

Is There an Answer?

by Billy Graham

Billy Graham's sermon calls for a spiritual revival to address the moral and societal challenges of the modern world through faith in Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 5:14, John 3:3

Topics: "Spiritual Revival", "Transformation through Christ"

Description

Billy Graham addresses the pressing question of whether there is an answer to the world's problems, emphasizing that true solutions lie not in political or economic systems, but in a spiritual revival and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He argues that humanity has neglected the soul in favor of materialism and rationalism, leading to moral decay and inner turmoil. Graham asserts that the transformation of human nature through being 'born again' is essential for finding peace and purpose. He calls for a collective return to faith in God as the only way to address the crises facing society today. Ultimately, he encourages individuals to seek a personal connection with Christ to experience true change and fulfillment.

Transcript

"IS THERE AN ANSWER?"

An Address by DR. BILLY GRAHAM

Thursday, October 6th, 1955

CHAIRMAN: The President, Dr. C. C. Goldring.

DR. C. C. GOLDRING: It is particularly appropriate for the Empire Club of Canada to begin its 1955-56 season by having as its guest speaker a man who has been designated as "the most potent evangelist in American history".

Dr. Graham came to Toronto at the request of more than five hundred churches, and is conducting meetings which attract many thousands each day or evening. Tens of thousands of Canadians have followed the career of Dr. Billy Graham during recent years. During the years 1951-52-53, the Graham Crusade centred in seventeen major American cities, including Washington, Dallas, Seattle, and Detroit. During each of those years, approximately two and a half million persons attended the crusades. In 1954, Dr. Graham went to Europe and in England and Scotland conducted meetings which were attended by

more than 3,100,000 people. Probably his largest single meeting took place at Wembley Stadium when there was an overflow throng of 120,000.

Following his crusade in Britain, he visited Europe and conducted meetings in six countries, having an attendance of some 80,000 on one occasion in Berlin.

From coast to coast many Canadians listen to Dr. Graham's radio broadcasts entitled "Hour of Decision", which is currently heard on more than 400 stations on this continent and approximately fifty foreign stations. He has also appealed to thousands by means of religious films, of which four have now been produced under his general direction.

It is a real pleasure to welcome Dr. Graham here today, and I extend to him, on your behalf, a warm welcome to the Empire Club of Canada.

MR. GRAHAM: Mr. Chairman, gentlemen, members of The Empire Club, and friends who are gathered here today, it is a great delight and privilege for me to be here. I am also grateful for the very generous remarks that have been made by your President, and I am reminded of an incident that happened to the Archbishop of Canterbury some years ago. He was scheduled to visit an orphanage. In preparing for the occasion, the head of the orphanage gathered all the children together and said, "Now, when the Archbishop comes, there is a certain protocol you must observe. The Archbishop of Canterbury is always addressed as either "My Lord" or "Your Grace", and that is the way you are to address him if he stops and talks to any one of you."

So the Archbishop came. When he stopped in front of one little boy, he asked, "Son, how old are you?"

The little boy, frightened, looked up and answered, "My God, I am ten."

Now after the introduction that I have had today and the statistics that have been quoted, I am not sure exactly what you think of me, but we have been looking forward to coming.

I heard a story the other day about a Texan who was playing jokes on another Texan-and when two Texans play jokes on each other, they are really jokes, for they carry to some extremes. It seems that this man had been doped by his friends-he had been given some sort of drug that put him to sleep. They had prepared a grave for him out in the cemetery; and so they put him in the coffin, carried him out to the cemetery and buried him in this grave-but they didn't cover it. The next morning when he awoke, he looked all around and saw that he was lying in a coffin. He looked up at the clear blue sky, then stood up in the grave and looked around at the other tombstones. All of a sudden he gave a shout: "Hallelujah! This is the resurrection morning, and a Texan is the first one up."

I am certain that The Empire Club has a certain amount of pride in the Commonwealth of Nations, and more particularly in the Commonwealth of Canada. It has been my privilege to be in many parts of the British Empire and recently to spend a great deal of time in the British Isles and to make many friends there.

Most of us are aware, I think, that not only Great Britain but also the United States and the entire world are battling, as one United Nations delegate recently said, for our very survival. Economically, morally, politically, religiously and otherwise, we are battling against forces of materialism and humanism and communism that are beating at our gates from without and infiltrating from within. We are living in a period of world history that could either mean the beginning of a new day in history in which all mankind could be

lifted to new economic levels and a new standard of living or we could be living in a day in which the entire world could be swept into destruction.

