's Ruth leaning in the fields and so on, day by day, and Boaz is looking after her, but Boaz has the power to chase and offer his field or to care for and look after her.

Yes, probably Boaz by this time already knew what he intended to do with his children, but the point is, every day that Ruth is having to glean in the fields, yes, she's been able to glean in the fields and that is good, but every individual stalk you pick off the ground, it's only got so many heads of corn in it, by the time you've gathered it all out and threshed it all out and beaten it out and taken it home and so on, there's probably enough to feed you maybe for one day and you get food for that night she and Naomi will get food that night and then she's to go back out into the field and do it all again, just like the manna falling from heaven one day at a time, so Ruth gleaning in the fields one day at a time, how does she know she's not going to starve, how does she know she's going to be okay, she doesn't but she trusts, a full reward be given to the Lord God of Israel under whose wings are come to trust, it is about recognising the consistency with which the Lord who does not change has cared for us in the past, we cannot see the future, that is true, but we can look back and see the path by which we have been brought, and we can see even those times we thought at the time, well Lord, you're always saying, have I ever let you down, that time I thought, yes,

I thought, the Lord has let me down, definitely, for sure, this time, and then, a little further along the road, he said, well actually, no he wasn't, I can see why that happened now, I can see why things worked the way they did, fair enough Lord, you didn't let me down, you were actually looking after me, you actually got me through, okay, you know better than I do, fair, fair, time and time again, we will find that, when we are inclined to rail against the Lord, as as ready to rail against his donkey and to beat her, first of all with his hands, then with his staff, we would rail against the Lord, if only we had the power of God is in heaven and we are upon earth, and we cannot influence him in that sense, not by our raging and tantrums anyway, but God who loves us, will have reason and purpose for all that he does, and the consistency with which he has dealt with his children in the past, as they look back, it's one reason why the children of Israel are always told to remember the

[33 : 36] Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, remember how he parted the Red Sea, remember how he delivered you from the angel of death, remember all that he did, remember how your shoes didn't wear out, your feet didn't swell, the clothes didn't fall off your back, remember how he looked after you, why are they to look back, so that they'll know to look forward, because people used to talk about how Roman roads in this country were straight, and they went in a straight line, while the Lord deals straight with his people, and if you can look back and see the Lord's dealing in a certain direction, you can be pretty sure it's going to carry on in the same direction, because he is consistent, he is caring, and he delights to deliver his children, he may allow them, to be chastised,

he may allow them to suffer, yes, he may allow them to hunger, so they may learn that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord, now of course you can't eat words, but it does direct us where we should go for our fruit, it does direct us how we should live, and how we should obey the

Lord, and he looked to him for the provision which he will always make, because, she says, what have I done unto thee that thou hast smitten me these three times, am not I thine ass upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day, was I ever want to do so unto thee, have I ever been unfaithful, have I ever turned out the way before, have I ever let you down before, the donkey says, and it is the Lord who puts these words into her mouth, the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said to Balaam, what have I done to me, and the Lord would speak to his children and say, look, when have I never let you down, there's been times I thought you thought I let you down, there's been times that maybe things didn't go the way you thought you wanted, but you know with hindsight, don't you,

I knew what I was doing, and you didn't actually know what you were doing when you asked for the things you thought you wanted, I knew what I was doing, I was looking out for you, I was protecting you, if you had ridden straight on ahead, you may have thought you looked great in the eyes of the princes of Moe, but you would have ridden right on to the point that the angels saw, the Lord preserves, protects, and cares for his children, if we find at some point in our life, things are not going the way we want, we've sustained injury, we've had problems, God is not looking after us, God is not caring for us here, God is not being the kind of God that we want him to be, he's not doing well, he's like the donkey that we want to beat and punish for, for not doing the right thing, God may open his mouth and speak to us, by looking through the mouth of a friend, through his word or by some other means, have I ever done anything to let you down, have I ever done anything to give you just cause against me,

God is no man's debtor, if something is happening that is out of the ordinary, if something is happening that is against what we think it should be, there will be reason, there will be purpose, and there will be meaning, and there will be direction from almighty God because of it, not to make us look foes, but to save us alive, to preserve, to protect, and to keep us, now Balaam's subsequent relationship with the Lord of course was not exactly ideal, he did end up getting killed by the Israelites after he tried to lead them astray, and so on, and he tries to sacrifice to idols, and to commit fornication, and so on, and that's just the way it turned out, that was his just comeuppance, but for now, the Lord delivers him and keeps him, because he has purpose, he has planned for him, the Lord does not cast us onto the point of a sword, does not throw us away, casually, he intervenes to save, to protect, to guide, to lead, whatever it is that is turning you out of the way, whatever else it is that you long to blame, or to punish, or to rage against, behind it all will be the providence of Almighty

God, who knows exactly what he is doing, and who will have reason to ask, why are you reacting like this? Have I ever done anything in the past to cause you to think this of me?

[38 : 29] I am always faithful, I am always consistent, I am always righteous, I am always good, and I always know how to deliver my children.

God can use a prophet, God can use the silent book of his word, God can use the mouth of a friend, God can use anything, God can use the mouth of a donkey, God can even use the likes of you and me.

Amen. Amen. Amen.