

Moments *for* You

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Theme: The World



OVERCOME THE WORLD

If our world is great, and the universe is vastly greater, how big is the One who powerfully created it? The Bible tells us, “For by [Jesus] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16).

This is good news because this same Jesus who created the universe is the One who has come to rescue us from our sin for every day and forever. The night before He died, Jesus said, “I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

When facing the large and small challenges of life, we call on the One who made the universe, died and rose again, and won victory over this world’s brokenness. In our times of struggle, He powerfully offers us His peace. God’s grace is immeasurable, His mercy inexhaustible, His peace inexpressible.

In Colossians, Paul combats false teaching that seems to have included both severe self-discipline and the idea that the material world is bad and we are saved by avoiding it (see 2:16-23). Paul argued that the teachers were missing the point entirely. By focusing on their own ideas and rules (vv. 18, 22), they were missing Christ—the One through whom everything holds together (v. 19).

Colossians 1:15-17, often believed to be a Christian hymn, beautifully reinforces the truth that the gospel includes hope for the material world,

God’s good creation. Because Jesus is the One who holds creation together (vv. 17-18), He restores not only harmony between people and God but between the creation and God (v. 20). Believers, as those living in His kingdom (vv. 12-14), can experience a taste of this renewed creation, even as we long for the final restoration.

—Bill Crowder, condensed

WHY IS THE WORLD BROKEN?

It is hard to deny that the world we live in is broken. Terribly broken. We are constantly bombarded with news of senseless shootings and terrorist attacks. Wars continue without end. Natural disasters such as tornadoes, earthquakes, and floods claim many lives each year. Despite our wonderful modern medical technology, thousands and thousands of people die every year of cancer, stroke, diabetes, or some severe infection.

Beyond this, we see greed, poverty, abuse, jealousy, racism, and seemingly every possible manifestation of man’s inhumanity to his fellow man. It’s an ugly picture. This world is broken and can’t seem to find its way.

It is obvious there is suffering in the world, but God is not to blame. Whose fault is it then? Quite simply, it is our fault. The world is broken because of our sin. Most people fail to factor this into the equation.

In the perfect paradise, God was in control, just as He is today. He was in authority, and He established rules. Adam and Eve were told not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They were given a choice. Obey and live. Disobey and

die. Mankind chose to disobey, and the suffering we see and experience is a consequence of that rebellion against our Creator.

God certainly could take away all evil, but in the process we would be gone along with it. After all, we are not good. We are all sinners. Every person descended from Adam and Eve. Each one of us has a sinful nature and has sinned by breaking God's rules.

Sin must be judged. That is just and right. However, our God is not only the righteous judge, He is also a God of love. Even before the foundation of the world, God had a plan.

Jesus Christ would be born into this world that we might be redeemed. He would be that perfect sacrifice and take our sin upon Himself on the Cross at Calvary. He defeated death so we could spend eternity in Heaven if we repent of our sin and put our faith and trust in Him.

Yes, our world is broken. The trials and suffering we experience often seem too much to bear. But our time on earth is just the blink of an eye compared to an eternity in Heaven.

The groaning of the world around us and the grief that afflicts each of us is an ever-present reminder of the horrible price of sin. But Jesus Christ paid that price on the cross and rose from the dead in victory. Never forget the hope that we have in Christ.

—Dr. Tommy Mitchell, © Answers in Genesis, used by permission

THE GOD OF THIS WORLD

The devil is the father of lies (John 8:44) and the deceiver of nations (Revelation 20:3,8). He “disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14), and he will do whatever is in his power to get us to forget him altogether and to live as if he doesn’t

exist. As believers, we know Satan exists, but many of us still fall into his subtle trap of ignoring him and hoping he’ll leave us alone.

But just as we cannot read a page of Scripture without running into the sovereignty of God, neither can we read very long without coming face-to-face with the harsh reality of the power of the evil one. And so, we recognize that we cannot completely ignore his existence.

We often fall into Satan’s trap of thinking he’s not really there, or that he’s not very active. It can be a pleasant thought to believe that he’s not around or, at least, that we’re really not a significant enough target for him to spend his time on. But the reality is that we do wrestle against cosmic powers—“spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). These forces of evil have set their sights on all true believers, and they are unrelenting.

