

# MOSES, AN UNLIKELY HERO

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I cried today when Moses died.

This is not an event that just happened, and it's not because he and I were close. In fact, Moses died many thousands of years ago, long before I was born. I won't meet him until I die too, and then I'll find a different Moses than the guy I've just read about.

Most of us are familiar with Moses at some level. He led the people of Israel out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. It was tough traveling, and the challenges were many. Though God miraculously guided them and provided for them each step of the journey, the Israelites learned all their lessons the hard way, if they really learned them at all. This was very hard on Moses, and his resulting frustration eventually proved his undoing.

But from birth to death, it is obvious that God chose Moses for a special purpose. His relationship with God was unique, personal, and faithful. The Bible concludes Deuteronomy by stating that "...no prophet has since risen whom the Lord knew face to face," and that "...no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did." Let me put this another way: we are never going to see anyone like Moses again. He was a hero, a pretty remarkable man. No doubt about it.

So I hesitate to say I see a lot of myself in him. But I do. I understand Moses when he doubted God, when he challenged God, when he pleaded with God, and when he asked God for special favors. I sympathize with his frustrations, his loneliness, and even his passion for justice. I feel his despair when he wanted to give up and call it quits. I've been there. I know how it feels to wonder if you're really the man for the job.

Everybody loves a hero. Our heroes accomplish the things we can only dream about. They show us it can be done! We're inspired by our heroes because they give us hope. We believe in them, and eventually we place some of our own identity in the person we choose to see them as. And that's why a gnawing misery invades our soul when something goes terribly wrong with our heroes. Our sense of worth and purpose gets clouded. We become troubled in our secret places, forced to wonder once again who we are.

I admit that the circumstances surrounding Moses' death will always make me feel uncomfortable on some purely human level. After so many years of endurance, hard work, loyalty to God, and doing a lot of hard things right, Moses had his natural outburst, his unguarded moment. He lost control. He blew it. And for this, God denied Moses the reward of achieving the goal, even when the trophy Moses had endured so long for was finally in sight. It

makes me swallow hard. It's easy to feel a spasm of despair for Moses who showed that even he could fail. It concerns me to no small degree that I see myself in Moses here too.

In the end, Moses, the staunch patriot, the unparalleled leader, the prototypical judge, and great mentor was still just as human as I am right now. I am tempted to be alarmed about this more than I am encouraged to find any hope in it. After all, if an matchless personality like Moses could fail, then maybe the bar is set too high. It's easy for me to feel overwhelmed. My hero couldn't pull it off, so why should I even try?

After thinking this over, I conclude that there is a lot of incentive to finding fault with God. It is easier to hold to an improper view of God than to change something I most want to believe about myself. And being the person I am, I want to believe that I'm OK. I want to feel I have a right to bring something good to the table.

The problem is I'm not OK, and Moses wasn't either. Only the absolute holiness of an Almighty God makes this clear. Without this standard, it's too easy to think I'm better than I am or that God is not as awesome and perfect as He really is. Both views are so very wrong.

I'm wiser to see Moses as a reality check. The Israelites constantly failed the basics about trusting God, and in a critical moment, Moses also failed to do the same. Sure, he was a hero, and basically everyone around him wasn't. But personal achievements aside, who we really are comes down to giving proper place to God. That's why A. W. Tozer says, "What comes to our mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us." This sets the tone for everything else which follows.

I think Moses should still inspire us. He went from murderer and fugitive to become a prophet and leader for all time. Originally, he was a fairly ordinary man, but after God got hold of him he became a commanding figure of incredible destiny. He's an example of what God can do through any of us if we lay aside our personal distractions and choose to walk as closely with God as Moses chose to do. And because God never changes, He's still searching for imperfect people to turn into unlikely heroes. People like me,....and you!

Moses walked into the final hours of his life with his head and his heart in the right place. I doubt he anguished over his appointed time. He delivered a final, firm challenge to the nation of Israel and then he climbed the mountain alone, never to come back down. The Bible states that God met Moses up there and personally showed him the land which he would not enter. After that, Moses died.

I wonder how he died. I'm sure that Moses and God had one last talk. If the Lord said anything to him, I'm betting they were words of love and reassurance. Maybe they were something like, "It is time. You've journeyed long, my child. Let me take you to a far better Promised Land than this one you see."

The Bible states that God Himself buried Moses. There is no record of anybody else that had this honor. Moses left this world as exclusively as he lived in it. If Moses had any shortcomings as a hero, he certainly died with hero's honors.

All things considered, it is not difficult to see why I feel like I've come to understand Moses, or at least the person he was. And because I understand him, I miss him now that he is gone.

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