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Donald B. Crawford, President

**THE STAND**  
**CHARLTON HESTON**

We all have heroes.

We all need heroes.

A hero is personal. He or she is someone an individual looks up to, admires, emulates, remembers fondly. A hero is a person who has impacted a life and influenced that life for good.

One of my heroes, or at least a man I greatly admired and respected was Charlton Heston. I will never forget the movie Ben-Hur. Charlton Heston played the role of Judah Ben Hur, a noble Jewish citizen in Israel at the time of Jesus Christ. The acting was incredible. Heston was a noble and magnificent presence, a tour de force, the best of his kind in Hollywood. The movie was a witness, an incredibly strong spiritual statement, a historical learning experience and Academy Award winner if there ever was one. BOTH the movie and Heston!

I recall the scenes vividly today. In fact, I take the pleasure of watching the movie every three or four months, and I am never disappointed. In fact I always get something more from it. Actually, I get more from Mr. Heston in so many ways than the movie itself.

Heston was charismatic, manly in every sense. His personality was profound. His voice, unforgettable. His eyes, piercing and powerful. The set of his jaw, the shape of his nose, the body a physical masterpiece. He was a powerful presence and I shall always remember him as such.

He was equally potent and impactful in the movies MOSES and THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY. He was made by God to be Moses, and no one could have ever been a better Michelangelo than Charlton Heston.

I met him once in person at the Denver airport. He came to a waiting area and sat down next TO ME! I was flabbergasted, speechless, something rare indeed for me. I was nervous head to toe for I knew that if he said nothing to me, I would surely talk to him. Time passed, seemingly like an eternity, but in reality seconds. With heart pounding, I turned to him and said, "Mr. Heston". He turned to me and said one powerful word, those eyes looking right through me: "CHUCK!".

Call me Chuck, he said. No matter the admonition, I would never call him Chuck. You do not call a hero Chuck!

Anyway, I began, heart pounding through my chest, to tell him how much I appreciated him as an actor and a person. He thanked me. I told him how much the movie Ben Hur meant to me. He thanked me again. I told him what an incredible spiritual story the movie MOSES was. He thanked me yet again, and he said he was somewhat surprised that someone my age would appreciate those movies and remember them so well. And I said to him:

“REMEMBER THEM? I COULD NEVER FORGET THEM IF I TRIED!

YOU AND THOSE MOVIES ARE FOREVER INDELIBLY ETCHED IN MY SOUL!”

This hero of mine was real, totally unpretentious. I found him even more charismatic, even more wonderful in person than on the screen. We talked for 45 minutes. He asked what I did and when I told him, we talked about me and about radio, and especially Christian radio, more than we talked about him. This real man, this hero, was more genuinely interested in me than he was in what I thought of him. He was a man of character, purpose and mission. He was a spiritual man in many ways. He was real, straight and mesmerizing in word and person. I will treasure those 45 minutes with him until the day I die.

Charlton Heston suffers from Alzheimer's disease and the day he will die is near. He declines rapidly from the ravages of this horrific disease and he is near death. He is a shadow of his former self. He lives, rather exists, now in a vegetative state, so much so that his family prays for his passing. Charlton Heston has struggled valiantly against this satanic sickness for five years. He has pleaded with the public for money and effort to combat this killer. It is the height of irony that a man so potent and powerful will die so poorly of this pathetic disease. There is now virtually nothing left of this rugged man moviegoers everywhere once knew and loved. His family will be with him every remaining moment of the little life left.

A hero is gone but his memory will never die, at least not with me. He and the art, the spirituality he created are one with me. I count myself privileged to be able to share part of my life with him. When it finally is his time, the biblical words will never ring more true:

HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH!