

The death of Moses

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0 : 00] Let us turn now to the passage we're reading in Deuteronomy chapter 34. Deuteronomy 34 at verse 5.

So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth Peor.

But no one knows his grave to this day. Now the subject of our address this evening is Moses and in particular the death of Moses.

The death of Moses. And at the very outset we can say this. That Moses was not only a true believer in the Lord.

He was also one who not only walked with God but he spoke with God face to face. Moses is commended in this very chapter here.

[1 : 16] A chapter which is one of the most tragic in the whole of the Old Testament. But at the same time the record is set straight in the end of this chapter.

In verse 10 we read that since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses. Whom the Lord knew face to face.

Moses was commended in scripture on many occasions. In both the Old and New Testament. In the book of Exodus.

God said to Moses. That he, that is Moses, would be made like God to Pharaoh. He was sending him to Pharaoh with the demand.

Let my people go. And he said you will be as God before Pharaoh. And Aaron will be as your prophet. So he was, in other words, the ambassador of Jehovah.

[2 : 19] Also in the Psalm 106. He is called by the psalmist. God's chosen one. Moses, my chosen one. Stood in the breach.

That God should not slay Israel. And then in the New Testament. In the Hebrew letter. He is called my servant. Moses, my servant. Who is faithful in all my house.

And he is commended in that Hebrew letter. In chapter 11. As the one who for the reproach of Christ. For the testimony of Christ.

He refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be ill treated with God's people. He valued the reproach for Christ.

As greater than all the treasures of Egypt. And then we read that. Not fearing the wrath of the king. He forsook Egypt. And Moses did all of this.

[3 : 24] In order to be obedient to God. He was not. He was not. We could say. As was said of Paul. He was not disobedient. To the heavenly vision.

And. Afterwards. After he had led Israel out of Egypt. In all. Their hardships. He also. Endured hardship.

And his hardships. With them. Stemmed. His worst hardships. Stemmed from them. Themselves. Since there was so much.

That he had to put up with. From them. And. Then we read. As we read. Numbers chapter 20. That after.

After leading them on. After 40 years. Of enduring. All their complaints. All their murmuring. And so on.

[4 : 20] That when he was commanded. By God. To bring forth water. Out of the rock. He lost his temper. With the people. And instead of. Speaking to the rock.

As God commanded him. He struck it. Something which. On a similar occasion. He had been commanded to do. All those years earlier. Just in the very.

First or second year. It would be. After leaving Egypt. There was a similar occasion. And God had said. Strike the rock. And Moses had struck the rock. Again. I think it was Meribah.

Strangely enough. And the water had come out. And this time. However. God said. Speak to the rock. But Moses struck it. He didn't strike it. To bring the water out.

Alone. He struck it. Because he had lost his patience. With them. And. There. Although he was a meek man. And in some. Somewhere we read. That he was the meekest man. In all the earth.

[5 : 18] He lost his patience. With Israel that day. And it was. Because of that. Incident. That God said to him. In Deuteronomy. That.

He would not enter the land. He would not lead them in. Rather. He would go to die. On a lonely mountain peak. Just as his brother Aaron. Had already died.

Moses was going to die. Prematurely. His eye not dim. His natural vigor. Not abated. Because. Of this one. Particular sin.

Which he had committed. And. At first sight. The sin committed. By Moses and Aaron. Doesn't seem to be very serious.

Especially when we compare it. To others. Among the patriarchs. For example. Of Israel. Abraham. Who was a faithful man. Yet. Abraham is recorded.

[6 : 12] As having. Told the same kind of lie. Twice. In his life. Lie concerning his. His relationship. With his wife. Because he was afraid. Of what would happen.

To both him and her. Claimed that she was. His sister. And like father. Like son. Isaac. Did the very same thing. On another occasion.

He also lied. Concerning. His wife. Rebekah. And. From them. Of course. Came Esau and Jacob. And. And if we were to go.

By what scripture says. Concerning the way. These two. Lads. Esau and Jacob. Behaved themselves. We would almost be. Willing to say that. Esau was the better of the two. Or so he seems.

From what we're told. In those early days. Of their. Life's history. Because Jacob. Is shown as a cheat. A deceiver. Someone whose. Character and behavior. Was far from.

[7 : 07] From morally upright. So we can see that. That there were others. Also among the. The patriarchs. Who also.

