

Series: "Holy Moses" (Part 4)
"The Legacy of Moses"

When our children were young we took a trip into New York State, and to the quaint village of Cooperstown, to the Baseball Hall of Fame. It's a place set aside to honor and remember the great heroes of the game of baseball. There is a "Hebrew Hall of Fame." It's found in the New Testament, in Hebrews, chapter 11. It lists some of the great characters of the Old Testament – heroes of faith for both Jews and for Christians. Is Moses in the Hebrew Hall of Fame? Of course he is!

Hebrews 11:24-25 says, "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin." Moses gave up a life of privilege and status as Pharaoh's adopted grandson, and chose to suffer ill treatment with God's people rather than to enjoy the "fleeting pleasures of sin". (That's a *great sermon text* – the *fleeting* pleasures of sin)!

The writer of Hebrews goes on: "He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel" (Hebrews 11:26-28). He had faith to persevere because he kept his eyes on God (vs. 27).

In the Baseball Hall of Fame there are rooms with old gloves and bats and equipment, plaques, and also a portrait and name of each Hall of Fame player. I can imagine in the Hebrew Hall of Fame that there must be a bronze plaque and portrait of Moses, perhaps with those words from Hebrews 11 etched into it! *Moses has given us a spiritual legacy that's endured over 3,000 years. He left behind an inspiring example of a life of faith.*

What kind of spiritual legacy am I leaving behind? The lawyer was sitting with the family of a wealthy man who had recently died. He began to read the man's will out loud: "To my dear wife Elizabeth, I leave my house, fifty acres of land, all my stocks and bonds, and ten million dollars. To my son, Samuel Jr., I leave my Rolls Royce and my Mercedes sports coupe, and \$100,000. To my daughter, Kathleen, I leave my yacht, and \$100,000. And to my brother-in-law, Horatio, who always insisted that health is better than wealth, I leave my exercise bike." Well, Moses left behind more than an exercise bike! And he left behind something even more valuable than expensive cars or yachts or houses. He left a *spiritual legacy* that has blessed and inspired people for centuries! *His life pointed people to God, and to a life of faith.*

This is the last of 4 messages on the life of Moses. If you've caught the previous messages, I hope we have seen something of the greatness of this man: that he was willing to say "yes" to God and make himself available for God's purposes...that he was an intercessor and brought people and their needs to God...and that he lived so close to God that God was his friend.

And yet, I think it's important to always keep in mind that *Moses was not perfect!* Sometimes

we look at people in the Bible and we think of them as “super-saints” – not really human like us. Today, as we sum up Moses’ life and look at his legacy, I don’t want to forget that he was flesh and blood like us, not a stained glass saint. Did you ever notice how, when someone dies, we tend to gloss over their faults, and sometimes make them a lot better than they really were! A man died, leaving a wife and 2 young children. He really wasn’t much of a husband or father. He was lazy and couldn’t hold down a job. He drank too much. He had an ugly disposition and was sloppy in appearance. At the funeral, the officiating clergy was doing his best to be kind. He sort of overdid it in terms of praising the man. At one point in the service one of the man’s children whispered to her mother: “Mom, you better go up there and look in the casket and make sure it’s dad in there.”

Moses left a great spiritual legacy, but he wasn’t perfect. For instance, there is this story from Numbers, chapter 11. “Moses heard the people of every family wailing at the entrance to their tents. The LORD became exceedingly angry, and Moses was troubled. He asked the LORD, ‘Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their ancestors? Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, “Give us meat to eat!” I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me, please go ahead and kill me—if I have found favor in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin’” (Numbers 11:10-15). The people are out in the wilderness, grumbling! Finally, Moses has had it up to his ears! He cries out to God, “I’m sick of these people! If this is how you’re going to treat me, I want to die!”

He is out of patience. Frazzled, depressed, ready to give up! Ever felt like that? All of us, including *the most dedicated Christians*, at times fall prey to shifting moods. We get stressed out. Some of the greatest Christians have had to wrestle with periods of depression, loneliness, anxiety. The great Protestant reformer, Martin Luther, for instance, had bouts of depression. Steve Brown is a radio Bible teacher whom I respect very much. He has a daily program called “Key Life”. One day on a program he admitted that he had recently gone through a spell of depression. I appreciated his honesty! Fighting emotional issues at times does not mean that we can’t live close to God and leave a spiritual legacy behind that will bless and inspire people.

There is another way that Moses wasn’t perfect: He sinned against God. In fact, Moses was forbidden to enter the promised land of Canaan because of some sin! What was the sin? I don’t think the Bible is clear on this question. One possible answer is found in the Book of Numbers. After Moses brings water out of the rock in the wilderness, it says, “But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ‘Because you did not trust in me, to show my holiness before the eyes of the Israelites, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them’” (Numbers 20:12). Apparently there was some element of doubt or unbelief in Moses around that event. It also says in Deuteronomy, chapter 32, that Moses “broke faith” with God. Whatever the sin was, it kept Moses from entering the promised land. Yet Moses left a legacy as a great man of God!

This should give us hope! We all sin and fall short of God's glory. Sometimes we sin badly. God hates sin. Sin brings hurt and suffering. Yet in spite of our human failings and sin, we can still be remembered as a man of God, or a woman of God!