Paul teaches us that the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they might not see the light of the glory of the gospel of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4). The implication is that in having blinded their minds, the devil then focuses his primary work on the followers of his enemy. It would seem to be the case that before we trusted Christ, the devil was certainly our enemy, but not to the degree that he became our enemy after we trusted Christ.

We must make every effort to make use of the means our Lord has given us to fight. He has given us the ordinary means for our daily warfare; namely, the word of God, prayer, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. He has given us the Lord’s Day, and He has given us weekly, gathered worship with our family where we sing and proclaim our battle songs of final

victory and affirm the faith once delivered to the saints.

Above all, our Lord has given us Himself in Christ, and He has given us the Holy Spirit. And although Satan is not afraid of us, he is terrified of the One within us. And our protector never sleeps nor slumbers (Psalm 121:3-4), and in Him we are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37) because greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

—Berk Parsons, condensed

GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, KJV).

- There are 25 words in this verse.
- The first 12 words speak of the Lord, His love, and His gift.
- The last 12 words speak of the blessing of eternal life to any and all who believe in the Lord.
- The middle word is “SON.” That’s very appropriate because Christ is the center of all.

The fact that the Lord loves the world so greatly does not mean that the Lord approves of the actions of the world. He does not! However, regardless of the sinfulness of man, the Lord still loves the world. In fact, He loves the world so much that He GAVE His only begotten Son.

“Whosoever” – What an incredible word! It shows that salvation is offered to all.

“Believeth” – All that is required of man is that he “believe” or “trust.” No work can be done and no work will be acceptable unto God. Only the finished work of His Son on the cross will satisfy God’s righteous demands

for the salvation of a soul.

“In Him” – There is no other means of salvation except through faith in the very Son of God. The Lord Jesus said, “...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me” (John 14:6, KJV).

“Should not perish” – It is not the will of God that any perish in their sins and face His judgment. “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise ... but is longsuffering ... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9, KJV).

“But have everlasting life” – What incredible words! To live forever in the presence of the Lord is almost too good to be true. If the word of God didn’t say it so clearly, we might doubt it, but here it is. God loved us so much that He gave His only begotten Son to die for our sins, so that through faith in Him we can immediately have eternal life!

My friend, have you considered the value and preciousness of John 3:16? Have you accepted this free gift of eternal life by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior?

—Answers From the Book

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

What would the world be like without light?

The short answer is that there wouldn’t be a world! Light is necessary for life. This is why, when God created the world and was readying it for the plants, animals, and humans He would create to inhabit it, light was the first thing He spoke into existence.

Light is also necessary for spiritual life. Sin is equated with darkness; in darkness there is no life, and so appropriately, sin leads to death. In contrast, “God is light, and in Him is

no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). God is the source of all knowledge and all goodness. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (James 1:17).

In the Bible, Jesus is clearly defined as God in flesh, coming to earth in human form. He intimately revealed God to humanity and provided the way to eternal life. This revelation is also described as "light": "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:4-5).

Jesus Himself announced that He was the "light of the world" (John 8:12). This announcement came when He had gone to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. In that day, the celebration included the bright light of oil lamps filling the temple courts. The light represented two ideas: the very presence, or glory, of God that had once manifested in Solomon's Temple, and the "Great Light" that would come to give hope to those living in spiritual darkness and the "shadow of death," in prophetic fulfillment of Isaiah 9:2 (see also Luke 1:79).

When Jesus stood before those crowds on this momentous feast to which people came to celebrate from far and wide, He was announcing unequivocally that He was both of these lights.

While Jesus was in the world, He was the Light of the World (John 9:5). When He walked the earth, he urged people to recognize who He was and why He had come: "While you have the light, believe in the light" (John 12:36).

Today, we are still called to put our trust in the Light, and we, too,

are urged to do so while there is still time. We receive this light when we trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior, and we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Then, He shines the light through us to the world:

"You are the light of the world," Jesus said. "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in Heaven" (Matthew 5:14,16).

—Tricia Kline

HATED BY THE WORLD

"If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because ... I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:19).

