

Hebrews

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[0 : 00] We're grateful this morning, our Father, for the opportunity to simply be together, and more than that, we're grateful that you've given us a cause to be together, to focus upon who you are and what you've provided for us in and through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are so grateful for that bond that unites us like nothing else can. It provides a true brotherhood that even transcends that of blood relatives, and we are grateful for the truth that is behind it.

And this morning we want to thank you for the influence and the life and the legacy of Billy Graham, and for what he has meant to countless millions of people throughout the world, and for those who have come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ because of this man's ministry and influence.

We stand in awe of his achievements and accomplishments, and yet we know that his spirit was such that he would give you properly the glory and the honor for it all.

How grateful we are that you were pleased to use what the world would call a simple country boy from backwoods of North Carolina to reach presidents and kings and queens and commoners all around the world.

[1 : 14] And only eternity will reveal the impact of this man. We thank you for his spirit, for his demeanor, for his dedication, and for his children and grandchildren that he's left behind to continue the influence.

Thank you this morning for each person here, for the meal we'll be enjoying shortly, and for the day that lies ahead. In the name of our Lord Jesus, amen. Amen. Well, instead of continuing our study of Hebrews, we were just wrapping up chapter 10, I think I would like to devote our time this morning to the man in the ministry that we're all very familiar with to one degree or another, Billy Graham and the influence that he has had.

And what I would like for you to do is, if you have a desire and an interest, feel free to offer any comment or any questions that you may have about the man and his ministry.

And we'll just kind of make this an open forum kind of time to reminisce a little bit about someone who has impacted all of our lives to one degree or another.

And there's only one question that is really valid regarding the man and his ministry. And this question is the only one that actually matters at all.

[2 : 46] As the media, even today, are talking about Billy Graham and they're talking about his ministry, his life, his death, his interment, and his lying in state, people who will view it.

This will consume much of the news in many areas for the next couple of days, I'm sure. But beyond all of that, there is just one thing that I would like you to focus on that is the only thing that makes any difference regarding the man, Billy Graham.

And that is this. Was his message valid? Did the man speak the truth? And the gospel that he proclaimed around the world?

Is it really true? And that actually is all that matters. And the implications of either answer that you get to that question are quite stunning.

Because if what he preached was true, valid, ordained of God, then it's going to make a whole lot of difference to a whole lot of people throughout eternity.

[4 : 12] Because they came to believe in that message. On the other hand, if it is not true, then there are millions of people who have been sold a bill of goods that has no validity to it at all.

And there is no heaven and there is no hell. And when you die, you die like a dog and that's the end of it. There's no accounting. There's no judgment. There's no anything afterwards. And the point that I'd like to make here at the outset is this.

Between position A and position B, there isn't anything. There is no third alternative.

It's either true or it isn't true. And it isn't true kind of. It either is or it isn't. It is what we call the law of the excluded middle.

There's no middle ground. You can't say, well, it wasn't true actually. And it was true actually. And now that's the way a lot of people are thinking today.

[5 : 15] And I call that double think. It is also called relative position regarding morality. And some actually function this way.

I don't think they can do it consistently. But they tell themselves that this is what they believe. And that is that what Billy Graham preached was true. Provided you believe it was true.

Then it was true for you. But someone else may say they don't believe a thing that Billy Graham preached. Okay. In that case then, it isn't true for you.

So, the position they take is, you create your own truth. If you want it to be true and you believe it to be true, then it was. On the other hand, if you reject it and believe that it wasn't true, then it wasn't true.

It's kind of like the resurrection of Christ from the dead. If you really believe that he came out of that tomb alive, then for you, he did. But if you happen to not believe it, then for you, he didn't.

[6 : 20] And that's called, of course, subjectivity. And the only question that matters, is it objectively true? Did he really, literally, physically, bodily come out of that tomb?

Is what Billy Graham preached really, truly, actual, factual to be believed? Or is it not? There is no middle ground. And there is no such thing as creating your own truth or creating your own reality. Because it is what it is. And someone has said, truth is that which corresponds to reality. And that's what we need to keep in mind. So, to come right back to our initial premise, everything hinges upon the truthfulness of this man's message.

And it's interesting to note that out of all of the news commentators that you'll hear talking about it, etc., they will talk about Billy Graham and the fact that he reached millions and millions of people around the world, that he was a counselor to six or seven presidents, and they will talk about the crowds that he drew and the length of his ministry.

But I dare say, you will probably hear none of them say anything by way of commenting on the man's actual message.

