

Face to Face
Finishing Well • Message 7
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Prayer Points for Prayer Time:

- Thank God for loving you even in your failures.
- Pray for wisdom to make choices that honor God.
- Pray for the strength to finish well and trust God's plan.

Scripture Reading:

And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said. He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is. 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. Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses. 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—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.

Deuteronomy 34:5-12 (NIV)

A. Introduction

Today we are talking about Moses' death... I confess to you, this was by far the hardest message for me to write, and here's why... we all hear about others dying... when you turn on the news, all you hear about are traffic accidents and people dying. We think that applies to everyone else, but the truth is, everyone is going to die... and I know it's not a popular thought... but in 100 years there will be all new people walking this Earth...

And some of you go, *Hey man, can you be more positive?* Yes, I'm 100% positive you are going to die.

And the subject today reminds us that death and old age await us all.

One old guy tried to put it in a poem....

I like my new bifocals.

My dentures are just fine.

I have both hearing aids turned up.

But Lord, how I miss my mind.

Most of us fear death. We don't want to talk about it; we want to sweep it under the rug. However, death reminds us that what seems so important right now often matters very little at the end of our lives.

But also, Moses' life ends with a little disappointment. For 40 years, he has been guiding and directing the people of God, and because of a failure years ago, he doesn't enter the Promised Land.

When I thought about this, I had this almost negative view of God. It just seems like God is being unfair or cruel towards Moses. Like, here is a guy who walked face to face with God, and now it feels a little like God is done with him...

Also, it didn't give me a lot of hope at first because I have made way more mistakes than Moses, and I know many of you feel that, so how can we have confidence we aren't going to mess everything up...

And then, as I began to study, I was reminded of this from the life and death of Moses...

B. Finishing Well

1. God loves us in our MESS, not just our SUCCESS.

(Numbers 20:7-12)

Sin:

1) Punishment.

God never punishes us... Jesus took the punishment for our sin (Isaiah 53:5). God isn't an angry father, looking to throw a cosmic hammer down on you and sin. He's good and kind, and the Bible says he's slow to anger.

2) Discipline.

The other day, one of my kids got upset with the other, so they walked over, threw the TV remote, and hit the other in the face. I said, *Why did you do that?*, and she said, *She wouldn't stop talking...* Jesus come quickly... and so I said, *Go to your room.* I went and talked to her, and I told her, *I love you, but you can't do that.* I took away a privilege. When we pout, when we lash out and get angry, when we turn our hearts, God will discipline us, but it's always in love.

3) Consequences.

Before I was a Christian, I was not into the things of God... and I regret that I made a lot of mistakes... I was a bully to a couple of kids... then I became a Christian.... There was one kid who told another kid he didn't want to be a Christian anymore because I was... I sat down and I apologized, but I couldn't undo the heartache and pain that I had caused.

Here's the point: you read this and suddenly it's as if you think God is just a cruel, angry father punishing Moses... but God is still loving Moses in the midst of the mess, not just in the success.

Moses made a mistake in Numbers 20.

The LORD said to Moses, "Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink." 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. But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."

Numbers 20:7-12 (NIV)

This was the seventh time the people grumbled, and so I'm sure Moses was frustrated...

Plus, think of the weight he carried, the burdens of leading so many people who don't seem to get it.

Moses' Mistake...

- 1.) **He disobeyed.** (God said to speak to the rock, but he struck it.)
- 2.) **He elevated himself above people.** (Must WE bring water out of the rock? Maybe Aaron, but more than likely, he meant God and I... God is the source, Moses was a resource.)
- 3.) **Misrepresented God.** (God didn't command him to yell at people, to scold them or condemn them. God doesn't say anything in this passage about anger.)

Can I ask you a question? How do you represent Jesus? There is a book by a man named Michael Hart called: *The 100 Most Influential People of All Time*. In the book, he ranks Jesus 3rd. He was asked why, and he said that by his own right, Jesus is number one. The issue is with his followers; they don't seem to represent Him well.

Two things that made Jesus' life so impactful. (And for that matter, Moses, except for a couple of mistakes.)

- 1.) Jesus is different than the world. (Listen, if your language, your values, your focus are no different than those who wouldn't call themselves believers, then we aren't representing him well.)
- 2.) But He was with the world. (He sat with people; he loved people.)

When I first got here, there was a congregant who would send me some of the meanest emails, complaining about the church, Brookwood, and its pastors. Normally, I just don't respond, but he kept sending these really theologically brilliant emails, but they were mean. He even spoke about Perry and some of the other pastors... so one day I just responded... I said, *I have a problem with your theology...* and he fired back, *Tell me what is...* and I just said this... *You're mean*.

It may not surprise you that he's no longer at the church.

Listen, I don't say that from an ivory tower... but I just want to be real here. Some Christians out there are some of the meanest people around. Church, may it not be so of us... Here's why visible people represent an invisible God.

Moses was the one who went to speak face-to-face; Moses was the chief representation with God. It shows us that you can have the values of God, but not the heart of God. (Moses' emotions weren't God's emotions.)

God isn't this crotchety, angry, old God... I love what Mark, our Discipleship Pastor, said after someone said God just hit me upside the head with a 2x4... he said, *If my dad hit me with a 2x4, I'd call the police...* and I loved that.

