

# Real Drama

#0159A

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—December 27, 1968

One of the most interesting texts in the Bible to me, is found in 1 Corinthians, the fourth chapter, and the ninth verse, the last part. This explains the meaning of life, which to most people in this world is an enigma. To many, life is a series of accidents, coincidences—the things that happen are the result of luck, circumstance.

But not so, dear friends. What does the scripture say here in the last part of this ninth verse:

“...we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels,  
and to men” 1 Corinthians 4:9.

Now, notice the marginal reading on the word “spectacle.” What does it say? A theater. We’re made a theater unto the world, to angels and to men.

Let me say at the outset, dear friends, that God often uses things as illustrations that He has no interest in, as such. He uses war as an illustration of the Christian life, but you and I are what? Noncombatants.

Paul used the Greek games, the races, in which men ran themselves sometimes literally to death to try to get a fleeting reef of laurel or ivy. he uses that to illustrate the Christian life, but he makes plain the difference between the uncertainty of those Greek games and the certainty of the Christian race.

And so, when Paul introduces the illustration here of a theater, he’s not advising you and me to go to a theater and see a play on a stage. Not at all, but there is something about a theater, a stage, that illustrates something profound. In fact, as I think we shall see before we finish our study tonight, everything that takes place on a theatrical stage is a cheap imitation of the real thing.

There is a drama, my friends, in the great controversy between Christ and Satan. There is a hero, which is Jesus Christ. There is a villain, who is none less than Satan himself, and there are lesser parts played by the various actors on the stage. And thus, we see that life, viewed from *this* standpoint, is not, as I say, a series of accidents. There is a script for this, my dear friends, and you and I are called to take our place as actors in the real drama, in which there is no pretense, no make-believe, and in which no one pretends to be somebody else.

What I want to study with you tonight, friends, is this. Let me say it very simply here at the outset. There is a choice which you have; there is a choice which you do not have. The choice which you have is the choice as to whether you will play on God’s side of this drama or the Devil’s side. *You* can choose that. *You do* choose that.

But, once you make that choice, if you hold to that choice, whichever choice it is, it is God who, looking down the stream of time, chooses the hour in which you shall be born and the place that you shall fit into this great drama. You have been born for a certain work, to fill a certain place, and we shall see that as we look at various texts tonight.

Turn to Acts, the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter. Here is a verse that I always enjoy looking at. The 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts, the 20<sup>th</sup> verse, the first line. Who is this talking about? Moses. Stephen is telling the story before the Sanhedrin. Notice, he says:

“In which time Moses was born...” Acts 7:20.

Well, what time was Moses born in? If you look at the verses before, you’ll see it’s when the pharaoh arose that knew not Joseph and began to persecute and kill the children of Israel, make their lives hard with slavery. This is the time in which Moses was born.

Why was Moses born at this particular time? It’s a part of the drama we’re studying tonight. He came on the stage at exactly the right time. Now, it took 80 years for God to get him ready to play his principal part, but infinite wisdom counted not the time too long, nor the price too great.

You know, in this world, as men and women study for the stage and prepare for various presentations, they will study and practice for hours and days and weeks and months and sometimes years, to be successful in portraying a certain part. But the difference in what we’re studying, I repeat, and this is so important, nobody is pretending, nobody is taking another’s part, nobody is acting in the sense that he’s just pretending to be somebody else.

When Moses came on the stage down there and went into the court of Pharaoh and said, “God says let My people go,” he wasn’t reciting lines which he had memorized out there in the desert, pretending something. Moses was the real messenger carrying a message to a real pharaoh.

And that brings me to the next point, friends. Pharaoh was just as much a part of the drama as Moses was, and this particular man was born at this particular time in order that this drama might be played through just as God had foreseen and had arranged it.

Now, turn to Romans, the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter, and the 17<sup>th</sup> verse. And I want you to see how the scripture clearly presents the fact that this man, Pharaoh, was on the throne at this particular time to act his part in this great drama. He was playing on the Devil’s side, of course:

“For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth” Romans 9:17.

