

Making Every Moment Count

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

I'd like you to do something for me. Blink your eyes. Do you know what that was? You just experienced a moment. That is all there is to a moment. Even when we have heard and read that God wants us to number our days, so often we are careless with moments. Each one goes by so quickly.

Only so much time is given to each of us on this earth. When that time has passed, our opportunities to serve God by faith in this earthly body will be gone.

Think of what happens when a devastating illness hits a husband or a wife. Moments suddenly take on value as never before.

This booklet reveals some of the very sacred moments I have experienced throughout my ministry. I have a great expectation that there will be many more moments to enjoy, but I am so glad that God has taught me to count every one of my moments as precious. My prayer is

that these words will inspire you to do the same.

Chapter One

TIMES AND OPPORTUNITIES

“In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

“In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine.

“I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day” (Isaiah 27:1-3).

Moments go by so quickly. The one thing we must realize is that all we have is the time we have together right now. What is a moment? A moment is a time when the bird will fly, when the flower will bloom, when the sun will rise, when the chandelier of stars will shine brightly at night.

A moment is a couple gathering at the altar for marriage. Both of them say, “I do.” Then, that

moment is done, and they go on their honeymoon and start a journey of life together. A moment is when a baby is born and a mother holds her child for the first time.

A moment is a time and opportunity given to us by God to be realistic, objective, and honest.

Great Dreams, Great Thoughts

I was thinking of some moments early on in my life. I remember being a child throwing the ball against the wall of the barn. I pretended to be all of the players—and the broadcaster! I would pitch nine innings. The Red Sox was my team, and, in my little dream world, we won the World Series. (Now that's really a dream world. The Red Sox haven't won a championship since 1918!)

Other great moments were the Saturday night specials—meals that my mother made every Saturday with pork and beans and hot rolls and homemade pickles. Everything you can think of, my mom made it. Those were great, great moments and I will never forget them.

I remember my daughter Pam wearing a little pink dress, and I would pick her up while she was sleeping and walk around the house with her. My wife would say, "You're going to

wake her up.”

“No, I won’t!” I’d say. “I just want to hold her. She is so peaceful and beautiful right now.”

Before I was saved, I remember going down to the Baptist church in West Sumner, Maine. My wife and I were the only two there that day, and we sat way in the back. There was no electricity. The wood stoves were burning hot and you could see the flames through the grates.

The preacher never smiled, and he launched into a message on hell, fire, and brimstone. Now, that was quite a moment.

I remember being led to the Lord by my first wife. Later on in our marriage, she went home to be with the Lord after a battle with cancer. But I remember the moment she led me to Jesus Christ one Sunday afternoon—it was a beautiful moment right there in our home.

Saved By Grace

I want to say this. Before that moment when I received Christ as my Savior, I was a good person. But that would not have gotten me to heaven. Many people think that if they are good, they do not need God as their Savior. The truth is that no one is good enough to make it without Jesus Christ.

Self-righteousness is just as much of a sin as getting drunk is. Thinking that we are self-sufficient is just as bad a sin. We need to be saved. That is what Jesus said in John 3:7. The beautiful thing about salvation is that it is free: a gift from the Father. It cannot be earned. You can do nothing to merit it. None of us is good enough to earn it. Salvation comes as a gift, by grace through faith, when we believe on Jesus Christ.

What a great moment it is when a soul is saved! At that point, a new name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Sins are washed away forever, and a guaranteed ticket to heaven is issued. That is something beautiful—a precious moment for sure.

Oh, the moments God gives us to enjoy.

Chapter Two

AWAITING THE GLAD SURPRISE

We have a young fellow from the Ukraine going to our Bible College. Once, he was in a gang, and members of the gang had a plan to kill him. He escaped by jumping onto a train. He traveled to a new city, where he started living on the streets. One of our pastors was preaching on the streets of that city, and this scared little run-away kid was there. The boy had a pistol and was getting ready to rob a bank to get some money for food.