Sinned. And yet. All three patriarchs. We've mentioned. Were buried. With great ceremony. Great ceremony. At the tomb of Machpelah. A place which.

Where Abraham had bought. A plot of ground. As his burial ground. You see. The burial. The burial. Of the. Of the. Of one of the people of God.

Was something which was. Very important. Something to be observed. In great. Ceremony. Jacob. When he was about to die. Gathered his sons.

All about him. Making prophetic utterance. Over them. Concerning the future. His body was embalmed. And taken up from Egypt. In great procession.

[8 : 08] Remember. Do you remember reading. That when Joseph. Took his father up. To. To. To Machpelah. That a great entourage. Of the Egyptians. Came. And all the peoples.

Of the country. Round about said. It's a. It's a. It's one of the great Egyptians. Being buried. It was a massive. Tremendous procession.

Yet. When it comes to Moses. Moses. Who was. In many ways. Greater than Jacob. Moses.

Was given. No such ceremony. He had to die. Alone. Utterly. Alone. Without ceremony. Without. Even being allowed.

Like Joseph. To give the command. That his bones. Be taken up. And buried. In the promised land. After his death. He was not even.

[9 : 00] Allowed that. Rather. The Lord. We are told. Buried him. In a valley. In the land of Moab. Opposite Beth Peor. And no one knows.

Of his grave. To this day. So the question. Which arises. Why? Why? Why was it because of this. One sin. A sin which at first sight.

Does not seem very serious. Why did Moses. Have to die. In the way he did. There are three reasons. I'd like to give for this. Three reasons.

Why Moses. Went up the mountain. To die. And the first is this. He went up the mountain. To die. So that all Israel. Might know. The seriousness.

Of sin. Now these people. Israel. Had become so used. To the fact of sin.

[9 : 54] In their lives. That. Something was needed. Something was needed. To make it. Appear. In its true colors. The problem was.

You see. That they'd been so long. In that land of Egypt. There'd been so much. Of. The Egyptians. And their ways. In their lives.

In their thinking. In their actions. In their behavior generally. There was so much of that. That they had. Become inured. To sin. Calloused. To it.

It said. You know that. That it took. One day. To lead. Israel out of Egypt. But it took. Forty years. To take Egypt.

Out of Israel. Think of. The way. They were. That they behaved. Moses took them. Out of Egypt. Took them down. To the. The. The region.

[10 : 51] Of Sinai. He went up. Into the mountain. And for forty days. He was. Face to face. With God. On their behalf. Receiving from God.

The commandments. Which they were to observe. And which was to be. Their. Their standard. And now. And then. However. While he was there. In their way of it.

Taking so long. They said. Moses is. Moses is not here. Who is this Moses anyway? Some of them hardly knew him. And they said. Where is the God. Who led us out of Egypt?

And they turned immediately. To Egyptian ways. And turned to Aaron. And said. Make for us. A golden calf. And they called. That golden calf. Jehovah. They said to Israel.

This is the God. Who took you up. Out of Egypt. You see. They were just. So ready. To sin. To turn to idolatry. The golden calf.

[11 : 46] Was one instance. Of that. And then. Elsewhere. They were. They were lusting. And crying out. For food. Such as they had in Egypt. Give us the onions. And the garlic.

And the melons. Of Egypt. They were. Complaining. And murmuring. And rebelling. They weren't trusting God.

At all. And Moses had to stand in the breach. As we say. For them. To intercede for them. So that the Lord. Would not. Destroy them.

And make a nation. A new nation. Out of Moses. Which God said he could do. But Moses stood in the breach. For them. Because of his intercession. They were saved.

So we see that they were. They were a rebellious people. A sin loving people. And something had to be done. Something had to be done. By way of.

[12 : 42] Some kind of shock treatment. To make them see. How serious sin was. Something had to be done. To make. To write thin. Large. Before their eyes.

As to what it meant. As to its seriousness. And consequences. And that's just so often. Like ourselves. We're so used.

To going away from God. All we are like sheep. Who go astray. We turn everyone. To our own way. That's how we are.

In our nature. We're so. Unwilling. To be obedient. To God. We're so often. Unconcerned.

That we are obstructing. The work of God. In our own lives. And we don't recognize. Sin. For what it really is. In our lives. We make excuses. Oh that's just me.

[13 : 38] I'm. That's the way I'm made. I can't be any different. And so on. The thing is. We're not willing. We don't want to be different. We don't want to change.