Isn't this interesting? Here God addresses this heathen king, who has defied the God of heaven, and God says to him, I put you on the throne at this time for this very purpose. Ah, you say, that looks like he had to be that way. Not at all, not at all. He could have been just as good as Moses was, and just as much an instrument of God to deliver God's people.

But, no, he stubbornly and defiantly and willfully rebelled against the God of heaven, but God foreseeing this did not say, We'll sweep him away. We have no use for him. God said, We can use him in the drama at a certain place at a certain time in a certain way, and we'll arrange to have him on the throne at that particular time to act his stubborn, rebellious part.

Now, let me read this from the divine commentary, so you'll see it isn't some human idea. The book *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 267, and remember, when I'm reading this, his was no isolated case. It's just as true of you and me as it was of Moses and Pharaoh, friends. Each one has been born at a certain time in history to do a certain work, and I'll read you that before we get through the study tonight. Oh friends, this gives wonderful meaning to life! It means that your birthday is indeed an important thing.

The angel, Gabriel, said to Zacharias concerning John the Baptist:

"...many shall rejoice at his birth" Luke 1:14.

Will many be glad because *you* were born, my friend? It can be so. But, believe me, if that is not true, if you do not do the job that God planned for you to do when you were born, if you let Satan take the faculties that God gave you, the talents that God gave you, and so pervert and twist them that you become an instrument of Satan, then God will use you in the drama playing on Satan's side to reveal what a devil the Devil is. Yes, he will. You'll have your part to play.

Now, back to Pharaoh. *Patriarchs*, page 267:

"Still the heart of Pharaoh grew harder" *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 267.

This is when the plagues were falling.

"And now the Lord sent a message to him, declaring, 'I will at this time send all My plagues upon thy heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like Me in all the earth... And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee My power.' Not that God had given him an existence for this purpose..." *Ibid*.

He wasn't born to do that job. That isn't what God is saying. Oh, no. Watch:

"Not that God had given him an existence for this purpose, but His providence had overruled events to place him upon

the throne at the very time appointed for Israel's deliverance. Though this haughty tyrant had by his crimes forfeited the mercy of God, yet his life had been preserved that through his stubbornness the Lord might manifest His wonders in the land of Egypt" *Ibid*.

I think that's wonderful, friends. The more stubborn he was, the more he demonstrated what a devil Satan is and what a devil he makes of those that let him. And here's the thing—suppose that this man had been a weak-kneed, easy-going sort of fellow. There are plenty of people like that. Suppose that kind of king had been on the throne at that time. By the time the first plague had fallen upon Egypt, what would that king have said? He would have said, You get going fast. I've learned my lesson soon.

But this fellow never learned his lesson. Even though after 10 plagues and the loss of his own son, he finally said, "Let Israel go", within just a few hours, he had the army of Egypt marshaled and was after them, and he met his end in the Red Sea. The glory of God triumphed, and the might of Egypt was laid low in those waters of the Red Sea.

Now, I come back to my reading:

"The disposing of events is of God's providence. He could have placed upon the throne a more merciful king, who would not have dared to withstand the mighty manifestations of divine power. But in that case the Lord's purposes would not have been accomplished. His people were permitted to experience the grinding cruelty of the Egyptians, that they might not be deceived concerning the debasing influence of idolatry" *Ibid*.

Do you see? A nicer king wouldn't have been so hard on Israel. He'd have let them out of Egypt far easier, and they would have gone with better feelings about the idol worship of Egypt. But all through the future history of Israel, God pointed them back to the oppression, the iron furnace, of Egypt, as He called it, and they remembered it.

And so, you see, God had many reasons for allowing this cruel tyrant to be on the throne at that particular time. But remember, God didn't make him wicked that way. No, no. He could have been just as meek as Moses, just as spiritual as the man that led Israel out of Egypt. But, no, with outstanding talents, he devoted himself to the service of the Devil. He played just opposite Moses on the stage in that act of the drama.

Now, let's come down many hundreds of years later. Let's come to the life and death of Jesus, and I want you to turn to Acts, the fourth chapter, now, and I want you to see another significant statement. Acts 4, verses 26–28.

