LIFE LESSONS FROM FAMOUS FAILURES (Pt. 4)
"Moses – A Successful Failure" (Acts 7:20-34; Heb. 11:23-28)

INTRO: *Arthur Ashe* said. . . *Muggsy Bogues* said. . . Moses has to be one of the ten most influential people in history. Single-handedly, with no army, but God's help, he brought the world's most powerful nation (Egypt) to its knees and fashioned a nation out of a group of slaves that lives today. But it was not a clean ride. Let's look at his life, his failures and see what life lessons we can learn from this successful failure.

I. PHASES IN MOSES' LIFE (Acts 7:20-34)

A. *Break into 3-40 yr. periods* (died at 120):
- 1st 40 yrs. in Egyptian court *learning something* (Acts 7:20-23).
- 2nd 40 yrs. in desert of Midian as Shepherd *learning to be nothing* (7:24-29). Life in the penalty box. Letter . . .
- Last 40 yrs. in Wilderness *proving God to be everything* (7:30-34).

B. *Incredible résumé* – prophet, priest, servant, shepherd, statesman, soldier, lawgiver, and deliverer. Enjoyed close intimacy with God ("spoke face-to-face with God as a man speaks with his friend" (Ex. 33:11; Num. 12:3). He is known for his selfless dedication to be faithful to God's call.

II. FAILURES IN MOSES' LIFE

A. (Acts 7:23-28) *An Act of Impulsive, Impatient Self-Will* (Ex. 2:11-14) – Prior to the burning bush, God called Moses to lead Hebrew nation out of bondage. Prematurely and impulsively Moses shows his knowledge of God's plan by trying to build a relationship with his people, trying to protect his people and bring peace to his people. He thought his people would understand but they did not. Impulsively and impatiently, he tried to do God's will his way in his timing. He failed, had to run and ended up in desert (Acts 7:29; Ex. 2:14-15).

B. (Acts 7:30-35) *An Attitude of Total Inferiority* (Ex. 3-4) – 40 yrs. in desert have passed. He is a humble shepherd with a wife and family. He has learned from valuable lessons in the desert. Now God in a burning bush renews His call on Moses. Moses still had one valuable lesson to learn – *God is sufficient for all our needs!* He felt like a failure and reject to ministry. He was convinced because of his earlier failure he was a washout, shelved indefinitely, destined for life on the bench. So he begins to make excuses for disobedience (3:11, 13; 4:1, 10, 13).

C. *An Angry Fit of Pride and Unbelief* (Num. 20:1-13) – Moses had trouble controlling his emotions. He tended to be an angry man at times. Miriam, his sister, had died. Millions of Jews were complaining about his leadership, lack of food and water. God was specific in his instructions – speak to the rock. Instead, Moses spoke to the people angrily and struck the rock twice – plainly disobeying God. Years earlier, God's way was to strike the rock (Ex. 17:6). God's discipline was severe (v. 12).

III. LIFE LESSONS FROM MOSES' FAILURES

A. *God's will must be done but in His way and on His timetable.* Moses tried to do God's will but *his* way. He knew it was wrong, too. Why else "look this way and that?" He should have looked up! Self-will brings confusion and frustration. Like Abraham, he got ahead of God. He chose carnal ends to achieve spiritual ends. He acts on his own with no directive from God. Though his motive was pure, his actions and timing were all wrong. He ended up in the desert where self-will invariably leads.

B. *When we fail, God may send us to the desert for more training (Exo. 2:15-22).* To teach him some needed lessons, God put him on the bench. Some things can only be learned on the backside of the desert. As a humble shepherd, he learned to serve, to patiently trust and to obey. Desert time can be great learning times. All need training and preparation. God spares no pains in preparing His instruments.

C. *God's sufficiency is greater than our inferiority (Ex. 3-4)*. Moses felt inferior, esp. since he had failed before. He was inferior, we are too! Like Moses, we must learn to place our confidence in God's sufficiency. God will be there for us when bush isn't burning, mountains not shaking, waters not parting. He is enough (Phil. 4:19).

D. *There is no acceptable excuse for not trusting and serving God*. Moses gave excuses. He informed God (who already knew) of his limitations and all the obstacles. When God calls, just do it.

E. *Wrong actions can bring dire consequences (Num. 20:12).* Because of his anger and disobedience, he was not allowed to see his dream through (Deut. 3:23-29). Too harsh? Not really. Moses' actions exalted Moses, brought attention to him, not God. He robbed God of His rightful glory. God shares His glory with no one. Note two sidelights: One, when we fail God's work will go on. God used Joshua to finish task. Two, Moses' discipline ushered him into the true Promised Land.

F. *God still uses failed, broken vessels*. Moses responded to his failures. He learned from them. He became an intimate friend with God. God still used him mightily. Age was no barrier (80 when did most of his best for God). You don't have to spend the rest of your life in the penalty box because of some failure. Listen to Heb. 11:24-27 testimony. . . Deut. 34:5-7, 10-12. . .

CONC: Like Abraham, Moses recovered. He became a successful failure. Initial failures ended in eventual success. True of all of us God is using today. He is still the God of another chance. He still gives more grace.