

## WHEN OUR HEROES DISAPPOINT US

Presented by

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In my last sermon I spoke to you about Moses' younger brother, in a lesson titled, "Aaron—a Good Man Who Did a Bad Thing." Aaron had played an extremely important part in helping Moses free the Israelites from more than two hundred years of slavery in Egypt. Plus, he was given the signal honor of becoming the Israelites' very first high priest—an honor that God allowed him to pass on to his sons as well. But, while Moses was on Mount Sinai for forty days and nights receiving God's laws for the people of Israel, the Israelites grew impatient and said to Aaron, "Make us gods that shall go before us" (Exodus 32:1). Yielding to the Israelites' request, Aaron fashioned an idol in the form of a golden calf for them to worship. Exodus 32:28 explains that as a direct result of Aaron's sin, "about three thousand men of the people fell that day." Exodus 32:35 then adds, "And the Lord plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron had made." In Egypt, Aaron had played the part of a **hero**. But at the base of Mount Sinai, he played the part of a **sinner**! His regrettable actions angered God and disappointed his brother Moses—in addition to causing thousands of Israelites to die.

Like Moses, Aaron was a living legend among the Israelites. As Exodus 7:10 explains, it was Aaron who, during the brothers' first meeting with pharaoh, had cast down his rod before the pagan king—who watched it miraculously become a serpent. Exodus 7:19-20 tells us that it was Aaron who placed his rod into the Nile River and turned it to blood. It was not just Moses whose fame had spread among the Israelite people. Aaron was just as famous. I can only imagine how many Israelite children thought of Aaron as their personal hero.

We all appreciate and respect heroes, don't we? Perhaps there are certain people about whom you have heard, or whom you have known in your own life, whom you consider to be heroes. Maybe the person was a soldier who saved the lives of others through his own self-sacrifice. Maybe the person was a teacher who selflessly devoted her life to teaching children. Maybe the person was a doctor who saved the life of someone close to you or close to someone you know. Maybe the person was a pilot who guided a crippled plane to a safe landing, thereby saving the lives of hundreds of people. Maybe the person was a policeman or fireman who risked his life to rescue others from dangerous or deadly situations. Or, maybe the person is a mom or dad whom you love because of all they have sacrificed to give you, or a granddaddy or grandmother whom you cherish because of all they have taught you.

Generally speaking, heroes are people whom we admire and revere the most, aren't they? Furthermore, sometimes our heroes become our role models because of what they teach us by their words and actions. In fact, we frequently try to become like our heroes in one way or another—by copying their actions, lifestyles, or decisions—because they are, after all, **heroes**!

But, on occasion we get a rude awakening because our heroes, like Aaron (a good man who did a bad thing), disappoint us as a result of the bad choices they make. All too frequently, so it seems, we hear about how a person whom we considered “a hero” lost his health, his freedom, or even his life because of the bad choices he made. And that hurts, doesn’t it? As I said earlier, I can only imagine how many Israelite children considered Aaron as their personal hero—only to be devastated when they saw him sin by making an idol for their parents to worship.

But this type of thing is not something new. The Bible contains numerous stories about people whom we would consider “heroes”—yet who made wrong choices that not only hurt their reputations, but also hurt other people as well. Consider, for example, Noah. In Genesis 6:9 the Bible refers to him as a man who was “perfect in his generations.” Because of Noah’s righteousness, God saved him and his family from the worldwide flood that He sent to destroy all life on Earth. Yet the Bible also tells us that after that flood was over, Noah “planted a vineyard, drank of its wine, became drunk, and was uncovered in his tent before his son Ham” (Genesis 9:20-21). Noah’s other two sons, Shem and Japheth, ended up having to redress their drunk, naked father. How do you think they felt when they realized that their dad—“their hero”—was drunk and naked?