[7 : 46] With the exception, the person who's talking may well be a believer himself, then they may say something about it. But the news media in general just cover it as an item of news, and they will offer no opinion at all as regards the man's message and its validity.

Largely because they themselves don't know, frankly. And they don't have that assurance. They don't have that faith. And they don't understand those who do. So they just report the bare facts and then move on to the next news item.

And that's probably what we'll be getting over the next couple of days. And that's really, that's all you can expect. Because they can only speak from their own frame of reference. And they probably don't have one.

We are presently engaged in a nation that is being inundated with secularism.

And the name of the game today in society and particularly in social media is to get God out of everything. And that is striving for secularism.

[8 : 57] And the other side so far seems to be winning. Because there is more and more opposition.

Lack of respect for. And by the way, this lack of respect for things Christian comes from the same crowd that is always touting acceptance and broad-mindedness.

And yet, it does not extend to things Christian. It extends to Muslims. It extends to gays. It extends to abortionists. It doesn't extend to Christians. And that's what we're dealing with.

But you know what? We really have no cause to expect anything better. In a certain sense, Christianity in the United States of America, from our inception, has had a pretty smooth ride.

We've had it pretty easy here. There hasn't been much of a price to pay at all for identifying with the Christ of Calvary. We've been pretty much tolerated.

[10 : 14] Maybe if not agreed to or bought into, at least they've taken a live and let live attitude toward things Christians. But it's not so much that way anymore.

There is less and less tolerance. And more and more things are turning out to be counterproductive for those things that we regard sacred.

I do not know, and it's probably too early to tell, whether the present administration under President Trump is going to be able to alter that any. I don't know to what extent he's committed to it. But time will tell. It could very well be that we are closer to the end than what any of us know. And if that's the case, you can expect the screws to only get tighter. And that may well be what's going to happen.

But we don't know. At any rate, the Lord is in charge. The thing I'd like to mention about Billy Graham is the exponential aspect of his ministry, because that's probably the greatest impact.

[11 : 15] It is true he has preached to hundreds of millions of people around the country. In fact, I think the largest gathering ever put together in one place was when Billy Graham addressed the audience in Seoul, Korea, I believe in the 1980s.

I'm not sure about that, but I think it was like the 1980s. There was estimated to be a million people in attendance. This, of course, was not a coliseum or anything.

It was nothing that large of a whole. It was a huge open-air meeting in Seoul, South Korea. And that, I think, still is on record as being the largest public gathering ever, anywhere, at any time, or any occasion.

That's a lot of people, and I've seen a picture of it. I had the privilege of being at the Cove in Asheville, North Carolina a couple of times for some Bible conferences.

And this is a place that Billy and Ruth Graham had constructed there in Asheville. It's called the Cove, and it's a beautiful facility.

[12 : 27] And everything about it is top drawer. And they have the finest speakers in the country in there for two, three days at a time. Lots of pastors go there.

Lots of lay people go there. And it's a time for spiritual refreshment and renewal. And it's a great visit. So I would recommend it heartily if you can ever get down to Asheville, North Carolina, to the Cove.

It's quite an unusual place. And there is where I saw the picture that I was just describing about the million people that were in attendance in Seoul, Korea, when Billy was there and preached many, many years ago.

The exponential aspect of this ministry, of course, is the way evangelism works. It isn't by addition. It is by multiplication.

And the principle works that one person tells another person, and that person tells two people, and those two tell four people, and those four tell eight people, and so on and so on.

[13 : 33] And that's the way it grows. And it has always been like that from the time the gospel began being published in the first century. It got to the place of where Constantine the Great, who was emperor at the time in the fourth century, made the political, and to what extent it was a religious decision or a spiritual decision, and the jury's still out.

But we know he made a political decision because these Christians were growing and multiplying in number so rapidly that if we don't read the writing on the wall, we may be in big trouble with them if they decide to come against us.

So, if you can't whip them, join them. And Constantine in 325, with his Edict of Constantine, made it not only legal for the first time in the Roman Empire, made it legal to be a Christian.

He also made it illegal for you not to be a Christian. And as a result of that, we are told that there were long lines of pagan priests lined up to be baptized into the Christian faith.

And I think we can safely say that Christianity has never recovered from that since because that's not the way you entered the Christian faith, by standing in a line waiting to be baptized because your emperor has commanded that you become Christian.

[15 : 06] That doesn't cut it. It didn't cut it then. It doesn't cut it now. So, this multiplication thing that was taking place eventually did impact the whole world, and it actually became the seedbed for what ultimately became the Holy Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church that was established as the only valid expression of Christianity for literally centuries, even though they were smaller groups.