But the thing is. That Israel had to change. Israel had to be brought to see. The importance of obedience. The importance of serving Jehovah.

They were to be a special people. A holy people. A set apart people. Unlike the other nations. Around about them. These other nations. Were characteristic.

Of what humanity was like. Israel was to be different. But the point was. That they would never be different. Unless they were brought up short.

To see. Sin in all its seriousness. They were on the point. Of entering the land. They'd spent 40 years in the wilderness. And this.

[14 : 37] This latest. Episode. In which Moses lost his temper with them. Was evidence of the fact. That all that time in the wilderness. Had.

Done very little. To show them. To educate them. As to how they should be. And now something was needed. To. As we say. To bring them up short.

Something to. That they would see. Something dramatic. And that is why Moses went up the mountain. Alone. To die. To show Israel.

How serious sin was. Moses going up that mountain. For that sin. And the people would say. Well. Surely it wasn't that serious. Was it?

It wasn't that bad. It certainly wasn't as bad. As compared to what so and so did. And. He's still alive. And he's going in. To the land.

[15:33] And so on. But Moses. Was picked out. Because. Moses. We'll come to the reason why. In a moment. But. Anyway.

The point to be made here is that. His sin. Although it was not the most serious sin. We might say. Committed in Israel. It was sin. And something we need to be very very.

Shall we say. Conscious of. Is that the least sin. Is enough. To send a soul to hell. There are degrees of sin.

As to its seriousness. That's true. Some sins are more serious than others. But the little. One little sin. What we might say is a little sin. Is enough. To send a soul to hell.

Because it breaks the law of God. There is no. There are no degrees. Of perfection. Or imperfection.

[16:34] Perfection does not admit of degrees. We know that no one is perfect. But the least imperfection. In the work of God. Is sufficient. For the. For that work of God.

To be rejected. As long as man was walking. In obedience to him. At the very beginning. Then there was fellowship and communion. There was harmony.

There was peace. Between God and man. But as soon as one sin came in. We may say. Oh the little sin. Taking of fruit. Not very serious. Didn't harm anybody else.

Surely. It did. Because that one sin. Caused a breach. Between God and man. And that one sin. Was what set man.

On the road to hell. So the seriousness of sin. Needed to be made. Plain. To these people. And it still needs to be made.

[17:29] Plain to us. All of us. The second. Reason I'd like to suggest. Why Moses went up the mountain. To die. Was to show that with God.

There are no favourites. When it comes to the matter of sin. Sin is no less serious. When it is committed. By a Christian. Than when it's committed.

By a non-Christian. Shall we say. An unbeliever. If anything. It's more serious. When it's committed by a Christian. Because when a person. Who's not a Christian.

Sins. Then they do so. Against the law of God. Yes. But they do so. With less light. With less understanding.

Of what sin is. And who God is. And what it is. What it is. To break the law of God. When a Christian sins.

[18:29] He or she does so. Against light. They have more light. Christians do. Those who are sitting under the law of God. Week by week. Are every week.

Making themselves more responsible. Before God. God. And. If we sin against. That better knowledge.

Of God's law. Then it is a serious matter. We sin against light. And because God. Is a God of mercy. We are sinning against his mercy.

And against his grace. We thank God. That there is mercy. We thank him. That there is forgiveness. As it said in Psalm 130. Yet with thee.

Forgivenesses. That fear. There mayest be. Yes. There is forgiveness. The mercy and grace. Of God. Towards his people. Are.

[19:26] Always. Faithful. But they are always. At the same time. In the context. Of a covenant relationship. With his people. And that.

That also. Implies. Obedience. The way that we show. That we are. The Lord's. Is by.

Our desire. To obey him. And to be true to him. Even although we. Often may fall flat. On our faces. In the attempt. To do so.

To do so. But the point. To be made here. Is. That in the case of Moses. Although. There was. This covenant relationship. And we are nowhere. Saying here. That Moses was an unbeliever. He was a believer. But he was. As well as all of that.

[20:21] He was also. A public figure. And we can say this. That the public. Breaking of God's command. By his appointed lawgiver. Was a very serious matter indeed.

You see the lawgiver. Is not above the law. The lawgiver. And that the. Those who. Who keep the law. Those who enforce the law.

Are. In a sense. To be judged. More strongly. Or to be judged. By a more. Rigid rule.

Moses is often called. The lawgiver. But yet. That did not mean. That he was a favorite of God.

When it came to sin. God has no favorites.