Another thing about Moses: ***Moses' life was incomplete.*** As I said, he never entered the promised land. He led the people out of Egypt, endured years of wilderness wanderings with a cantankerous group of people, led them to the border of Canaan, only to be denied a chance to go in himself! There's a touch of sadness as this great man of God climbs Mt. Nebo, and looks over into the land flowing with milk and honey, realizing he will never get there: "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...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" (Deuteronomy 34:1,4-5).

Did you ever get this sense of the incompleteness of your life? Things you wanted to do, places you wanted to go, situations you wanted changed for the better? But somehow it never happened (at least not yet). Time ran out, or time is running out. You wanted a family where family members were close, but the relationship with some members of your family aren't what you had hoped. You longed to see some part of the country or world, but don't have the health, or money, to travel. You planned to enjoy your retirement years together, but your partner is now gone. The older we get, the more aware we can become of the limitations placed on us, and how some of our hopes and dreams may never materialize. I took maybe 3 or 4 guitar lessons when I was in high school, then quit. How I wish I had continued those lessons – I'd like to be able to *really* play guitar. I've often thought in my later years of taking lessons, but probably never will. I took a few piano lessons and quit. I wished I had continued that, too. For years, I had this hankering to write a book about life as a pastor, what it's really like! A few years ago, another man and I wrote a book together. A novel. The easy part is writing; the hard part is getting it published. I'm sure now I never will see that book published (it's already out of date).

We talk today about "bucket lists" – things we want to do before we die. What's on your "bucket list"? Do you think you'll see it happen? In one school our children attended, they had this kindergarten report card, where the grades are not ABCDF...but J, M or N! J – just fine. M – making progress. N – not yet! *Not yet* – in ways our life is stamped with "not yet". But just because there may be unfinished business and we don't see results from all our efforts doesn't mean that our life can't count for something for God!

Moses left behind a great spiritual legacy, even though he was no stain glassed saint, and even though there was a sense of incompleteness about his life. ***What was it that enabled Moses to leave behind such an inspirational example?*** *One reason is: He gave his all to God, his best for God.* He was able to put aside his *selfish ambitions* in order to do what *God called him to do.* He was willing to be inconvenienced, and even suffer, rather than take the easy way out.

During World War II Marine Lieutenant Ben Toland wrote out his will while going into battle at

Iwo Jima. He was killed in that battle. In that will, he disposed of all he had: \$597.16. He left small sums to industrial and labor organizations “for the purpose of improving general relations between capital and labor.” He left 10% to Yale University “to promote scholarly research toward the solution of contemporary problems.” To the Congress of the United States went another 10% for research toward a “far-sighted foreign policy and better government for all the people.” The rest he left to a school, to charities, and to his church. Ben Toland didn’t have much, but few have left a larger legacy for the human race – considering that he gave all he had.

We can be the best we can be for God in the place where we are! Maybe deep down we’d like to be in a different situation. We’d like to have more money. We wish we had accomplished more. We see ourselves as pretty insignificant. There’s a Peanuts cartoon where Snoopy the dog is moved to deep thought one day as Charlie Brown and Linus pass by. He says to himself in a series of meditative thoughts, “I wonder why some of us were born dogs, while others were born people. Is it just pure chance, or what is it? Somehow, the whole thing doesn’t seem fair!” Then Snoopy snaps out of his meditative mood and skips away with one more question, “Why should *I* have been the lucky one?”

Whether we think we’re one of the lucky ones, or whether we think we’re living a dog’s life, we can be the very best we can be for God and live for Him *within the circumstances He has placed us!* Be the best you can be for God in your family. Be the best you can be for God at work, or in your neighborhood. Be the best you can be for God if you’re involved in a church.

The late news commentator, Paul Harvey, once reported that a woman called up the Butterball Turkey Company’s consumer hotline and asked about the advisability of cooking a turkey that had been in her freezer for 23 years! The customer service rep told her that it might be ok to eat if the freezer had maintained a below-zero temperature the entire time, but even so, the flavor would have deteriorated so much that it wouldn’t be very tasty. The caller replied by saying, “Oh, that’s what we thought. We’ll just donate it to the church.” Some church people don’t get beyond an “old turkey” commitment to the church!

Moses is remembered because he gave his all and his best in serving his God! I once saw an article in a Christian magazine titled, “Not For Sale.” It was about a singer/songwriter who made record albums, but his albums were not for sale. This musical artist said, if he’s singing for Lord, his goal is not to make a lot of money. This singer-songwriter was Keith Green. Keith wrote some beautiful songs containing powerful messages for Christ. Keith Green was still very young when he was killed in a small plane crash. His career was tragically cut short, but what a legacy he left! I never knew much about Keith Green, but he impresses me as one who gave his very best for God and for Jesus His Lord. He was a man who lived by the right questions: not asking “What’s in it for *me*?” but “What can I do for my Savior and for others?”

Moses left a tremendous legacy behind - a memorable example of what it means to live a life close to God, a life of faith, a life unselfishly given for others. I’ll never be a spiritual giant like Moses, but I want to leave something good behind that will outlive me. What about you? What will you leave behind?

