

At any rate, He, and no other, can best fit "the daily burden for the back." Let us not look out from our rocky or dark surroundings on some fancied fertile or bright plain of circumstance where we think it would be easier to serve God; no, here and now we must find the best way to serve God, the best way to love Christ, the best way to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.

The message begins with praise: our Lord is not niggardly of commendation, nor is He sparing of blame when it is deserved.

So there is praise for those who, like the faithful Antipas, hold fast His name, but there is blame for the toleration of evil and especially for the existence and perhaps for the toleration of false teaching of the type recognised as that of Balaam, allied to which was the teaching of the Nicolaitanes. These were in fact twin evils; it has been pointed out that Balaam is the septuagint form of the Hebrew "Bileam"—destroyer of the people, and the word in Greek Nikolaos appears to be derived from *Νικᾶω*, to conquer, and *λαός*, people; both are destroyers of the people of God: the one historically in the Old Testament, the other in the New.

Both appear to have been not open foes like the Roman Power, which often organised persecution, but secret foes, foes within the fold. These are the more dangerous foes, because more insidious. Balaam's character is a most interesting and instructive study. The contrary currents of motive in him: the desire for gain and reward; the reluctance to disobey the Divine Command; the outward obedience after the will had begun to be corrupted; the unwillingness to say more than he was allowed to say even when with Balac; the wonderfully inspired poetry of the man rising to that noble height: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his;" the contrast between this noble aspiration and his ignoble device for corrupting by carnal allurements those whom he had already pronounced blessed; and the final overthrow of Balaam fighting against the children of Israel: all these thoughts crowd into our minds when we think of Balaam. He is the type of all unworthy prophets or teachers; He is the prince of those who "know the right and yet the wrong pursue." The tendency to be like them is one we should fight against with all our heart and soul. Those in Pergamos who taught that Christians could countenance idolatry by eating meats offered to idols, and that they could countenance immorality by taking part in the wild revels of the Aphrodisia, were repeating the practice as well as the theory of Balaam. Christ claims our whole soul, hence there is no room for the recognition of any object of worship other than the Son of God. Christ claims our whole body, hence as Temples of the Holy Ghost there is no room for any form of impurity!