I'm thinking here also. Of how it is that. In for example. Organizations like the police force.

Sometimes. There has been. Corruption. In this land.

[21 : 23] In the police. Sometimes a policeman. May think. Because he is a policeman. That if he stops. Say for speeding. Or whatever it is. He may think.

Well. Once they hear my occupation. They may just let me go. And sad to say. That it can happen. In cases like that. That the policeman. Maybe.

Let go. Because he is stopped. By someone. Who either knows him. Or knows that. He is a policeman. But the person. Who is exercising his duty. At that point. Should. Do his duty.

And as we say. Book the policeman. Because the policeman. Is someone. Who should be. An example to others. Not someone. To use his job. To get off.

When he himself. Falls foul. Of the very system. He is meant to be upholding. And it's that kind. Of. Relationship. Between Moses.

[22 : 17] And the law. That we're considering here. God gave the law. Through Moses. Therefore. When Moses. Broke the law. Moses stood. Shall we say.

In a more serious light. Before that law. That broken law. Than did. Others. In the nation of Israel. So we can say this.

That leaders. Of the church. Christian leaders. And ministers. Are no more privileged. Before God. Than other Christians. And I can say. With absolute conviction.

That ministers. And elders. Are just as liable. To fall into sin. As anybody. Sometimes.

Perhaps even more so. Because Satan. Has his gun. Trained. On the Christian leader. Especially. It's like in battle. If the enemy knows.

[23 : 16] They can shoot down the leader. Then they know. That the army. Will be scattered.

That's why. He attacked. Our Lord Jesus Christ. With such fury. And viciousness.

In the wilderness. As we're remembering. This morning. At Croy. And so. Christian leaders. Are no more. Exalted. Or privileged.

Before God. They have no more. Access. To God. Than any other. Christian believer. That's. These are things. Which. Are so easily.

Forgotten. Yes. There have been. Some very godly. Ministers. In Scotland. I wish I could have met. Some of them myself. But the point is.

That. That they were. No more privileged. And when a minister sins. It is a serious matter. In the eyes of God. Even if it's a private sin.

[24 : 13] Because. The man. If he. If he. If he is truly. In the job. For the right reasons. Then he will. Take himself. To task. And say. How can I. Who am supposed.

To be preaching. To others. Myself. Become a castaway. How can I preach. In all good conscience. To others. If I am willfully. And blatantly.

Breaking the law. That I. And. And. Going against. This gospel. That was one of Paul's. Great fears. Wasn't it?

Lest having preached. To others. He himself. Should be a castaway. So. God has no favorites. At all. And that was one main reason.

Why Moses went up the mountain. To die. These people had all. Seen him. Commit that sin. It was a public sin. That was really. What made it so serious. Because what he did.

[25 : 08] He did in the sight of all Israel. And as the Lord. Took him. And Aaron as well. To task. He said. You. Refused. To hallow me. To sanctify me.

Meaning to hallow. To. To. To show. The glory and honor. Due to God. God has said. Speak to the rock. Moses strikes the rock.

Before the people. And so it was publicly. Committed. And as such. It was. An aggravation. Of the sin. And so the people then.

Publicly. Saw him go up the mountain. Thirdly. We can say this. That Moses. Went up the mountain. To die.

In order to break. The hard hearts. Of this people. You see. As they saw him go. They. If they had any conscience.

[26 : 05] At all. If there was any. Sensitivity. Within them. They would say. You know. It was our grumbling. Which. Which put him to it. It was our disobedience.

Which drove him. To it. And our rebelliousness. Which finally broke his patience. Another point. Which. Which should be borne in mind here. Is that. Christian leaders. Are human. As well as everybody else. But these people. Would have. Would have seen these things.

That it was their fault. In the beginning. If they had not. Been the way they were. So rebellious. Then Moses.

Would have been saved. From that moment. Of loss of temper. So there we have. These three reasons.

[27 : 04] Which is. Very briefly. That Moses went up the mountain. To die. In order to. That the people might see. The seriousness of sin. Secondly. To show.

That with God. There are no favourites. And thirdly. To break the hardness. Of the hearts. Of Israel. Of Israel. But you know.

Having said all that. The death of Moses. Reminds us. Of the death. Of someone else. Someone who was greater than Moses. I'm referring of course.

To the Lord Jesus Christ. And just like. In concluding. Tonight. To compare. The death of Moses. With the death of Christ. Along the same lines.

