

## Finishing Like Moses

Deuteronomy 34:1-12

June 21, 2009

### Intro

We have now come to the last chapter of the book of Deuteronomy. Here we have the account of Moses' death. God describes for us the picture of Moses finishing the course of his life. In verse five we read that God himself buried Moses in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-Peor. Therefore, we do not know exactly where Moses was buried and we cannot read his tombstone. So chapter 34 becomes the tombstone for Moses.

We read in verse 10 that, "Since then no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." I believe that would still be true today, with the exception of Jesus, who was more than a prophet, he was also a king.

A tombstone gives us a sense of how a person lived their life. I've noticed that tombstones have become much simpler in recent years. That's probably because they have become much smaller. But tombstones can be very insightful into the life that person lived. Here are some words written on actual tombstones: "Beneath this stone, a lump of clay, lies stingy Jimmy Wyatt, who died one morning just at ten, and saved a dinner by it." Then there's, "Jedidiah Goodwin, Auctioneer, Born 1828, Going! Going! Gone!! 1876. I liked this one, "John Goembel, Attorney, The Defense Rests." This one is sad, "Here lies an Atheist, all dressed up and no place to go." But my favorite is, "See, I told you I was sick!" Our mom said we could put anything but, "Gone, but not forgotten," so we teased her by saying we were going to write, "Anything but – gone, but not forgotten." We finally settled on, "Our Mother – Our Friend."

Someone once said that the most important part of a tombstone is what is behind the dash between the date of birth and the date of death.

When we look at the life of Moses, especially as we look at the last 80 years of his life and we see the manner in which he died, we see a man from whom we can learn many lessons.

### **I. Know the Lord Intimately**

- 1 Verse 10 reads, "Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel whom the Lord knew face to face."
- 2 In other words, this became one of the defining aspects of the life of Moses, he knew God face to face. Literally, it means, "mouth to mouth." It was an ancient expression meaning that they spoke to each other personally.
- 3 This is a key for us as well. If you want the dash between your birth and death to have some meaning, this then becomes the key.

#### **A. Live your life in the present**

- 4 Life is short and we should live it to the full.

- 5 There are several scriptures that describe the perspective of our lives from God's Word.

**Isaiah 40:6-8, A voice says, "Call out." Then he answered, "What shall I call out?" All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.**

**James 4:13-14, Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.**

- 6 Many people spend a lot of time longing for the next phase in their lives.

**Illus – I couldn't wait to move up to junior high, then I couldn't wait to graduate from high school, then I couldn't wait to be done with college and then to get married and then to have kids and then that the kids would get done with high school...**

- 7 Life goes by faster and faster as we get older. Now is the time to use the time we have been given to live for the purpose God gave us to live.

#### B. Walk with God with every step

- 1 God told Moses to walk to the top of Mount Pisgah. There God wanted Moses to see the land that He had promised to the sons of Israel.
- 2 This was a gift that God was giving Moses as a consolation of sorts. Moses was not allowed to go over there because he had lost his temper and misrepresented God to the people of Israel.

#### **Deuteronomy 32:48-52 When Moses broke faith with God**

- 3 Here's the point: Moses broke faith with God when he lost His temper. He stopped walking with God and went on his own and the results were disastrous.
- 4 But when Moses walked with God he saw the powerful hand of God doing awesome things through him for God's glory.
- 5 Notice in 34:11-12 as the signs and wonders are described which Moses performed.
- 6 We see a powerful picture of this in Elijah. He was a man just like you and me, but when he walked with God, powerful things happened through his life.

**James 5:16-18, The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.**

**Illus – Mount Nebo is approximately 4,500 feet in elevation. Here God asks Moses to climb this mountain to the place where he will die. Moses was still filled with vigor at 120 years old, so he is able, but this is a walk that Moses would take with God. We have many people in our lives, but our walk with God is just between us and God; and this should be a walk of faith.**

**Psalm 23:3-4, He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me;**

7 One of the greatest descriptions of walking with God is in the godly man Enoch...

**Genesis 5:24, Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.**

## **II. Finish Strong**

- 1 The description of Moses at the end of his life is very interesting. We see that he is 120 years old, yet his eyes were not dim; nor was his vigor abated. In other words, he was fit and strong to the end.
- 2 To me this is amazing when you consider the great weight and burden he had on his life. Can you imagine the stress of leading a rebellious nation for 40 years—through a desert?
- 3 When he finished, he finished strong.

### A. Don't let anyone cut in on you

- 1 This comes from the picture of running a race. Paul wrote to the church in Galatia...

**Galatians 5:7, You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?**

**Illus – One of the scenes from “Chariots of Fire” that has always inspired me was when Eric Liddell was in a race and someone cut in on him and he fell. Rather than becoming angry and walking off, he got up and took off after the other runners with greater effort, passing them all to finish the race first.**

- 2 Moses fell down also when he misrepresented God. But he knew how to get back up and keep running well.

