

9 August 2020

“Moses Death” – Numbers 27:12-14

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☺ Good morning. And welcome to those who have joined with us online.

A valuable lesson to learn early on in life, is that life is not fair. My Dad loved chocolate. And when we were growing up it was a special treat. But as one of 8 kids it did not seem fair that Dad didn't share his special treat with us. Little wonder – there was 8 of us! But a valuable lesson, nonetheless. Life is not fair – get used to it, and get over it.



What an incredible life that Moses lived. He was born at a time when Hebrew baby boys were being killed upon their birth. He was saved from this fate; placed in a basket on the River Nile. For God had a very special plan for this child. He was raised in the luxury of Pharaoh's palace, and grew up understanding the Egyptian ways. He ate the finest fair, and had the best education the palace could provide.

Then at the age of forty, in a moment of righteous indignation he killed an Egyptian man and fled for his life into the land of Midian. From the lap of luxury in Egypt Moses took on a job as a Shepherd for his father-in-law Jethro. And he worked out there tending sheep for 40 years until God called him to return to Egypt, and lead the people of Israel out of slavery and into the Promised Land.

Moses lived a long life, a rather productive life of great contrasts; coming to know God in a unique way, and seeing the wonder and miracles that God alone would perform. And today we come to read of the end of his life here on earth.

We read in the last chapter of Deuteronomy,

“Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho. There the Lord showed him the whole land - all the land of Judah as far as the Mediterranean Sea. Then the Lord said to him, “This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it.”

And Moses the servant of the Lord died there in Moab, as the Lord had said. Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone. The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over.

Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, who did all those signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt.



At 120 years of age, his eyesight and strength were still with him, yet it was time for his departure. What an amazing life! With all of the battles he faced and the dissatisfaction and complaints; the lack of faithfulness of the people and their disobedience; the constant struggles he faced in leading this huge rabble. The greatest thing of all for Moses must have been in seeing God face to face. That would be more than enough to keep him going; more than enough to motivate him and energise him.

Spending time alone with God, does that for all of us!

So, why was Moses disallowed to enter the Promised Land and retire in comfort? The simple answer is that we all have to die at some point, and that God had raised up a much younger man, Joshua, to lead them in and displace the people who were already living in these lands. But there is much more to it than that.

From the book of Numbers, chapter 27,

“Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go up this mountain in the Abarim Range and see the land I have given the Israelites. After you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was, for when the community rebelled at the waters in the Desert of Zin, both of you disobeyed my command to honour me as holy before their eyes.”

So, although Moses was able to see the Promised Land he would not enter it.

What happened in the Dessert of Zin? This event is recorded in Numbers 20. The Hebrew people had come to a place where there was no water for the community – at least not on tap or in plentiful supply, and the people began to quarrel and complain. And so Moses and Aaron approached the Lord at the tent of Meeting. And v.7, **“The Lord said to Moses, take the staff, and gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock and it will pour out its water, enough for the people and their livestock.”**

V. 9-12, **“So Moses took the staff from the Lord’s presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, “Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?” Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank. (Thumbs up? – jobs done!) V.12, ...**

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust in me enough to honour me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.” (Thumbs down – jobs done but not in a God honouring way.)

You see God asked Moses to speak to the rock. Instead he struck it with the staff. You say – same result – what’s the problem? Well, Moses makes it look like God is not happy – that He is in fact angry with the people, when He wasn’t. God is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and mercy. He graciously supplies all of our needs and doesn’t give us what we deserve. Moses reaction was one of frustration and anger, but God’s was not. Moses did not honour God by his actions and gave an incorrect perception of God.



But secondly, as Moses struck the rock, he also made it appear that he was the one who was supplying the water. **“Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?”** In essence his actions said, “You want water, I’ll give you water!” Little wonder the people asked Moses to fix their future problems, rather than ask Him to go to God and petition God on their behalf. We need to be careful as we serve the Lord that we do so graciously, and in a God honouring way.

Now, Moses failed the Lord on other occasions too. It seems that anger was something that he may have struggled with. At about the age of 40 Moses saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave and in a fit of rage he killed the Egyptian taskmaster. Around forty years later, he came down from Mt. Sinai with the Ten Words from God and found the people in worship of a golden calf. In hot anger he smashed the two tablets. And it seems that anger was behind his striking of the rock to produce water. It seems that we’re never too old to make our mistakes. And so the Lord declared that neither Moses nor Aaron would enter the Promised Land.

And you might think, that’s not fair, that this was a bit harsh from God. But Moses story is a mix of both human failure and God’s grace. Does God hold Moses accountable for murder? Does God punish Moses for smashing the first set of stone tablets? Is God more concerned about our punishment or His glory? Does God place mercy over justice? You see, it’s because Moses fails to bring glory to God that results in him not entering the Promised Land. And that too may have been a gracious gift for Moses – not having to lead the people into battle - into war against formidable enemies.

Although life might seem unfair to you, you and I have made our mistakes; there have been times when we have failed our God, failed ourselves, and failed one another; God's grace continues to carry us through. Sometimes there have been serious consequences because of our failings, but God is still on the throne and at work; bringing about His purposes and glory. He is still working all things together for good and His glory. God doesn't punish us as we deserve. And that's not fair!

And on top of that, the hope that we have of seeing the Promised Land continues to motivate and energise us

Paul wrote, **"For our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."** (Phil 3:20-21) **"We wait for the blessed hope - the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ,"** (Col 2:13) **"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."** (1 Thess 4:16-17)

And so, we experience the Promised land as we walk with the Lord, led and empowered by the Holy Spirit, as He produces His fruit within us, creating us to be more like His Son, and we look forward to the fullness of the Promised Land in the glory of Heaven – eternal life with our Father.



And we see this in Moses. Fast forward several centuries. We read of Moses brief return – this time into the Promised Land, and this time upon the Mount of Transfiguration.

We read in Luke 9, **"Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem"** (Luke 9:30-31).

I guarantee that Moses wasn't standing there looking around at the scenery saying, "So, this is the Promised Land." Moses saw and spoke with the fulfilment of God's promise – Jesus, God's Son. Wow! Moses spoke with God face to face and with Jesus face to face. Wow! You can't get better than that!

Moses failures did not stop him from experiencing God's grace. Although Moses made his mistakes and at times failed to bring honour to God, he would see the Promised Land, and he would experience the wonder of the Eternal Promised Land. Although we might make our mistakes, and at times fail to honour God, and at times life's seems unfair, we see glimpses of the Promised Land already, and look forward to experiencing it in all of its fulness – to seeing our Saviour face to face.

Life's not fair? The best is yet to come! Praise God! Our failure does not stop us from experiencing God's grace!

COMMUNION



In Communion, these emblems remind us of the depth of God's love for us; the extent of God's mercy; that Jesus was prepared to die on the cross so that we might be forgiven of all our sins.

For He is faithful and just, and as we confess our sin before Him, He purifies us from all unrighteousness.

Praise God! "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

Praise God! In accordance with the riches of His grace, we are forgiven.

Praise God! "While we wait for the blessed hope - the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ."

Praise God! Our failure does not stop us from experiencing God's grace! And praise God, that's not fair!