

## “ . . .walk worthily . . .” from the Book of Philippians

**Scripture Block:** Pp 1:12-30

**Theme:** TO LIVE, IS TO ACCOMPLISH THE PURPOSES OF GOD.

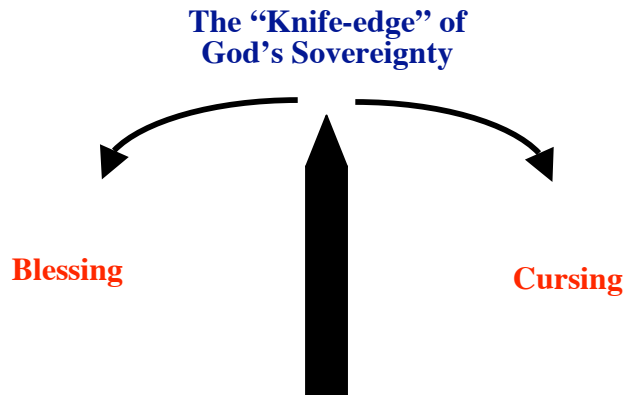
**Life verse:** Pp 1:27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ.

**Today's passage:** N/A

Notes

### Application

Let's continue our investigation of the “knife-edge” of God's sovereignty as it relates to a range of Biblical examples. Thus far, we have looked at Pharaoh as representative of the unbeliever and the Exodus Generation as representative of believers in general. I would like to close with a more subtle example that looks at a special case regarding the believer.



c. A more subtle example—that of Balaam. Here is a quick summary of the situation, which is further developed in Num 22-25.

1. The king of Moab is desperate to do something about the Israelites as they move into the Promised Land. As a last resort, he attempts to contract the prophet Balaam to curse the Israelites.
2. Balaam takes the king's request to God, who tells him in no uncertain terms that he is not to curse the children of Israel.
3. What follows in the book of Numbers, is a series of machinations whereby Balaam somehow tries to find a way to not violate the command of God and still receive his fee from the king of Moab (i.e. serve both God and look out for his material prosperity).
4. Balaam never does find a way to directly curse Israel, and chapter 24 ends with Balaam returning home. Balaam appears to have remained “clean” before the Lord.

5. However, if we carefully piece together the rest of the story, we will see the legacy of Balaam is a lasting reminder of the terrible consequences of trying to live for both self and God—something we need to have the discernment to avoid. Consider the following points of application:

a. We always put ourselves at risk whenever we see how close we can come to the boundaries that God has established—we need to steer well clear, something Balaam failed to do.

b. Now for the terrible part of this story. Num 25 tells us that the women of Moab enticed Israelite men to become involved in sexual immorality. As the result of this sin, 24,000 Israelites died in judgment by God. Now look at Nu 31:16 and Rv 2:14—although Balaam refused to directly curse the Israelites, he was in fact the source of the suggestion to undermine the Israelites standing before God through sexual sin. As Moab hoped—this led to discipline from the hand of a holy God. Scripture doesn't say, but perhaps Balaam obtained his retainer after all. However, it does tell us that Balaam was put to the sword when the Israelites defeated the Midianites—and now all that is left is a legacy of infamy recorded for all time in the Scriptures as a warning to us.

c. Could it be that Balaam had returned home after refusing to curse the Israelites “clean” in his own eyes? Let me be very clear, with the “knife-edge” of God's sovereignty clearly in mind, an “end-run” on the will of God will always leave a legacy that lays bare self-righteousness! The lesson for us is to have such a healthy respect for the sovereignty of God, that we keep well clear of the boundaries that He places into our lives, so that we would avoid the double-mindedness of Balaam.