**Proverbs 24:16, for though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again, but the wicked are brought down by calamity. NIV**

- **James 1:12-13, “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”**

3 Paul strongly admonishes us to finish well even as we have seen this in his life as.

**2 Timothy 4:6-8, For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day;**

4 Don't let anyone cut in on you and shipwreck your faith...

**1 Timothy 1:19 “fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.”**

B. This is our valley of decision

5 You no doubt will remember that Moses wanted Israel to go to the Shechem Valley once they entered Canaan, and there they were to have men stationed on the two mountains on either side of that valley. Those men were to shout out the blessings and curses that come from either following God or walking away from Him.

6 In many ways, this life is our own valley of decision. But the decision that we make has eternal consequences.

**App – There has to be a better word than “death” to describe what happens to us when we leave this earthly life.**

7 We say someone has “died” when their bodies take their last breath. But the proper definition of death is “separation from God.”

8 God told Adam that the day he ate of the fruit of the tree in the garden he would die.

**Genesis 2:17, “but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”**

9 Every time someone sins he goes a little further away from God.

**Isaiah 59:1-2, Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you**

**and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.**

10 If death is being separated from God, then there are many people who are dead right now. When their bodies die, they simply continue in the state of their choosing.

11 In the same way, if you ask Christ into your heart, you already have eternal life, and when you leave this body you simply continue in the way you have chosen.

C. Be a good and faithful servant

12 Certainly we see in Moses' life that he finished well and that he entered into the joy of the presence of the Lord.

**Illus- Many rabbis who comment on this chapter say that God kissed Moses into death. Someone said, "He kissed him goodbye." But then another said, "No, God kissed him to welcome him home."**

13 When we die, may we hear the words that Jesus promised to those who were faithful in this life...

**Matthew 25:23, "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'"**

1 There is a powerful testimony to Moses' faithfulness in Hebrews 11:23-26.

**Hebrews 11:23-16 The faith of Moses**

2 What a joy to understand what God thinks of our death...

**Psalm 116:15, Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones.**

**Illus – F.B. Meyer wrote about the death of a man of God who on his deathbed said, "The celestial city is in full in my view. Its glories have been upon me; its breezes are fanning me; its odors are wafted to me; its sounds are striking upon my ears; its spirit is being breathed into my heart." And then he was gone.**

**In Passion for Souls, by Dorsett, the famous preacher, D.L. Moody died and the events of his last moments were recorded and have become of blessing to many.**

**“Moody’s beloved son in law set up with him all night on December 21<sup>st</sup>. At 3:00 AM, his son Will came in to take the next bedside watch. Around 6:00 AM, the ailing preacher roused from sleep and in slow, measured words announced, “Earth recedes, heaven opens for me.” Will assumed his father was dreaming and attempted to wake him. “No,” this is no dream, Will, it’s beautiful, it’s like a trance. If this is death, it’s sweet. There’s no valley here. God is calling me, I must go.”**

**The nurse summoned the family as well as the Dr. who was sleeping nearby and everyone gathered around the venerable 62 year old patriarch pronouncing a blessing. He said, “I’ve always been an ambitious man; ambitious to leave you no wealth or possessions, but to leave you lots of work to do. Will you carry on the work?” He said to a son, “You take up Mt. Hermon.” He said to his other son Paul, “You take up the seminary. Fit, you look after the institute. Ambert, you will look after the business details.”**

**After a pause, he exclaimed, “This is my triumph. This is my coronation day. I have been looking forward to it for years.” Then with his face illumined he cried out (his two children had died before him), “Dwight, Irene, I can see the children’s faces.” After a few moments he turned to his beloved wife, “Emma, you have been a good wife to me.” And then he slipped into unconsciousness only to rally again a few minutes later. And then he said, “This is a strange thing. I have been beyond the gates of death and then to the very portals of heaven, and here I am back again.” Then he made a few more assignments, telling Percy and his daughter, about some things he wanted them to do at the Moody Bible Institute. Emma received her assignment and then inquired, “Well what about momma?” and he replied, “Oh she is like Eve, the mother of us all.” And at that moment Mr. Moody decided to get up and sit in his chair, and then he said, “I’m not at all sure that God may perform a miracle and raise me up. I’m going to get up.”**

**And after sitting for a few minutes he sank quickly and allowed the doctor to help him back to the bed. Once settled, he turned to Emma his wife apologetically and whispered, “This is hard for you, mother, and I’m sorry to disturb you this way. It’s hard to be kept you in such anxiety.” The doctor approached him with another nitroglycerin injection, but the fading giant pushed him away and said, “It’s only keeping the family in anxiety.” And in just a few moments he slipped quietly into eternity.**