God is serious about sin. He crushed his son for it. So, stop excusing it if you are. God is serious about our holiness... but let me speak this: God never crushes us. He did that to Jesus so we could be made right. He will discipline us, but it's always out of love.

Moses' mistake kept him from the Promised Land, which was a consequence, but let me say something else I learned through Moses' life...

What if not going into the Promised Land was a kindness to him as well?

Remember, the people weren't going to live in the Promised Land; they were going to fight for it!

Remember, the people of Israel were no better when they reached Canaan than when they were in the wilderness. They suffered defeat through unbelief, and they missed much of their inheritance through self-indulgence. Moses had seen enough of them on one side of Jordan, without being troubled on the other. Maybe the Lord, therefore, graciously took his servant off the active list.

The weight he's carried for so long... what if God is removing that so he can eternally rest, delight, and live in the ultimate Promised Land?

Charles Spurgeon said this....

What a lonely life he led! Are you surprised to hear me say that? With whom could he associate? Even Aaron, his brother, remember how he failed Moses, when that man of God was absent for forty days upon the Mount with God. It was Aaron that made the golden calf, and this clearly proved his spiritual inferiority to Moses. With whom could he take counsel? Who would talk with him as a friend? He dwelt apart and shone as a lone star. Significantly, he died alone, for so had he lived. Moses, after one hundred and twenty years of service, enters his rest. Is it not well?

– Charles Spurgeon

2. Your last days can be some of your BEST days.

(Joshua 24:15)

One thing Moses never lost was hope... Can I ask you an honest question? Do you have hope?

Do you have hope that God can heal your pains?

Do you have hope that God can help you be your best, spiritually speaking?

Do you have hope that God is in control and working things out for your good?

Do you have hope in the midst of the trials you are facing?

Hope is the birthmark of God's children... It's the anchor for our souls.

God wants you to hope again in Him, not yourself.

So many people don't hope because of a mistake, or they just feel like they are stuck in a mundane or mediocre life... they have a bad health report, they didn't get married, their kids aren't where they need to be, the job isn't great... and they think this is it.

Let me speak this over you... If you aren't dead, you aren't done... and your best days can be ahead.

But guess who didn't lose hope... Moses... and dare I say this... Moses had moments of sadness, but I really think His best days were his last days.... When he heard he wasn't going to the Promised Land, he didn't give up...

Moses' Last Days...

He's commissioning. (Deuteronomy 31)

(Takes Joshua, builds him up, and powerfully speaks over him, commissioning and supporting.)

He's singing. (Deuteronomy 32)

(Called the Song of Moses. He gave them this song to remind them of God's provision. They would sing because they didn't have computers or pens and paper, and so it was easy to remember.)

Nationwide is on your side.

Gimme a break ... break me off a piece of that Kit Kat bar.

Easy, breezy, beautiful. Cover girl. (A lot of men seem to know that one.)

Once you pop... You just can't stop.

I don't always drink beer... but when I do it's a...

That was a test. Why would you know that, you sinful people? That's not even a song...

I don't wanna grow up, I'm a Toys R Us kid.

He's blessing. (Deuteronomy 33)

Do you know how much power is in your words? Your words hold death and life. Long after you are gone, people will carry the words of blessing you spoke into them, even people you don't know well. When you build them up, it shapes the direction of their life... Listen, if you have breath left in you, there is someone who needs you to speak life into them...

He's trusting. (Deuteronomy 34)

He prayed in Deuteronomy 3 for God to let him see the Promised Land, God tells him to speak no more of it, and that's the last he ever asked. He's not bitter. He's not angry.

With his last breath, he's commissioning, he's singing, he's blessing, and he's trusting...

I want to do something the Lord put on my heart. When the Lord gave me this, I wept... I'm not a crier... but I just saw this picture of some people stepping into their destiny... today getting their eyes fixed on what matters... not perfectly ... but like Moses, you sort of have a moment... an I'm drawing a line in the sand moment...

I'm going to do something for 55 and up... I want you to do something. I want you to stand up. Today, you represent Moses. You go, *Are you calling me old?* Yes, I am... but here's the thing... I know life has been hard on some of you... The older you get, the more you see... the more fear can creep in. Let the fear go. We need you to hope. We don't need you to retire or sail into the sunset... we need you, church, with the last breath that you have. We need you commissioning us and believing in us. We need you singing and singing loudly about the goodness of God. We don't need you standing here. We need you singing about how he's been good and faithful, and we need you blessing and building up. But most importantly, with your very last breath, we need you trusting the goodness of God, like Moses. Our church, our community, and our world need you to be like Moses.

I am going to pray...before I do...

And for 55 and under, would you stand... You are Joshua's today... You're the young men and women... Let me say this... it's time to get in the battle... some of you haven't been in the battle... you've made too many excuses about it not being the right time... about you not knowing enough... we need you to be a Joshua... in Joshua 24, the culture around Joshua was

wavering, they weren't all in... they wanted to live for other things. Church, you only get so many wake-up calls, and that's what it is for someone today... a wake-up call.

"But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

Joshua 24:15 (NIV)