They were very small in number and very small in influence, and it was Roman Catholicism that led the way for centuries and had the greatest impact not only religiously, but politically throughout Europe.

So, the idea of multiplication, something that is fond of my heart and I can identify with because insofar as my own faith in coming to Christ is concerned, I would say that my roots, my spiritual

roots go back to a woman that I never knew, never met, had no idea what her name was, but she was a believer in Jesus Christ, and she lived in Seattle, Washington, and she was talking to a woman over the backyard fence in the 1940s as they were busily engaged hanging out the week's laundry.

And this unnamed woman, for whom I shall forever be grateful, communicated to her next door neighbor, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and she became a believer.

And this believer, in turn, talked to her younger sister and explained to her the gospel of Jesus Christ, and she became a believer.

[17 : 04] And that woman was my mother-in-law. Because my mother-in-law talked to her daughter, who at the time was about 12 or 13 years of age, and she led her to faith in Christ.

Then in 1956, I met that girl. She was 19 and I was 21 in Olympia, Washington. And even though she did not lead me to faith in Christ, she was very instrumental and positioned me so that the day we were married, we talked to a minister who married us, and he led me to faith in Christ.

So, you see how this thing called Christianity works. People tell people who tell people who tell people. And I think that the greatest impact of Billy Graham's ministry will not be the tens of thousands of people that he won to Christ through his invitations and the crusades that he held, and in the television ministry that he had.

Those people who came to Christ, I don't think will constitute his greatest legacy, but I think it will be the people that they, that they who were won by Billy Christ, by Billy Graham, then went out and expanded that, and those who did will have a greater influence and it multiplies because now we're probably into the third or fourth generation of people who've been impacted by Billy Graham.

So, the thing goes on and it's just incredible the way evangelism works. Someone said that all evangelism is about is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.

[18 : 53] And that's what the gospel is. So, anything that you would like to offer by way of comment or any memory that you may have or any questions that you may have, I may or may not be able to answer them.

I'm not an authority on Billy Graham. I'm just one of millions of admirers. But, anything anybody would like to say? Yes, Joe? Well, I'm sure that that's involved to what degree I don't know.

Franklin Graham is making quite an impact, is holding lots of meetings throughout the country, but he, of course, does not have the reputation or the history that his father does, nor could you expect him to.

But, I personally, and I'm sure that there are a lot of people who would agree with me, consider Billy Graham as God's gift.

to the 20th century. And, I say that unapologetically and I'm convinced that it is true. Largely because of what I mentioned about the exponential aspect of his ministry because those that he reached in turn reached many, many more.

[20 : 24] And, that's the way the gospel works. Yes? Mark, in his background, did he start being where he came from? Did he start out as a Baptist? Yes. Yes.

His roots, his roots in the beginning were Baptist and, in fact, he maintained his Baptist connections throughout his ministry.

For many, many years, he was a member of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, where W.A. Criswell treats for over 50 years. and it is the church now where Jeffress, Pastor Jeffress, who's been on Fox a number of times, he's the pastor there now.

If I'm not mistaken, I think, I think Billy Graham's membership now is in a Baptist church there in North Carolina, probably in the Charlotte area.

I cannot say for sure. But, he never made an issue of the fact of denominations of any kind. In fact, Ruth, the wife that he, the girl that he married, was born and raised in China and her father, Dr. Nelson Bell, was involved in medical missions in China and that's where Ruth was born and she and Billy, I think, met at Wheaton College, if I'm not mistaken.

[21 : 56] And she was Presbyterian in her background and I remember hearing Billy Graham one time, I was in a group pastors that he was addressing and he said he tried every way that he could to convince his wife, Ruth, that she needed to be immersed and that sprinkling wasn't good enough but I was never able to persuade her.

She always had an argument for everything I had to say. So, she never did submit to immersion water baptism and of course everybody got a chuckle out of that and someone has said it doesn't

make any difference what position you take regarding water baptism you're in a minority because some sprinkle and some pour and some immerse one time backwards some immerse three times forward so whatever you choose you're in a minority.

My first wife Barbara used to say that when she was a baby she was baptized as a Roman Catholic at her birth and then later she was sprinkled as a Presbyterian there in a little town in Cleelum, Washington and then she joined the Baptist Church and she was immersed and then she went to Grace Bible Church and got dry cleaned.

So, she's been through the whole gamut. Yes, Dana? I agree with you that secular news media does not talk about the true message of Christ.