In a moment, right there, the boy received Jesus. Today, he is one of the most outstanding Christians you would ever want to meet. He has a great ministry with teenagers. And all of this started with one moment.

Oh, Lord, let us not waste our moments!

A young woman lost her husband, and she was trapped in a depression for nearly five years. She did not want to come out of her house.

She kept the curtains closed and lived her life behind these walls. Then, one day, someone sent her the booklet, *Just Let God Love You*.^{*} This woman read that booklet, and Jesus Christ did an amazing thing in her life. She got gloriously saved, and one of the first things she did was to open up the curtains and go shopping. She was delivered from her confinement and depression in one glorious moment.

Consider the story of the Pharisee and the publican, told by Jesus in Luke 18. Publicans were not good people; they were crooked businessmen, thieves. The Pharisee went in and prayed what seemed to be a beautiful prayer, but it was not. That man, with all of his religious zeal, was a self-righteous hypocrite who offered up a self-righteous prayer. "I thank God that I am not as other men are—extortioners, unjust, adulterers—even as this publican. I fast twice a week and pay tithes on all that I have" (see Luke 18:11-12).

The publican, who indeed was a crook and a sinner, could not even lift his head to look toward heaven. He just said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

Jesus said it was the publican who went home justified, not the Pharisee.

The thief on the cross next to Jesus had spent his life hurting and robbing people. Yet, in a moment, his destiny was changed. He was on the road to hell when he said to the Lord, “Remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

“And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:40-44).

By the grace of God, a thief was saved—in a moment.

Changed in a Moment

Soon, there will be a glad surprise. Jesus will return, and those believers in the grave and those on the earth will be caught up in the Rapture. It will be a magnificent moment, and it could happen at any time. There will be a glorious resurrection. Souls will be transformed as they take on brand-new bodies—one of the most significant moments in history.

Oh, you think this makes no sense? When a farmer plants corn, eventually the corn comes up, doesn't it? The kernel goes into the ground, and it is covered with dirt and dies. But does it stay dead forever? No. The corn comes up. There is life in the kernel just as there is life in the tree in the midst of winter.

Did you know there is more life in the branches of a tree during the winter than in the summer? They look sickly and terrible for a time, but then Spring comes, and the blossoms come, drawing out the life that was hidden. When the leaves die, new life has a chance to come into the branches. Resurrection life is revealed in this process of the changing leaves.

Can you see how it works now? This is an intelligent and logical principle. By the grace of God, Christ died and was resurrected so that we might enjoy eternal resurrection life. His death made it possible for us to be saved. He paid our penalty by shedding His precious blood and dying on the old rugged Cross so that we could have our sins washed away and spend eternity in heaven.

Soon there will be a beautiful moment when we will take part in the great resurrection, that day of glad surprise—a time of glad reunion when we will all be gathered together in heaven with brand-new glorified bodies that will never die. Oh, it will be so glorious when that special moment comes. But just imagine it: That moment will last forever and ever and ever—it will never, never end.

Even if one of us were to die today, Jesus

promised that we will not even taste death (John 8:51). Our bodies may be put into the ground, but we will be absent from our bodies and present with the Lord—all in one glorious moment.

**The booklet Just Let God Love You, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens (Grace Publications, 1996), is a remarkable message, personal and practical, to the saved as well as the unsaved, revealing the finished-work Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Chapter Three

SPEND YOUR TIME WISELY

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

The Word of God teaches us the doctrine of moments. Our afflictions are but for a moment. The Lord is deeply concerned about how we spend our moments. For this reason, we must make sure we stay confessed up to date.

Seize your moments. I remember well the moment I was saved. All it took was a moment. I recognized that I was truly a sinner, and all kinds of guilt plagued my mind. In that moment, I understood that the wages of sin is death and that there is a heaven and a hell. By grace, I accepted Christ right there.

The moment you believe Christ died, was buried, and rose again for you—at that very moment, you are saved. Your destiny is changed in an instant. It is a beautiful moment in the eyes

of God.

