

THEATER OF GRACE

by Herb Montgomery
Director | Speaker



For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. — 1 Corinthians 4:9 (emphasis added).

In the above, Paul chose to use an interesting word in his letter to his fellow believers in Corinth. In most versions, the word is translated as “spectacle.” The Greek word

that Paul chose was “theatron.” It is found only one other time in the New Testament (Acts 19:29&31), where it is translated as “theater,” a place for dramatic performances.

How appropriate! You and I are a theater of God’s grace before men and angels, fallen and unfallen. Our lives are bound up in the greatest drama that the universe has ever witnessed. For it is the story of the slander and vindication of the Character of our God before the on-looking eyes of all.

But we are not play-actors, my friends. This is real life! Not only is God holding us up as a display of His grace and love, which is poured “on” sinners (Ephesians 2:7), but he is holding us up as a theater, where His grace and love are poured out “through” sinners to others as well (Ephesians 3:10). What a testimony to the power of love—the power by which God is endeavoring to govern the universe.

“The church, being endowed with the righteousness of Christ, is His depository [a person with whom something is left in trust], in which the wealth of His mercy, His love, His grace, is to appear in full and final display” (CET 209).

“The church is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God’s plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to ‘the principalities and powers in heavenly places,’ the final and full display of the love of God” Ephesians 3:10 (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9).

This was this same method that God used with Christ. “Having undertaken our redemption, He will spare nothing, however dear, which is necessary to the completion of His work. No truth essential to our salvation is withheld, no miracle of mercy is neglected, no divine agency is left unemployed. Favor is heaped upon favor, gift

upon gift. The whole treasury of heaven is open to those He seeks to save. Having collected the riches of the universe and laid open the resources of infinite power, He gives them all into the hands of Christ and says, “All these are for man. Use these gifts to convince him that there is no love greater than Mine in earth or heaven” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 57).

To this same dispensing of God’s unfathomable grace, we too are called.

“So that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 3:10).

May the work that Jesus began be finished in our lifetimes. May the church in these final moments cry out to this world and the unfallen universe above, “Behold your God” (Isaiah 40:9). †

Thoughts to Ponder—

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(Ellen White, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9)

MINISTRY UPDATE

The Awakening – Pullman, WA

Four days in January, Nine sermons, Sixty souls, Sixteen visitors. The Community Worship Center of Pullman, WA, feels a deep desire to reach the university community surrounding their church. This past January, I had the privilege of conducting an abbreviated evangelistic series (nine topics), entitled The Awakening, in a neutral venue. The concept was simple. In her encounter with Jesus, Mary Magdalene had experienced in her heart the awakening of something that would change the rest of her life. Whatever it was she saw, we set our hearts to encounter that same. We looked at such topics as the Sabbath, Death, The Final Fate of the Wicked, and the question of Why Do Evil Things Happen if God is Good? We contrasted what the Christian church of the Middle Ages taught concerning these topics with what Jesus taught concerning them during His ministry here on Earth. The comparison was striking. The four days culminated in an encounter with Calvary that moved us all.

One story stands out above the rest. Sabbath morning, a dear sister we had met in a restaurant that week showed up to the meetings. The subject was Why Do Evil Things Happen if God is Good? Without mentioning the details, at the close of the service, she had a meltdown. We discovered that she herself had been abused as a 12-year-old girl and had been harboring it since (50+ years). That morning was the first time someone from a church had ever addressed what happened to her in a way that made sense. She began to cry uncontrollably, and I along with three of the other leaders of the church quickly began to pray. We lifted this dear sister up before Jesus, praying that He would work a miracle, that she could be freed, and that, in the light of God's great forgiveness for her sins, she might have forgiveness awakened in her heart toward those who had sinned against her. The result: Our dear sister

walked away that day a new creature in Christ Jesus. For the first time in her life, she was free. With tears streaming down her cheeks, she was free. She came to the remaining meetings in the series, and before I left, she had already been warmly drawn into one of the church's weekly Bible studies. Truly, a miracle had taken place before our eyes. One of God's children had come home. She had been brought out of darkness into His marvelous light.



Charleston, WV

Wow, wow, wow! I was truly amazed to see what the Charleston SDA church is doing these days. My first introduction to the great things our God is up to in this church was Friday night when I arrived. I was immediately met by a lovely young lady whose introduction was, "Hi, my name is . . . I'm now off the streets, and I've been clean of drugs for seven months!" I thought, "That's great." Then, the next morning as I was listening to their praise and testimony time, another lady stood up and thanked God for the changes God was making in her life and stated she would soon be getting her daughter back. My ears perked up. I thought, "Who is this church reaching out to?" Then it became obvious. In between church and my afternoon meetings, the church packed up the leftovers from the "potluck" (which was quite a lot of food, nonetheless), and we headed downtown to feed the hungry. Man, they came out of the woodwork. Then I met Isaiah. He was slobberingly (is that a word?) drunk, and then our eyes met. There was something different about him, and I think he noticed something different about me as well. He reached out to me and began to cry. He said, "I don't know why I'm telling you this, but I've tried so long to give up the bottle. I need help. I'm tired of my life. I'm tired of all this. I want to be free. Please, can you help me?" I reassured him that I could not set him free, but I knew someone who could. I looked into his eyes and said slowly and firmly, "My friend can help you. And the best

part is He doesn't care where you've been. He just cares where you are going." Isaiah hopped in the car with us as we headed back to the church and stayed through my last two presentations. He encountered Calvary that day as he had never heard it before. I know he was inebriated, and some may scoff at this, but he did make a decision that day. He accepted Jesus that day as His Lord and Savior and stated he wanted to go to heaven to live with Jesus. He wanted to be free from his alcohol and have Jesus instead. I wonder sometimes if we really mean it when we say, "Come to Jesus, just as you are." Certainly Isaiah did just this. He's in the hands of that local church now, and I can't wait to be met at the door next time with, "Hi, my name is Isaiah. I'm off the streets now, and I've been sober for seven months." May the gospel continue to change lives in real and practical ways. Praise God!