You remember that shortly after Jesus' death and resurrection, He ascended to heaven and, as the Holy Ghost descended upon the early church there on the day

of Pentecost, all Jerusalem was stirred with the preaching of Peter and the other apostles, and literally thousands of converts flocked into the church.

Well, this aroused the opposition of the chief priests and rulers who had put Jesus to death, and there was a real controversy on that. They arrested the apostles and called them before the Sanhedrin, and threatened them. But, when they let them go, Peter and John went back to their own company, Acts 4:23 says, and reported what had happened.

And then, the whole church got together and prayed. That's a good thing to do in the time of trouble, isn't it, friends? Get together and pray. Another thing they did—they quoted scripture. They presented the second Psalm as that which was being fulfilled literally at that time.

Now, watch the 26<sup>th</sup> verse. They're quoting the second Psalm:

"The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ"  
Acts 4:26.

Now, note their comment:

"For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done" Acts 4:27–28.

What did Pilate and Herod and the leaders of Israel and the Gentiles—what did they do to Jesus? What does this say they did? Twenty-eighth verse. Read it with me all together:

"For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done" Acts 4:28.

Who determined all this in advance? God did. Well, you say, then, it looks like they had to do it. No, they didn't have to do it. Pilate didn't have to give the verdict against Jesus. Herod could have let Him go. Judas didn't have to betray Him. Peter didn't have to deny Him. The mob didn't have to cry, Crucify Him, crucify Him. Every one of them made a choice—watch it—in harmony with the character they had developed.

And God—mark this point—foreseeing the character that they would develop, arranged that they should be born and live at that particular time in order that the character of Satan might be revealed in that murder of the Son of God.

Jesus could have laid down His life for the sins of men without all that Judas and Pilate and Herod did. But oh, there was something that happened as devils and men combined to heap cruelty and torture and shame and ignominy upon the Son of God—there was something that happened that unmasked the Devil.

All the universe, sitting as it were in the galleries and watching the events upon the stage of this particular act in the great drama, said, "We are through with Lucifer. We are done with the Devil." And thus, what Caiaphas did, what Annas did, what Herod did, what Pilate did, what Judas did—all, although moved by the Devil, it was all a part of unmasking the Devil and revealing, in contrast, the wonderful character of God.

This is why Jesus went through that whole thing without flinching. In the garden of Gethsemane, He viewed all this in advance. And in those prayer hours, He struggled through to the point of complete harmony with the will of God. And when the mob came, and the disciples, startled out of their sleep, got up and started to fight, Jesus said, No, no, don't do this. I could call my Father and He'd send 12 legions of angels, but how then would the scripture be fulfilled that thus it must be (Matthew 26:51–54).

Every event of that dark night in Gethsemane, those weary hours in the judgment hall, the bloody trail to Calvary, the dark hours stretched upon the cross and hanging between heaven and earth—all of those were the working out of the divine plan, the greatest act in the great drama of the ages, my friends.

Satan had his actors there. God had His. And remember, in this drama, there are no make-believes, no pretense. That's what's the matter with the drama of this world, friends. That's why the child of God has no interest in it. He's interested in something that's real, something that's genuine, something in which every actor is acting out his own character, not somebody else's.

Now, with these words from scripture before us, I want to read to you what I think is one of the greatest presentations of this subject ever penned. It's by the servant of the Lord, writing in the *Review and Herald* of June 12, 1900. Listen. Listen to these wonderful words. Caiaphas, who was the high priest at the time Jesus suffered.

"Caiaphas was the one who was to be in office when type met antitype, when the true High Priest came into office. Each actor in history stands in his lot and place; for God's great work after his own plan will be carried out by men who have prepared themselves to fill positions for good or evil" *Review and Herald*, June 12, 1900.

Oh, it takes a while to train to be a Judas, my friends, that will betray the Savior for 30 pieces of silver. It took a lifetime to develop that cunning, that shrewdness, that underhand dealing, that malice, that dark, brooding spirit, that finally blossomed out in that awful deed which has covered his name with infamy from that hour to the present.

Jesus said, concerning him, It would have been better for that man if he had not been born (Mark 14:21). Well, why was he born, then? Did he have to do that? Not at all. He could have been, friends—Heaven gave him the glorious opportunity to be—one of the pillars of the early Christian church! He could have been one of the

leading apostles. He was for a time. And he almost yielded to the divine molding... almost.