Or, consider Moses, whom the Bible calls “the meekest man on the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3). Joshua 4:14 tells us that the people of Israel “stood in awe of Moses.” So how do you think they felt when, as the Bible tells us in Numbers 20:2-13, they saw him lose his temper, rebel against God, and strike the rock at Meribah to make it bring forth water, instead of speaking to it as God had commanded him to do? How do you think the Israelites felt when they heard God say to Moses, with his brother Aaron standing right beside him, “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)? This was not just a sad day for Moses and Aaron, but also a sad day for the entire nation of Israel. Their hero had let them down.

Later, a man whom Israelites to this very day consider to be their nation’s greatest hero, also disappointed God and his nation. As 2 Samuel 11 explains, David, king of the Israelites, saw from the rooftop of his palace a beautiful woman by the name of Bathsheba, who was bathing in her house. The king sent a messenger to ask her to come visit him, and as a result of his evil thoughts, David committed adultery with her and got her pregnant. Then, as if that was not bad enough, David had her husband Uriah killed in an attempt to cover up his own sin. As partial punishment for David’s sinful acts, God did not allow the baby in Bathsheba’s womb to live after it was born. Furthermore, David’s sin became widely known—so much so that 2 Samuel 12:14 tells us that it “gave great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme” the name of the God of heaven. How do you think parents in Israel felt as they tried to explain the wrongful acts of their beloved king to their children? David—their hero—had let them down!

The New Testament also provides us with examples of people whom we could justifiably call “heroes,” yet who also could be saddled with the label, “sinner.” The most prominent example to come to mind would undoubtedly be the apostle Peter. In Matthew 26:34 Jesus told Peter, “Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” Peter’s immediate response to the Lord’s statement was, “Even if I have to die with You, **I will never deny You!**” (vs. 35). Yet just a few hours later, Peter not only denied the Lord three different times, but, as Matthew 26:74 explains, he even “began to curse and swear, saying, **‘I do not know the Man!’**” Can you imagine an apostle saying of Jesus, “I do not know the Man!”—**and then cursing and swearing to emphasize his point?** Peter’s status as a hero plummeted on that occasion, wouldn’t you say?

But before we—in self-righteous indignation—condemn people like Noah, Aaron, Moses, David, Peter, or others like them whose sins are so well documented in the Bible, we would do well to remember what Jesus told some people of His generation who had accused a woman of a terrible sin—and wanted to see her punished right then and there. Christ turned to them and said simply, “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7). Needless to say, on that occasion no one threw any stones. In fact, John 8:9 says of those people, “they went away, one by one,” until only Jesus and the woman were left standing together—at which time Jesus said to the lady, “Go, and sin no more.”

It is not just heroes who sometimes make terrible mistakes and disappoint others, is it? As much as we hate to admit it, **all of us make mistakes!** As Romans 3:23 explains, “**All** have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.” As Ecclesiastes 7:20 makes crystal clear, “There is no one on earth so righteous as to do good without ever sinning.” In other words, not a single one of our human heroes is perfect. Even the best-intentioned, most-well-meaning hero can make mistakes. But when he does, if he wants to exhibit the **genuine** traits of a **real** hero, he will acknowledge his mistakes, repent of them, ask forgiveness of God and his friends, and strive to do better from that point on—just like Noah, Aaron, Moses, David, and Peter did.

Fortunately, however, there is one hero who **can** serve as a **perfect** role model for us because He **never** made any mistakes, never sinned, and never needed to change anything in his life. His name is Jesus Christ. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus was “tempted in all points like we are.” But as that same passage goes on to say, Christ was “without sin”—which is why Peter could later write that Jesus left “an example for you to follow in His steps” (1 Peter 2:21). No matter how many of our heroes end up disappointing us by their bad choices or sinful actions, there will always be one special role model who will **never** disappoint us—**our true hero, Jesus Christ**. I have had some heroes in my own life—my parents, my grandparents, my great-grandparents, some baseball players, some coaches, and even some teachers. But when everything is said and done, my **real** hero is my Lord and Savior, Who gave His life so I could be free from sin and go to heaven. Now **that** is a hero!