The closer we get to the mission of Christ—to preaching the gospel that He has ordained—the more we will be hated and despised by the world.

We're going to find enemies everywhere—people who oppose us on our job, in our neighborhood, even in some churches—because we're fulfilling Christ's mission.

Yet, Jesus says: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in Heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12).

Our mission is much more than telling lost people, "Jesus loves you." It's more than trying to accommodate and please people. The ungodly man has spent years beating down his conscience and searing it. He has taught himself to still every voice of conviction that comes to him. And now he enjoys a false peace. He has become so deceived, he actually believes God admires him!

And now, just when he has shut down the voice of his conscience, you, a Christian, come along. And the truth you bring speaks more loudly than his dead conscience: “Unless you’re born again, you can’t enter the kingdom of Heaven.” This man doesn’t see you as someone who’s bringing good news. No, in his eyes you’re a tormentor, someone who’s out to take away his peace.

You’ve come preaching the blood of Christ, a new birth, separation from the world, a walk of submission and obedience. Yet you’re saying all of this to people who are convinced they’re in need of nothing. They can’t conceive how such changes could possibly bring peace and happiness.

“The world” that Jesus speaks of is an unwillingness to surrender to his Lordship. In short, worldliness is any attempt to co-mingle Christ with self-will.

Nobody can come under Christ’s Lordship until he faces the demands of the Cross. I have to bring that man face to face with the message of being crucified to his independence. I have to show him that he must come out of his deluded world of self-goodness. I have to tell him there’s no way to have peace in this life except through full surrender to King Jesus.

—David Wilkerson, used with permission from World Challenge, worldchallenge.org, contact@worldchallenge.org, (719) 487-7888.

IN, NOT OF, THE WORLD

The New Testament tells us that we are not to be conformed to this world but that we are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind (Romans 12:2).

Let’s look at those two words that are crucial to that discussion in Scripture, the difference between conformity and transformation. The

prefix *con* means “with.” And so to conform to this world means literally to be with it. That’s one of the strongest drives and temptations that we have as Christians. Nobody wants to be out of it; we want to be “with it.” We want to be up-to-date. We want to fit in. And we’re often engulfed by peer pressure that wants us to imitate and participate in all of the structures and the styles of this world. The Bible says we are not to be conformed to the patterns of this world.

Now, when we hear that as Christians, so often we think that all we have to do is to become obvious nonconformists. So if the world wears buttons and bows, we don’t wear buttons and bows, or if the world wears lipstick, we don’t wear lipstick. We try to show ways in which we are different from the world. But that’s not what the Bible is talking about. It’s not just a matter of being different from the world; we are to go beyond nonconformity to transformation. That fits with everything the Scripture tells us of being salt and light to the world. Something that is transformed is something that is changed. The prefix *trans* means “above and beyond.” We are to be above and beyond the standards of this world, not in the sense that we are to elevate ourselves in lofty status above everybody else, but that we are called to a more excellent way of life.

God sends His people into the world. Martin Luther said a Christian doesn’t reach maturity until he reenters the world and embraces the world again, not in its worldliness and its ungodly patterns but as the theater and the arena of God’s redemption. That’s what Jesus did; He went into the world in order to save the world. This world is the world that God has committed Himself to renew and

redeem, and we are to participate in that with Him.

—R.C. Sproul, used by permission of Ligonier Ministries. All rights reserved. Source: <https://www.ligonier.org/posts/how-should-we-be-world-not-it>

SET YOUR MIND ON THINGS ABOVE

My quadriplegia constantly clamors for my undivided attention: empty leg bag, deal with pain, arrange for help, adjust corset, charge wheelchair, look for access, and grab that handicap parking spot before someone else does. It's my world. Then again, it is definitively not.

My world, my breath and very being—my identity—is in Christ and Christ alone. I am not my own; I was bought with the price of God's blood (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Satan hates that. He will do everything he can—use my wheelchair, my notoriety, ministry, whatever—to focus me away from Christ.

It takes the fight and fire of God's Spirit to not be enticed away by these things. The apostle Peter says to make no provision for the flesh, for these things "wage war against your soul" (1 Peter 2:11). Your identity must never be in things that compete for space in your heart. Don't diminish the price paid for you or minimize God's adoption of you.

