

FAMOUS LAST WORDS Deuteronomy 3:23-4:9

Do you ever get frustrated with God's people?

Have you ever muttered under your breath, "Zap 'em Lord!"

*Have you ever stood up to teach S.S. lesson with **your Bible** in your hand, & felt more like throwing it at them, than teaching it to them!*

Then I have good news and bad news for you this morning!

Good news: You're not alone!

Every godly spiritual **leader** I've ever talked to has felt that way at times!

MOSES felt that way—we're going to look at one of those times.

Bad news: You'll never experience **God's blessing** in your life with that attitude!

MOSES' FINAL FAILURE Num. 20:2-13 (Num. 27:12-14; Deut. 3:23-27)

While not his *LAST* act, it is the act that brings his leadership to an end.

Faced with *another* water shortage, the people *again* complain **20:2-5**

Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. ³They quarreled with Moses and said, "If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the LORD! ⁴Why did you bring the LORD's community into this desert, that we and our livestock should die here? ⁵Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink!"

Moses and Aaron take complaint to the Lord. **20:6-8**

Moses and Aaron went from the assembly to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and fell facedown, and the glory of the LORD appeared to them. ⁷The LORD said to Moses, ⁸"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."

He tells them to *speak* to the rock before the people and they'll see it pour out water.

God will be exalted when people see Him work before their eyes.

What *DO* they see? **20:9-11**

So Moses took the staff from the LORD's presence, just as he commanded him. ¹⁰He 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?" ¹¹Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank."

Do they see a leader who trusts God?

Someone who believes that a spoken word will produce water for millions?

What's their attention focused on?

They see an angry man who yells at them and calls them names!

Who instructed him to deliver that scathing address?

Where did it come from?

They see an angry man who picks up a stick and strikes the rock twice.

You get the idea he'd rather strike a few of them with that stick!

Out of frustration with people,

Moses fails to honor God

In his anger against them,

he doesn't do what God told him to do!

Israel watches Moses demonstrate in public that *he* has a better idea!

God demonstrates in public the consequences of Moses' failure

=> Consequences = Can't lead Israel into promised land

Moses' failure disqualifies him to lead them into God's blessing.

Moses was running so well!

When everyone else is questioning God and complaining, Moses trusts Him.

Shows how important obedience is to a holy God.

Accusation God makes: Moses fails to honor God's holiness.

God's standard is absolute.

20:12

"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."

You can't trifle with God's standards! Don't play games with God!

It NEVER pays!

Our sin and failure is forgiven, but consequences of sin, for not obeying God, are real.

He can't go back and undo the harm done.

God's glory is forever affected by one moment of rage.

Moses is forever disqualified from taking the people into the land where they will enjoy God's blessing.

He could never go back and undo what he has done.

Heb 12 (16-17) reminds us of Esau.

He took his inheritance lightly

When he realizes that he has lost his blessing, he tries to undo his mistake.

Hebrews says it's too late to turn back!

Though he cries and tries, it's *too late*!

That's what happens to Moses. – Neither can we!

Have you ever prayed: ***"O Lord, if I could only go back & do that over!"***

Sometimes, by grace, God repairs damage--sometimes you can't go back!

We can't undo sin, we can't unsay angry words.

We can't reclaim those moments of rage!

Sometimes damage to God's glory is engraved in mind of observers!

Moment of angry reaction may permanently destroy our effectiveness, or God's blessing!

God is always willing to forgive.

But sometimes consequences can't be removed.

You can never go back and undo them!

God demonstrates His holiness in spite of Moses' failure

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“These were the waters of Meribah, where the Israelites quarreled with the LORD and where he showed himself holy among them.”

Moses continues to lead God's people, but **he remains disqualified.**

MOSES' FINAL APPEAL Num. 27:12-23; Deut. 3:23-28

Moses' appeal to enter the land is denied because of disobedience.

Num. 27:12-14a *“Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go up this mountain in the Abarim range and see the land I have given the Israelites. ¹³After you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was, ¹⁴for when the community rebelled at the waters in the Desert of Zin, both of you disobeyed my command to honor me as holy before their eyes.”*

Deut. 3:23-27 *“At that time I pleaded with the LORD: ²⁴“O Sovereign LORD, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do? ²⁵Let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan—that fine hill country and Lebanon.” ²⁶But because of you the LORD was angry with me and would not listen to me. “That is enough,” the LORD said. “Do not speak to me anymore about this matter. ²⁷Go up to the top of Pisgah and look west and north and south and east. Look at the land with your own eyes, since you are not going to cross this Jordan.”*

He keeps pleading with God,

until God finally says,

“That’s enough! Stop bringing it up! I have spoken!”