I disagree with you in that I don't think it's the Indian position to evangelize. Now, the news source that I listened to yesterday I thought it was a very good presentation or a filigree they commented about before he came around this is before my time because I've always known him but before that evangelists kind of went off in different directions and he unified the Christian evangelist message you know this is the heart of it believe that Christ will be saved and that really unified Christianity and another thing they mentioned was how he he didn't get political but he didn't he stayed out of politics and they commented about how many other evangelists have taken political sides what they didn't say is as soon as you take political sides you've lost half your audience and like you said he didn't take one denomination or another he believed in Christ he didn't take one way or the other and actually a gentleman that was a survival study that I went to earlier this morning he said before he became a

[25 : 06] Christian he had his structure going around and that I think is largely due to his accepting people and not looking at where people came from what they believe sure yeah but keeping that open mind with people that gave him the story yeah absolutely of his absolutely when I when I said you will not find the media talking about the message or what he delivered or what he actually preached or anything like that I did not mean that in a critical sense and I'm not faulting them for not doing that I simply pointed out they can't they don't even know what the message is they don't understand the message so you're not going to hear them explain and elaborate on it or anything like that like a Christian commentator could but it's not you're right it's not the job of the news media to do that to evangelize in the first place they can't they don't have the wherewithal some do some some don't well yeah it's a position to present facts news and evangelism is not news well why would it be

I mean what message he's spoken in all these audiences what was he telling them I mean that would be to me news to know what some great speaker is telling the people what he's trying to share that would be news news news well you've got a point there Joe that's why it's called the good news yeah the gospel is the good news so why wouldn't a Christian news person tell that part of the news but what Martin is saying is we don't have that many Christian news people anymore true to be able to tell that part of the news they don't know it they don't know that news that he told they don't ever bother to check it out and this news this news either is or is not there again is that no middle ground it really is the best news the world has ever heard or it is not and in my view everything hinges upon the veracity of this message the truthfulness of this message and if it is true let me put it this way if it is true then it has eternal implications and if that is true then there can be no venue in which this gospel is inappropriate think if you will come up if you will with one situation where the gospel of

Jesus Christ would not be appropriate to mention it's appropriate for funerals it's appropriate for weddings it's appropriate for births it's appropriate for anything and everything but only if it's true if it isn't true then you've got a lot of people who will say you ought to keep religion out of it this is no place for religion well in the first place we're not even talking about religion because we all know religion is religion is man's effort to create a god or to get to god on man's terms that's religion and christianity is god coming to man on god's terms and that's a whole different thing so other thoughts or comments anyone yeah i'm sure you've heard it said before mark that if we're wrong and we die we've lost nothing but if we're right and everybody else is wrong they've lost everything that's true that's that's an argument that has been put forth by i can't think of his name now 16th century mathematician pardon no no no it'll come to me when i'm thinking of something else but it was referred to and he wrote pen c's p-e-n-s-e-e-s and when he died he had this wonderful thing sewed into his into his jacket an ode to christ oh it wasn't i think therefore i am rene decar it was and he even it was even it was even called his his wager pascal pascal yeah i think it was rene rene pascal

was called rene it's called pascal's wager and he was a philosopher mathematician i think 16th century maybe 17th century but anyway his wager was that you had best put your money if you will on the claims and the reality of jesus christ who he is and what he did and why it matters and if you are right in putting your faith and trust in him you stand to gain everything and if you are wrong and it turns out that christ was not who he claimed to be and didn't do what the bible says he did and you die and it's all over and there's no nothing thereafter what have you lost you lost nothing that's referred to as pascal's wager and it's got some merit to it yes question marvin the roman catholic church was the early church how did they get so steeped in the traditions of the jewish well that's a that's a really big question how did they get so i'll tell you what fellas i've i've learned this in my short lifetime and my lifetime is short compared to how long people have been around but i don't think i don't think there is anything as powerful or that dies a harder death than tradition tradition tradition will outgun truth almost