As we've been following. So far. There is of course. A major difference. And the major difference. Is that. Whereas. The death of Moses. Was because of the sin.

[28 : 01] Of Moses. The death of the Lord. Jesus Christ. Was. Completely. For the sins. Of others. He did no sin. He knew no sin.

There was no guile. Or deceit. Found in his mouth. He was holy. Harmless. And undefiled. Separate from sinners. So. What he died for.

Was. Nothing to do with himself. They were not his sins. Yet. There are similarities. Between the two deaths.

The first. Similarity. I'd like to point out is. That it is supremely. In the cross. Of Jesus. That we see. The seriousness.

Of sin. In the death of Moses. Sin and its seriousness. Was seen. But. Supremely. As I said. In the death of Christ. We see there.

[28 : 55] Above all other. Places. The seriousness. Of sin. In other words. It took that. In order that sin. Might be dealt with. It took.

My savior. And yours too. To go. To a cross. In order. That our. Our redemption. Might be purchased. That's how serious sin was.

If sin could have been paid for. In any other way. If there was another solution. Any other solution. That God could have resorted to. In order to. To gain salvation for men.

He would have done it. God did not send his son. To the cross. Because. He delighted. To do so. Because that was. In some. Some kind of.

Method. Which appealed to him. He sent his son. To the cross. Because there was no other way. Secondly. In the cross.

[29 : 56] Of Jesus Christ. We also see. That God has no favorites. We read. In Romans 8. That he. Did not spare. Even his own son.

But he delivered him up. For us all. When it. When it came to the point. When it came to the point. Of. Of surrendering his own son.

He didn't spare him. And that shows the unflinching. Impartiality of God. And that's the second point. Of correspondence.

I'd like to draw. Between these two deaths. And thirdly. In the cross of Christ. It is there. That God breaks. The hardness. Of the hearts.

Of men and women. Paul refers to this. In his letters. He says. To the Galatians. For example. He speaks to them.

[30 : 56] Oh you foolish Galatians. He says. Who has bewitched you. Who has. Who has deceived you. In this way. That you should not obey the truth.

You before whose eyes. Jesus Christ. Was clearly portrayed. Among you. As crucified. Paul is referring there. To his preaching. Among these Galatians.

How he had preached. Christ crucified. Among them. Which was his constant. Major theme. And it was Christ. Crucified. For them. Which.

Broke their hearts. Paul himself says. In the same letter. He says. He says. I. Have been crucified. With Christ.

It is no longer I. Who live. But Christ. Who lives in me. And the life. Which I now live. In the flesh. I live by faith. In the Son of God. Who loved me. And gave himself. For me.

[31 : 53] And it is that. Truth. It is that. It is that. Realisation. In the heart. Of a man. A woman. A boy. Or a girl. Which brings them.

To the point. Of surrender. To God. The point. Where they see. That. God gave his son. For them. That it was our sin. Which took him. To the cross. Our sin. Which held him there. It was our sin. For which he died.

And that breaks. Men's hearts. That's what does it. And let me ask you tonight. Has your heart. Been melted. Has your heart. Been broken. By the sight.

Of your sins. In the cross of Christ. Or have you not yet. Seen your sins. In the cross of Christ. If I could put it this way.

[32 : 51] That if you so far. Have not been able to see. The cross of Christ. And. Your sins being dealt with there.

Then you have. Then you do not know. Jesus Christ as saviour. It is that sight. Which. Which. Which. Which. Brings people.

To Jesus Christ. In the first place. Substitutionary atonement. As it is called. It lies at the very heart. Of the gospel. And when we see.

As the. In the words of the. The old negro. Who didn't know. An awful lot of systematic theology. But was able to. Express it in this way. He die.

Me no die. That's the truth. Of the gospel. Because Christ has died. For his people. They do not need to die. Their sins have been dealt with.

[33 : 50] Decisively. They are. Yes. Sin is serious. And yes. None of us is perfect. And so on. But the point is. As I say. One sin in our life. If we only had sinned once in our life.

It would still have been serious enough. For Christ to have died on a cross for it. It would have taken that cross. Even. Even as I say. If each one of his people.

Had only sinned once in their life. That's what it would have taken. To redeem them. To God. And it's that truth. Which breaks. The hearts of God's people.

When in all seriousness. And in all. Proper realization. Of why Jesus Christ died. It's that. Which breaks. The hardness of our hearts.