Let me say this: Every Christian should follow up his decision by making a public expression of salvation by being baptized. Go into the waters of baptism and identify with His death, His burial, and His resurrection. This is a public declaration before people, before angels, and before God. In doing this, you express your identification with Christ. You spend a moment in the water and come right out.

I remember those moments. My sons can tell of the time we baptized three hundred people one Sunday afternoon in Maine. I have never baptized that many at one time since—that was a real day's work! But it was a day marked with many beautiful moments.

Sacred Times That Are Never Forgotten

Let me give you a personal story about moments. I still remember very well coming home from a basketball game with the Bible College team, and having my wife say to me, "We must talk right now."

There on the couch she said, "I only have two months to live." Her cancer, which we thought had been healed, had returned. It was a very sacred moment as we looked into each

other's eyes at that moment. Then, we had to tell the family.

These were all sacred moments. Every moment was precious right up until the time she went home to be with God.

It was seven years before I remarried. Still, I remember my second wife weeping over the pictures of my first wife and saying, "What a woman she must have been—to go through what she went through while God raised up your ministry." That again was a sacred moment for me.

I remember laboring with my first church for years in soul winning and visitation, and then seeing it packed out for the first time. We built a new church building, and that one filled up too.

Sacred moments.

There are so many great moments, and we must reflect on them to keep our hearts warm. Husbands, can you remember when you asked your wife to marry you? And you were so surprised when she said, "Yes." It was a precious moment that led to more and more precious moments as you have grown more and more in love with her.

Think of all the great family moments. Certainly, there are bad situations, but they are all

practical opportunities for your growth in the Lord. That is what I want us to see in the difficult moments. For these, too, are very sacred to God.

God says that He waters His vineyard every moment, because we need that vineyard every moment. We are kept by the power of the Lord (see 1 Peter 1:5). We need to be kept every moment, and we need to be watered every moment.

Satan plagues and teases us. He teased Eve in the Garden. Watch for it, because Satan will tease you, trying to steal away your moments of joy, your moments of growth, and your moments of victory. In the face of it all, however, the Lord has left us a most beautiful promise.

Seeing Jesus Face to Face

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on

immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

“The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:51-57).

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Soon the Rapture will happen, and what a moment that will be! Once during a visit to Bob Jones University, I heard this story. A woman in a certain congregation had a little problem understanding a message about the Rapture.

“Preacher, you said that God is no respecter of persons. If that is so, why do the dead in

Christ get to rise first?" she asked him.

He answered, "Well, my dear lady, the dead have to come up six feet to join those who will be alive so they can get caught up into the air together."

In a moment, we will all be gathered together for that meeting in the air. What a day that will be!

There will be more moments to come. We will meet Christ at the Bema Seat where we will be rewarded for the opportunities we responded to in grace, during our lives on earth (2 Corinthians 5:10). Those will certainly be precious moments if, by God's grace, we live a life purified by faith and we walk in the Spirit. For this reason, it so important for us to study the Word of God and obey His commands. Should we do this, I trust in God that the Bema Seat will be a day of rejoicing as we praise Him.

Then we will experience great times of reunion with all the loved ones who have gone on to heaven before us. What a time that will be, as we gather for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in our brand-new glorified bodies.

It all began with a moment, and each moment reveals God's purpose. Each is an eternal moment that will go on and on, forever. Trust

the Lord for the moments that may seem clouded right now. In a twinkling of an eye, we shall be changed, and we will know even as we are known (1 Corinthians 13:12).

CONCLUSION

There is one moment I am looking forward to. It is that moment when I will meet Jesus face-to-face for the first time. No more looking through the veil of the Word, I will be there with Him in my brand-new glorified body praising Him.

Jesus will call each of us personally, and He will stand to receive us just as He stood to receive Stephen in Acts 7:55.

Just keep thinking of what it will be like to meet Jesus Christ. We will kneel before Him, and I am sure we will weep. We may even want to kiss His feet.

There He is! Heaven will erupt with shouts of joy! This heaven is so real. Our perfect bodies will be real—so real that we will be able to enjoy forever the perfect presence of our personal Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.