Oh friends, are there those here tonight that God would want to use in a wonderful way in this closing work, but something has to come out of the life? What will you do? Will you finally end up a John or a Judas? One or the other, my friends. If God has given you talents, believe me, it's not enough to have talents. The greater those talents, the greater the part you will play on this stage, *either* acting for God or acting for Satan. And nobody else can determine your destiny. The choice is yours.

Now, back to my reading:

"Each actor in history stands in his lot and place; for God's great work after his own plan will be carried out by men who have prepared themselves to fill positions for good or evil. In opposition to righteousness, men become instruments of unrighteousness. But they are not forced to take this course of action" *Ibid.*

It's as if we had a great stage here capable of holding literally millions of people, and out in the wings are tens and hundreds and thousands of millions. God is the great manager of the stage and the play (the drama), and this is for real, remember. Nothing phony about this, nothing make-believe, nothing pretense.

And may I repeat again, that's the trouble with the drama of this world: it's fictitious, it's make-believe, it's pretense. This is real. This is the only drama I can be interested in, my friends. Oh, and everybody here will have a part in it.

Now, back to our picture of the stage. And there we are out in the wings, and God, looking ahead, is planning, and He says, What would *you* like to play? What would *you* like to be? What part will *you* act in this great drama? You can play on God's side; you can play on Satan's side.

And remember, if you *do* not develop the character which will fit you to represent God, then the character that Satan develops in you—God will take that and place it at the right time at the right place to demonstrate the terrible character of Satan. And, in contrast, somebody will be standing over there.

Potiphar's wife tries to seduce Joseph, but all her maneuverings only cause the pure and beautiful character of that lad to stand out in contrast. On the other hand, here comes Delilah, and she gets Sampson in her net. Do you see the drama—again and again and again. And people who don't understand this, they say, Oh, isn't it too bad that this thing and that thing and the other thing happened.

If Peter hadn't gotten converted, he would have said, It's too bad that maid asked me whether I was a follower of Jesus or not. If she hadn't asked me, I wouldn't have cursed and sworn.

Jesus said:

“Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” Matthew 18:7.

Let me tell you something, friends. If there is something in your character that you have developed that is unlike God, God will allow some agent of the Devil to come along and play opposite you and draw out that thing, unless you get rid of it. To state it in another way, friends, if there’s a screw loose, something will happen to make it rattle.

Oh, I plead with you, learn from Jesus how to go in the hour of prayer and find out what’s weak and loose in the character, and get rid of it. So that, as you come to the supreme hour of history in your life, your character shines out like Joseph, like Daniel, and doesn’t fail, like Peter, in the crisis hour.

Now, tomorrow night I’m going on just where I’m leaving off now, and tomorrow night, friends, we’re going to study the grand finale of this age-long drama. Oh, I hope every one of you will bring somebody with you when you come tomorrow night. For, friends, this may change the course of life for somebody.

Since I’ve gotten hold of this in recent days, life looks to me, oh, so wonderful! More wonderful than it ever has before, and I thank God that I’ve been born at this particular time, packed my little part on the stage in this last act of the great controversy.

You know, if we can learn this lesson, then, like Jesus, no matter what other people do, we can go right ahead. We’ll know that God will allow nothing to touch us except by His permission. And even though men, and even devils, place their filthy and bloody hands upon us, we will know that God will permit them to do nothing except it’s part of the drama, to bring glory to His name and good to us.

May we pray. Precious Lord, indeed, we are made a spectacle—a theater—to the world, to the universe, both to angels and to men. Oh, Lord, I pray, turn our minds away from all the cheap imitations, the foolish pretense of this world’s drama, and fill our hearts, thrill our souls, with the holy purpose to be actors for Thee, on the stage of this last act in the age-long drama.

May we, like Jesus, be prepared to bring glory to Thy name, to endure the opposition and wrath of the dragon and all his host, and to so honor Thee that the while universe shall ring with songs of triumph, as Thy church marches up the heights of victory. We ask it in Jesus’ name, amen.

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