



Don't Be That Monkey!

Devotion

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen (Jude 24-25).

Have you ever tried to capture a monkey? “How do you do that?” you ask. A fable is told that says you make a hole in a gourd with an opening just large enough for the monkey’s paw, then fill it with nuts and tie it to a tree. At night the monkey reaches into the container for the nuts and is unable to pull out his paw! Now, he could let go of the nuts and get his paw out quite easily, but he wants those nuts! He is caught because of his desire for more.

Are we like the monkey? Is our hand in the gourd? You had better believe it! (Read 2 Peter 2.) We know the straight path God has established for us, but we deliberately abandon it to go our own way. We want to satisfy our cravings or we covet what we do not have. We work on perfecting our skill of getting what we want, whether it is more money, a better job, a bigger house, more power, or prestige.

The prophet Balaam is an example. His story is in Numbers 22-25. He knew he should not cooperate with Balak, the Moabite king, but Balaam wanted the money and honor Balak promised him. God even warned Balaam, then rebuked him through the mouth of his donkey!

But there is even more to the story. God did not permit Balaam to curse Israel; however, Balaam did tell Balak how the Moabites could defeat Israel: “Just be friendly neighbors and let them share in your feasts.” Instead of remaining separate, as God had commanded, the Israelites compromised and joined in the pagan celebrations.

Are we convicted yet? Do we ever compromise in matters we know are sinful, but we either ignore the sin or try to rationalize it away by having “a different view”? Do we know when Scripture is being twisted? Do we recognize when we, or others, are being exploited by the culture, the media, and Satan? Our culture says we must give approval to all religious beliefs, even if they are contrary to God’s Word. If we are not careful and discerning, we may buy into it.

Peter wants us to see the wisdom of remaining faithful to God and His Word. The more deeply we are rooted in that Word, the more resistant we will be to our covetous nature and the outside influences of the world. And when we fail and are that caught monkey, as we so often are, what a blessing is ours to be able to repent of our sins and hear God’s Word of forgiveness and life through the blood of our brother, Jesus Christ. No longer do we have to be captive to sin, death and the devil, for we are free; free from each of them through faith in our crucified and risen Savior. No longer are we caught monkeys, but redeemed and beloved sheep of the Good Shepherd.

Our prayer: Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank and praise You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus, who has saved us from our many sins. Give us the desire to humbly serve You through serving others and becoming more like Jesus. We pray for those who have strayed from Your path or have never been on it. May they learn Your truth through us and be set free from their bondage. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen.

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