The Dawning of a New Day

About six months ago, I had the privilege of delivering the Sabbath morning sermon at my home church (which doesn't happen often, since I'm away from home almost every weekend). That morning, I was blessed to look out into my audience and see a visitor. I would later be introduced to her by name. But at that point, I was struck by how deeply attentive she was to the presentation. I was speaking about a very meaningful topic currently in my life



and that is the encounter Mary Magdalene had with Jesus.

After church, I was introduced to our visitor. Her name was Crystal, and the person she was with asked if I could spare a moment to talk. Crystal's background was in Wicca, and she had never before heard the things concerning God's love, Mary, and the awakening of heart-level faith in the way she had experienced in that morning's presentation. She expressed that she felt like she was Mary, and for the first time, she felt as if God's love for Mary was exactly what God felt toward her. She wanted more. She didn't want to run anymore. She had lots of questions, as well as lots of tears. I assured her that it would all become clear in time, just be patient, and *don't stop believing* in what she was beginning to understand in regards to God's unfathomable love for her.

She began studying with a couple in our local church as well as our local pastor and his wife. And I am happy to announce that last month, in January of '08, Crystal was baptized in our local church here in West Virginia. Congratulations Crystal!! And even more so, now after your baptism, in regards to God's great love for you, *don't stop believing!* †



TESTIMONIES . . .

"A friend in HI told me about the message that RHM was teaching about Christ. I listened for about a month to different series but was especially touched by "Why, GOD, Why?" A month later, my younger brother died overseas. Because of what Herb explained about who GOD really was, I was able to draw closer to Him and help my parents too. Thank you and GOD bless your work. I hope that I can be a blessing to others by allowing GOD to work in my life too."—NW

"I did not plan to go to all of the meetings, but after going the first night, I was hooked! Seeing God in a different way was exciting, to hear our message in a new way that surely blessed my wife and I. Herb, keep listening to His voice, and God Bless!"—JL

"Thank you for the daily quotes. All of them are very good, but I especially liked your January 13th quote/insight. This one really hits the nail on the head. Here is a quote from Oswald Chambers that agrees with your point and helps me make mine. "We look to God to manifest Himself to His children: God manifests Himself in His children,

consequently the manifestation is seen by others, not by us." Your material/information is outstanding and just keeps getting better. I have told you that before, but I haven't told you what you "look like." Everything about you says you really believe what you are saying. They may be able to forget what you say, and they may not even get it, but they cannot deny what they see. Certainly you could get a job in your home town and spend more time with family/new son (really

"...when Herb Montgomery quotes Isaiah 40:9, you can't help but notice..."

cool name, by the way), and certainly you could be making more money as a salesman, but here you are traveling all over the world and speaking with passion, as if you really believe there is a spiritual war going on and that it will all soon come to a final conclusion. The way you live your life makes it all real . . . when Herb Montgomery quotes Isaiah 40:9, you can't help but notice, because this is obviously the theme song of your life. Hopefully God has reserved Himself seven thousand Herbs that are out there somewhere working even half as hard as you are.

Blessings on you and your family and your ministry."—V

"I was attending your seminar in . . . this evening (Jan. 18-19) at the . . . church and found myself really looking hard at how I see God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Cross. I know that I am not the same after hearing your message, and I am strongly engaged in the pursuit of completing a different picture of Christ than one I have ever had before."—GH

"Thank you so much, Herb, for your dedication to freeing our oppressed spirits by revealing the TRUE character of Christ!"—JJ

"I desperately needed to hear tonight's message about God's love. To know that Jesus was willing to step forward as soon as Adam sinned . . . and that He was willing to be eternally separated from His Father just so I could take His place in heaven . . . I don't understand that kind of love. But I am so grateful for it. Thank you for allowing God to use you to share this with us. These past two weeks, I have lost sight of what a gift God has given me. Thanks for reminding me how much Jesus loves me!"—C †

CALENDAR

February 8-9, 2008

Campion SDA Church
Loveland, CO
970.667.7403

February 15-24, 2008

Penn Valley SDA Church
Penn Valley, CA
530.432.2479

February 29-March 1, 2008

Westchester Korean SDA Church
Yonkers, NY
347-683-0157

March 7-8, 2008

Sunset Oaks SDA Church
Rocklin, CA
916.771.3869

March 14-23, 2008

Woodside SDA Church
Sacramento, CA
916.549.5656

April 1-5, 2008

Armona Union Academy
Armona, CA
559.582.4468

April 18-27, 2008

Marlinton SDA Fellowship
Marlinton, WV
304.651.0732

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