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## Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

March 20, 2016

### Life's Disappointments

*"I have shown it to you with your own eyes; however, you will not cross over into it."*  
Deuteronomy 34:4 (Common English Bible)

This is a remarkable picture of Moses! He is at the point of death, on a mountaintop, gazing out over the Promised Land, a land for which he led God's people to possess, pondering God's word to him that he himself will never enter the land. A universal truth of life is captured in this tragic moment, a truth that neither the great or small among us escapes; life brings equal capacity to experience joy as well as disappointment. This singular moment of Moses' life lays hold of our imagination as no other moment in his life does. Life sometimes falls short of what is desired and for which we intended our labors to provide.

That moment is on the horizon for every one of us – that moment when we realize that our grandest dreams and the greatest desires of our heart may not be realized. Moses wanted to cross over into God's Promised Land and the apostle Paul urgently wanted to take the gospel to Bithynia. Both were denied. Both their circumstances and own earnest efforts gave Moses and Paul every reason to believe their central purpose and passion in life would be achieved. But what would lie beyond their vision was the disheartening experience of watching their dreams tumble to the ground. "I have shown it to you with your own eyes; however, you will not cross over into it."

What are we to make of this? We do not have access to Moses' inner thoughts as he sat upon that mountain, looking out over the Promised Land. Paul speaks little of his failed ambition to preach in Bithynia. What we do know is that both Moses and Paul had a choice to make. They could look back bitterly, questioning where it all went wrong, angrily regretting that they ever had dreams at all, and this decision producing tears of disappointment. Or, they can hold their heads up in their disappointment and acknowledge that God has blessed their labor, that in their struggle, God's purposes were advanced and that by God's power, they did step closer to eternal things.

Perhaps there is no greater struggle than recognizing again and again that God's view of success and failure is different from our own. And, it is God's view, which really matters. Moses and Paul fixed their gaze upon a destination. Yet, what really matters to God is whether at the end of the pilgrimage those God calls have learned patience and humility, and have entered into an utter dependence upon God. Ultimately, the destination is quite a secondary thing. It is the quality of the pilgrimage that matters. We don't have access to the private thoughts of Moses and Paul as they experienced disappointment. But they were great men of God and great people live their lives for God. I suspect that, at the end of their life, Moses and Paul lifted their gaze beyond failed aspirations and saw God's smile at a life well lived.

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