any time now it shouldn't be that way because tradition does not trump truth truth trumps everything but in the minds of most people tradition is king and probably the greatest reason for that is because tradition involves emotion feelings and truth involves the intellect truth if something is objectively true it doesn't make one bit of difference how you feel about it that doesn't change it one iota that's the difference between subjectivity and objectivity and tradition is laced immersed in saturated with emotion and feeling whereas fact is not fact is more intellectual it is colder harder and more stubborn but tradition almost wins out every time i give you a perfect example that i'm an efficiency nut i mean i have to do things the easiest way you know the fastest way to get something done and when i go in that kitchen and my parents got the glasses a certain place in the cabinet versus bowls over here the bowls are real close to getting everything and put away we hardly ever use them these glasses we use all the time and i suggested one time whether we put the glasses right here where they're real close to get and these bowls that we hardly ever use you know put them over there and she says no because we've always done it this way and so we're not going to change now and you talk about emotion you know that was all that matter is because of tradition this is the way i've always done it this is the way it's always been it's powerful exactly this just happened recently how do i know this is true because this is what i've always believed so i know it's true because of that yeah most people disagree with me on this but i believe they have scientific evidence but if spock if we had spock minds totally logical quite often we cannot come to a decision so if you do this then that will happen if you do that then this other thing will happen whether we're when we think we're being logical the final decision is emotional and that leads us to the choice we want yeah so even when we are trying to be logical emotional and that's why your tradition is so successful oh yeah yeah yeah those of you who've seen fiddler on the roof remember tebbie the milkman tradition and that's that's true you know so many so very many jewish people today are not what in fact they themselves will tell you and i ran into this so much when we spent the six weeks in israel back in 1990 where jewish people will say i'm not a religious person oh i'm jewish but i'm not a religious person and what they mean is i'm not observant i don't observe the sabbath i don't observe kosher diets i don't observe this i don't observe that but you have you have your son bar mitzvah in the synagogue when he turns 12 or 13 years of age that is his introduction into manhood you do that don't you why do you do that that's traditional that's traditional and the girls they bat mitzvah and the boys bar mitzvah and they do so not because of a religious connection but just because it's tradition and that's the thing that drives a lot of people in a lot of churches in the Roman Catholic church for instance and i'm a little bit familiar with this because my wife my first wife was born and we're Roman Catholic they have in place a mechanism ongoing mechanism that that succeeds that succeeds in creating an emotional tie with its adherence in addition to a doctrinal tie and the doctrine involves the intellect and the other involves the feelings and the emotions and the the ritual and the mystery there is mystery involved in the

[37 : 04] Catholic church and really why shouldn't there be from the standpoint that you think God is not mysterious there is a lot about God that is mystery that we don't know and don't understand and through the centuries whether deliberately or unintentionally they have created an emotional bond between the church and the people that very very few Protestants are ever able to realize and I say this from experience and from friends that i've known for you know for decades who are both Roman Catholic and Protestant and and they have they have succeeded in doing that and this this is the thing that creates an intense loyalty to the Roman Catholic for instance let me give you an example with all of this scandal that has been going on regarding the priests all over the country you know all over the world and the abuse of children sexually etc and the millions and millions of

dollars that the

Catholic Church has paid out in damages you would think you would think that would send a signal to so many of the faithful say I don't want anything to do with an outfit like this that is that corrupt you know I don't want but but they look beyond that and they see that church that even though it had priests that strayed and violated their oath and everything and violated children still they are convinced that that is the church that Jesus Christ founded and that it is able to overcome even that so I'm not about to jump ship I'm going to hang in there and it is because of that emotional historical connection that they have that binds them to that and I'm satisfied that is the big item that that largely keeps the

Roman Catholic church in the position of influence that it does they preach fear well yeah and the fear too yeah absolutely there is a fear factor if you do certain things you're going to go to hell you receive they believe you receive grace through the sacraments and if you do not receive the sacraments you do not receive grace and the only place you can get the sacraments is in the Catholic church so if you are excommunicated that's the same as being consigned to hell forever when Paul preached so hard against those kind of things early how did the Catholic church get the other direction the only thing I can say is that the flesh and the self-centeredness that we are all cursed with whether Catholic or Protestant is very very powerful and fellas you need to understand this because and I'm sure that you I think you do but I want to emphasize it and that is this I don't care if it is a church a denomination a school an organization a lodge or a country the tendency is toward corruption always has been the tendency is toward corruption this is true of all churches not just the Catholic church it's true Judaism look at how corrupt it was when Christ was here look at how corrupt Judaism was when the prophets preached and they got stoned to death for preaching that was all because of their corruption and that corruption has infiltrated the Roman Catholic church unless the pot called the kettle black the same corruption has influenced the Protestant church and we have Protestant churches up to your eyeballs that soundly deny the authority of scripture and have departed from it a long time ago so corruption is the order of the day yes a good friend of mine believes very much in faith but very little in religion the difference being that religion is where man is corrupted

God yeah so any denomination is going to have its faults oh yeah yeah absolutely it's easy to get distracted that way absolutely