

REMEMBERING REVEREND BILLY GRAHAM
Sermon March 4, 2018

Billy Graham was one of the most influential people of the 20th century. He had a huge impact on not only North America but also the world. Graham left such a big legacy that he **deserves** to be honoured by us today. As he left this earth recently, let's see Billy Graham a bit closer, and let's learn things from him about the way he loved and served our Lord Jesus Christ.

Billy Graham has preached the message of Christ's freedom and forgiveness around the world, reaching over 200 million people in more than 185 countries. He had the privilege of leading hundreds of thousands of people to pray to receive Jesus Christ into their lives as Lord and Saviour. His integrity and wisdom have opened doors to offer spiritual support and guidance for United States presidents from Eisenhower to Bush. He has been a friend to celebrities, politicians, athletes, and leaders, such as Martin Luther King, Jr.

Billy Graham has been named by Americans as "One of the Ten Most Admired Men in the World" a record-breaking 59 times with the Gallup poll. He has been known through the years as, not only a world renowned evangelist, but also as a kind, non-judgmental, accepting, and humorous soul.

Billy Graham, died on Feb. 21, 2018, at age 99. His body lay in honour in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda Feb. 28-March 1.

Billy Graham was remembered Friday as a nurturing father, a lovable brother and a humble farm boy-turned-evangelist who lived the Christian Gospel he preached in all corners of the world.

His funeral service drew more than 2,000 guests, including President Donald Trump, Vice President Mike Pence, governors, senators, religious leaders, celebrities and longtime Graham family friends.

The funeral service featured tributes from Graham's five children, music by different Christian artists including the Gaither Vocal Band, and speakers from across the world. The guests included delegates from 50 countries. Pope Francis sent a message of condolences and respect for Graham's years of ministry.

Among those who attended the funeral was Cardinal Timothy Dolan of the Archdiocese of New York, the second-largest U.S. Catholic diocese. The cardinal, at the funeral, said Billy Graham "had a towering influence on me when I was

growing up in the '50s." Catholic bishops often told their parishioners to stay away from the Protestant Graham's crusades, but Graham met with Pope John Paul II and built bridges to other Christian denominations. The cardinal also quoted what Billy Graham often said: "we have enough forces against us and we don't need to be fighting among ourselves."

Billy Graham often said that he looked forward to death which was more celebratory than somber, more respectful than emotional. During the funeral service, his son said: "My father's greatest longing has been granted. He's in the presence of God."

Tributes from Graham's children included recollections from his daughter Anne Graham Lotz about her father's practice of gathering everyone in his home for family devotions, even into his final days on earth. "My mother taught me by her example to love reading my Bible every day," she said. "My daddy, by his example, taught me to think about what I read."

Franklin Graham recalled his father's love of his late wife, Ruth, his sense of humour and joy in his grandchildren. "The Billy Graham that the world saw on TV, and in the big stadiums, is the same Billy Graham we saw at home," he said. "There weren't two Billy Grahams."

I share with you the story I heard once from Billy Graham. As Billy and his wife were having their morning coffee and chit-chat one day, Billy, the well-known minister, asked his wife, "Ruth, were you ever thinking to divorce me?" After a few quiet moments, his wife said: "no ... never ...but I often thought I will kill you."

Graham's personal pastor mentioned that Billy Graham's wife, Ruth, died in 2007, 11 years ago. The minister, who knew Billy's wife's humour, in his sermon at Billy Graham's funeral service said: "I can only imagine what Ruth must have said to Bill when he arrived in heaven, I'm not going to put words in her mouth, but she probably said, 'It's about time, Billy.'"

Graham was away for months, headlining crusades, when his children were growing up. But his son told the guests: "I just want you to know that my father was **FAT – faithful, available, teachable**. May we all be that way."

Graham's daughter Ruth Graham, told how her father hugged her following a difficult divorce and greeted her with the words "welcome home." "**There was no shame,**" Ruth Graham said. "**There was no blame. There was no condemnation, just unconditional love. And you know, my father was not God. But he showed me what God is like that day. When we come to God with our sin, our**

brokenness, our failure, our pain and our hurt, God says ‘welcome home,’ and that invitation is open for you.”

“Billy Graham had a profound and deeply spiritual conviction concerning the Word of God, the Bible. **He loved the Bible. It governed how he lived, and it governed how he died.** He believed the Bible teaches us the truth about God and Christ Jesus.”

A few years ago, someone asked him if he didn’t think God was unfair, allowing him to have Parkinson’s and other medical problems when he has tried to serve God faithfully. Billy Graham replied: “I did not see it that way at all. Suffering is part of the human condition, and it comes to us all. The key is how we react to it, either turning away from God in anger and bitterness or growing closer to him in trust and confidence.”

A few months ago, on his 99th birthday, he sent a message to the world:

I’ve been praying that we might have a spiritual awakening. I think that becomes possible only as individuals surrender their lives afresh and anew to Christ. First, we must do everything we can to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Live a life in which we love one another, we help one another, and we live according to His word as Jesus lived. The Holy Spirit is the one who helps us live that new lifestyle. It’s one of love, gentleness, and patience and all of these things that are the fruits of the Spirit. You read his Word every day... the Bible. I know it’s very difficult but you need to start somewhere and I suggest you start with the Gospel of Luke in the New Testament and in the Old Testament start with the first verse — “In the Beginning, God.” Go to your knees and pray until you and God have become intimate friends. I cannot describe to you the joy and the peace He gives as a result of the daily routine that you have.

Multiple speakers referenced Graham’s longing for Heaven. Billy Graham said: “Whether you stand before God tomorrow or whether you stand before Him 50 years from now, is irrelevant in the scope of eternity. **The important thing isn’t when you stand before God; it’s where you stand with God.**”

Franklin Graham noted, “a few things that my father would want me to share with you today,” including explanations of the Gospel and that the Bible is ‘the infallible Word of God.’ “The world, ... would want you to believe that there are many roads to God, but it is just not true. God sent His Son, His only Son from Heaven to this earth to take our sins, and He took our sins to the cross, and He died in our place. He shed His blood for each and every one of you. Jesus Christ comes into each and every heart that invites Him. And if we will repent of our sins and by faith believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bible says we will be saved.”

Franklin Graham said: "I believe God is saying: '**Wake up church! Wake up world!**'"

Franklin Graham concluded, "Daddy," I won't see you on this earth again. But I will see you again."

A person said: Graham "didn't know until he got to heaven, how many people were there because he had shared the message of love and hope with them. What a homecoming that had to be for him."

Graham's grave marker of native stone will call him "**Preacher of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ,**" as he wished, and refer to a favorite Bible verse, John 14:6. "**Jesus answered, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'**"