

## A Failed Intercessor

Moses interceded and saved an entire nation from destruction, then brought an entire people into a Promised Land, *almost*.

In Ezekiel 22:29-31, God describes a later time when He again intended to demolish Israel as He had intended at the time of Moses, but this time there was no intercessor and the entire nation was destroyed: “‘The people of the land have practiced oppression and committed robbery, and they have wronged the poor and needy and have oppressed the sojourner without justice. And I searched for *a man* among them who should build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found *no one*. Thus I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; their way I have brought upon their heads,’ declares the Lord God.” *One* intercessor could have made the difference. Remember this the next time you complain – you could make the difference – it only takes one!

Moses was one of the greatest intercessors of the Old Covenant. As such, his intercession for Israel illustrates the power, weakness, and dangers of the Old Testament style of intercession and simultaneously points toward a greater way made possible because of the exchange of the New Covenant.

God had said at the time of Moses, “Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them, and that I may destroy them (Exodus 32:10).” The Israelites had made a golden calf and worshiped it, proclaiming, “This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt (Exodus 32:4).” Moses’ response to God was that “These people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will, forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written (Exodus 32:31-32 NKJV)!”

Moses identified 100% with his people. If they were destroyed, he would be destroyed. If they were doomed to hell, he would be doomed to hell. Moses was operating on the

equivalent of the exchange principle of the blood covenant. If the people had made it, all good; if they did not, he also would fail. The only way he could have been successful was by assisting those for whom he had been interceding to do what was right.

In this he failed, for though he was willing to die and even be eternally cursed for his people, he could not pour into them the righteousness which would cause the people to do right. He did his best, but time after time he again had to intercede for the people lest they be destroyed, and had to pray that the people would receive a second, a third, then a fourth chance . . . until God finally said, “Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs, which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it (Numbers 14:22-23),” which meant that neither could Moses enter the Promised Land!

Moses could not, however, have been kept permanently from the Promised Land until he allowed the sins of the people to influence his own actions. When you intercede for people, either you will change them or they will change you! The sins of the unchanged people weighed heavier and heavier upon Moses. Numbers 11:11-12,14-15 (NKJV) describes his anguish of soul caused by bearing those iniquities: “Moses said to the Lord, ‘Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, “Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child, to the land which You swore to their fathers?” . . . I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me. If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now--if I have found favor in Your sight.’” Moses forgets, or ignores, the fact that God had not laid this burden upon him – Moses chose it!

We need though to put ourselves in Moses’ sandals. He offered his life for his people, he even offered more than his life. He constantly pled for their survival before God. The Israelites owed Moses everything. Yet not one bit of thanks is ever recorded. Instead, they constantly

blamed him for their own failures, constantly fought against his leadership, and many times intended to kill him. Even as they sought to kill him, Moses would intercede. But finally, the sins of the people weighed upon Moses, bringing him into the depths of depression, where he despaired even of life.

The weight of those sins would eventually break him, unless, somehow, he could change the people, reducing or eliminating the weight of the people's sins which he bore. Otherwise the weight would only continually increase its crushing force until inevitably he would break, and would himself sin.

When Moses' temper finally broke, he struck out at the people and, symbolically, at God. Numbers 20:10-12 records that after God instructed Moses to *speak* to the Rock, "Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, 'Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?' Then Moses lifted up his hand and *struck* the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.'" Moses' attitude toward the people was revealed by his accusations toward them as well as his taking credit for the miracle in order to gain respect from them. His anger towards God was revealed when he struck the rock, which according to 1 Corinthians 10:4, represents Christ.

Moses, himself, gives the behind the scenes reason why he failed and did not enter the Promised Land: "The Lord was angry with me also *on your account*, saying, 'Not even you shall enter there (Deuteronomy 1:37).'" And Psalm 106:32-33 expands upon what Moses meant by "on your account": "[The Israelites] also provoked [God] to wrath at the waters of Meribah, so that it went hard with Moses on their account; because they were rebellious against His Spirit, [Moses] spoke rashly with his lips." Moses' attempt to bear the weight of the people's sin weighed him down until he spoke and acted in sin against God.

As a result, Moses permanently shared the fate of the Israelites, failing to enter the

Promised Land. His intercession, which had partly been a success, in that they did not immediately perish, was also partly a failure, and so Moses shared in the failure of the people for whom he interceded. Another would be required to bring them in to the Promised Land, a man whose Hebrew name was Joshua, but when translated into the Greek, such as in the Septuagint, and from there into English, is translated as “Jesus.”

Fifteen hundred years later, Jesus did what Moses could not. Jesus was not only willing to, but did, die for His people. He was also willing to, and did, go to hell for His people. He was then able to pour into us His righteousness which overcomes our sin. Had He, like Moses, been unable to overcome our sin, He would have remained in the grave eternally! Had He not been able to throw off our sins, sicknesses, curses, fear, hatred and everything else that comes with our sins and provides open doorways for the assaults of Satan, Jesus would still be overcome and held down in the deepest pit by the weight of our sin and anguish. As it was, when Jesus broke the chains of our sins, He broke free and arose victorious. Romans 4:25 says, “[Christ] was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised *because of* our justification.” When Jesus had overcome all our sin, then and only then, could He be raised from the dead. *Because* Jesus was able to overcome the sins which had come upon Him from us, He was able to enter into His Promised Land, in the heavens.

Every bit of that victory, because Christ has become one with us at the cross, is now being imparted into us so that we share in His victory and follow Him into our Promised Land.