Only in Christ do we find breathlessly fulfilling joy, peace, and meaning. When we live like we died in Christ, our career finds its balance, our pet finds its place, our children benefit unbelievably, and our victories over trials become reasons to make God famous and happily laud Him before others.

Since Christ is the source of peace, joy, strength, and rest, and in Him we live and move and have our very

being, we can be secure and feel significant when we see ourselves "in Christ." Jesus is ecstasy beyond compare. Why would we supplant Him with anything lesser?

Do you want to know who you are? "Your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). It's like those hand-painted Russian dolls that twist open to reveal—surprise!—another doll inside. Take out that one, open it, and there's another. This is fun, you discover. Every time you reach in and pull out a new one, you are sure it'll be the last. But not by a long shot—the joy continues as you relish one delight after another over all that's hidden inside.

It's a vivid picture of unfolding and delighting in your identity. Who are you? You are in Jesus and He is in the Father. So, start opening up Christ and—voilà—there you will find yourself. As you reach inside the layers of Jesus, you see more of yourself, transformed by the very discipline of knowing Him better.

Follow the mandate of Colossians 3:2-3, "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Every day get actively engaged with the Holy Spirit in knowing Christ better, in discovering "what's inside." The more you look, the more you will be enthralled by His beauty, captivated by His love, and overcome by the excellencies of His mercy and grace.

—Joni Eareckson Tada, joniandfriends.org, condensed

INTO ALL THE WORLD

"Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15).

My temptation, as I look at Mark's resurrection account, is to begin to

immediately speak about evangelism, emphasizing the obligation that every Christian has to spread the gospel. Yet, something must come first.

The first words of our risen Lord were not, “Go and preach.” Before He gives this final commission, Jesus says, and does, certain things in order to help His followers overcome three prevailing obstacles to evangelism.

DISCOURAGEMENT

Imagine what it was like for the disciples and friends of Jesus in the time in between His crucifixion and resurrection. Their leader had been executed, and their own lives were now in danger. There was discouragement surrounding the prospect of continuing the mission, and there was, of course, great discouragement in losing a beloved Friend.

John’s gospel describes how Mary Magdalene stood outside the empty tomb weeping. Mary’s faith had waned; hope had given way to discouragement and despair, but that all changed the day she was greeted by the Resurrected Jesus.

Before we can go and share the gospel, we must renew our affection for the Risen Christ. Only those who are in a vibrant relationship with Him will possess the motivation to share the Good News with others.

DOUBT

The second obstacle to sharing one’s faith in Christ is doubt. Basic sales principles apply here: just as it is difficult to sell a product that you do not believe in, it is difficult to convince others of their need to follow the Risen Christ if you yourself are not convinced of the need to follow Him.

John’s gospel records for us the words of a man we have come to know as “Doubting Thomas.” Thomas declared, “Unless I see in His hands

the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into His side, I will never believe” (John 20:25).

Thomas is able to overcome his doubt thanks to a face-to-face encounter with Jesus. But what about us? You may choose to simply live with your doubts, which will ultimately hinder your Christian witness. Or, you can choose to become a student of the Scriptures, and be among the blessed ones spoken of by Jesus when He said to Thomas, “Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

DISOBEDIENCE

For others, it is disobedience that keeps us from heeding the commission of Christ. As I think about those close to Jesus, I am immediately reminded of Peter. Without doubt, Peter’s lowest moment was when he denied Jesus—three times—just as Jesus had predicted (Mark 14:30).

Peter wept following his denial of Jesus (Mark 14:72). He felt terrible. The guilt from his disobedience was weighing heavy on him. Jesus knew this, and so Peter is singled out as a special beneficiary of the resurrection, “Go, tell His disciples and Peter” (Mark 16:7).

There remains a mandate for every Christian; we are commanded to “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel” (Mark 16:15). So long as we allow discouragement, doubt, and disobedience to fester, we will likely never heed this command. But when we are forgiven, believing, and encouraged, it becomes a natural thing to share the gospel with others. Do not delay another moment. The risen Christ stands at the door and knocks (Revelation 3:20).

—Bryn MacPhail, condensed