Moses appeals to God to designate a leader ...

Num. 27:15-17

“Moses said to the LORD, ¹⁶“May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community ¹⁷to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the LORD’s people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.”

Moses' appeal to designate a leader to shepherd God's people is granted because sheep need a shepherd –to lead them, lest they wander astray.

18-21 *“So the LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him. ¹⁹Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. ²⁰Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him. ²¹He is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim before the LORD. At his command he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command they will come in.”*

Deut. 3:28 *“Commission Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he will lead this people across and will cause them to inherit the land that you will see.”*

Moses was witness to the dangers of wandering for this group of sheep!

MOSES' FINAL MESSAGE

Deut. 1:1-3, 26-33; 4:1-9

At last they're ready to cross Jordan and enter the land of blessing.

Moses preaches 5 sermons (Deut) to prepare them to follow the Lord.

Prologue: **Deut. 1:1-3** *“These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel in the desert east of the*

Jordan—that is, in the Arabah—opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth and Dizahab. ²(It takes eleven days to go from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea by the Mount Seir road.) ³In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses proclaimed to the Israelites all that the LORD had commanded him concerning them”

God’s people missed 40 years of blessing and lost a generation of people
Why? 26-33

“But you were unwilling to go up; you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. ²⁷You grumbled in your tents and said, ‘The LORD hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us.’ ²⁸Where can we go? Our brothers have made us lose heart. They say, ‘The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there.’” ²⁹Then I said to you, “Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. ³⁰The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, ³¹and in the desert. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.” ³²In spite of this, you did not trust in the LORD your God, ³³who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go.

Because of unbelief and disobedience

Moses warns them of the danger of unbelief and disobedience

Moses challenges them to trust God and follow Him wherever He leads them.

**God’s people must believe God
and follow Him wherever He leads,**

if we want to experience His blessing. Summary of sermon: **Deut. 4:1-9**

“So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. ²You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the LORD your God with which I am charging you. ³You have seen for yourselves what the LORD did with regard to the Baal of Peor—how the LORD your God destroyed from among you everyone who followed the Baal of Peor, ⁴while those of you who held fast to the LORD your God are all alive today.

⁵See, just as the LORD my God has charged me, I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. ⁶You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!” ⁷For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is whenever we call to him? ⁸And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?

*⁹But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children’s children— **LESSONS FOR US:***

1. God's people can go too far and miss out on God's blessing.

Complaining can cause US to miss out on God's blessing.

2. Leaders can become frustrated with God's people and miss out on God's blessing.

Those who lead God's people have to focus on *God's faithfulness*, rather than on *our frustration* with the sheep.

Sheep will be sheep!

Sheep wander off, getting into some tough spots!

Sheep wander off, going away from the shepherd.

Sheep wander off, looking for better pastures!

But, when sheep act like sheep, **godly shepherds focus on God's faithfulness.**

3 keys to experiencing God's blessing:

1. Refuse to complain when God doesn't do what we want Him to.

2. Focus on God rather than on things that aren't working out the way we want them to.

3 Trust God and follow Him

wherever He leads us—whether it's where we want to go or not!

Blessed are

*** those who trust God and follow wherever He leads,**

*** rather than flail in frustration at His followers!**

What has this story got to do with our life today? --with our church?

Be faithful; trust God to do whatever HE wants to do; follow Him wherever He leads us.

Sometimes I want to identify with Moses; pick up a stick & go after a few people.

That's not the way to blessing!

The key to blessing isn't to focus on our frustration!

The key to blessing is to focus on God's faithfulness,

trust Him, and follow Him wherever He leads us.

Things looked pretty glum for Israel when they stood at Kadesh.

They complained and rebelled and they died in the desert!

Things looked just as glum for Israel when they stood on east side of Jordan (40 yrs later!).

The giants were still out there!

The situation was just as impossible.

What made the difference?

Israel is ready to trust God and follow Him wherever He leads.

We too live in a battle zone!

The enemy wants to wipe us out.

He'll use any tool he can get his hands on to discourage and defeat us!

Blessing isn't for those who have no adversaries!

Blessing isn't for those who never face a struggle.

Blessed are those who face the adversary, trust God, and follow Him wherever He leads.

*Let's focus on Him, Trust Him,
and Follow Him, boldly, wherever He leads us!*

God seldom asks us to trust and follow Him *INSIDE* our comfort zone!

There'll probably be opportunities to stretch our faith--to trust Him to lead us in some places we've never gone before--some ways of doing things we've never done it before!

He wants us to trust Him and follow Him!

Like the songwriter said:

I know not what the future holds--but I know who holds the future!

Will WE trust Him? Are we willing to follow Him--wherever He wants to take us?