A German scientist recently said in Germany that it is now possible to depopulate the entire earth. That seems strange: that we must be afraid of weapons today. With the advance of science, with the lifting of economic conditions, with the parts of the world that have been illiterate learning to read and write and having advantages of educational, medical and social help that they have not had before, it seems strange that ours should be an age of fear.

Many people are asking, Why? They are asking: What is the solution to our many problems? Which way can we turn? Is there an answer?

Many people feel there is an answer in the United Nations. Others feel there is an answer in economic help to the under-privileged and in the Four Point Programme that President Truman outlined a few years ago. There are many people today with various answers. Everybody is having his say. And now, today, I want to have a say. I want to go back two thousand years to find the answer to the dilemmas and the problems that we face. The United States and Canada were founded by Godfearing men. Whether their faith was Catholic or Protestant they came to these shores believing in God. They had a Bible in their hand. They put into the very foundation of our government "In God We Trust." They believed in Almighty God. They had a strong faith in religious liberty and a strong faith in the Almighty. They believed in God and the Bible. They made the Bible the very basis of our way of life and of our government and of our laws.

But a few years ago we decided that we no longer needed this faith, we no longer needed the Bible, we no longer needed God; and about the turn of the century we saw something happen. We began to feel that in the scientific, economic and industrial advances we had made that somehow science and religion could not be brought together and that religion was something belonging to the archaic past, that it was a group of myths, something to be done away with-and we almost agreed with Lenin when he said it was the opiate of the people.

So we discarded religion. Particularly in intellectual circles, we discarded the supernaturalistic concept: we said we no longer believed in God, we no longer believed in the Bible. So we substituted other things: Reason, Rationalism, Mind Culture, Science Worship, Freudianism, Naturalism, Humanism, Behaviourism, Positivism, Materialism - all the other isms we substituted for religion.

As a result, what happened? We developed our minds and neglected our souls. We forgot that we are more than just bodies with animal passions, animal lusts and animal desires. Oh, yes, we have bodies with eyes and ears and nose and hands and feet. Every one has a body with certain appetites that need satisfying: hunger, sex, thirst, the desire to be with each other, - the herd instinct - all of these things are passions and desires and appetites of the body. So we set about to satisfy our bodies. Our minds also have certain desires to acquire knowledge, so we set about to fill our minds with knowledge. But we neglected a third, a very important part of the human anatomy: the soul. We starved our souls, spiritually, and our souls began to shrivel. We forgot that we had been created in the image of God and that we had living souls that also had appetites. These appetites could only be satisfied by a faith and a communion with God.

We made money; we acquired knowledge; we developed scientifically, until one day we found ourselves with hydrogen bombs in our hands without the ability to control them, and until Sir Winston Churchill said:

"We have progressed scientifically and materially, but we have lagged far behind morally, and now our problems have gone beyond us." When Sir Winston asked on the floor of the House of Commons: "Is there an answer?" he sat down without answering the question, because I think even the world's greatest statesman wasn't sure that there was an answer.

We faced a dilemma: the problem of full heads but empty souls. We had departed from the idea of God. We had reared a whole generation by telling them we even doubted that there was a God. Certainly we didn't believe in accepting Him, following Him and serving Him; and morals, instead of being absolute, became relative. Instead of saying that certain things are right and certain things are wrong, and making it clearly white and black, we made it all a dull gray. We said that you could lie and cheat and be dishonest-and we called it "good business."

So our moral standard began to break down, and we began to see the symptoms of this moral breakdown in our society: it broke out into juvenile delinquency, racial hatreds, prejudice and bigotry. All the vast problems that we face today have come about because we have starved the souls of men. Men desire something more than bread to eat, and we remember the words of one of long ago who said: "Man shall not live by bread alone." We need more than bread, we need more than gadgets, ice boxes, automobiles and airplanes.

Why would a beautiful young movie star in Hollywood, at the age of twenty-nine, with a million dollars in the bank, a beautiful face, her name known all over the world, try to commit suicide?

Why would a Texas millionaire, with a hundred million dollars in oil reserves, bow his head the other day and say, "I am the most miserable man in Texas"?

I ask some of you here today . . . you have prestige, you have money; but you haven't found inward peace and happiness and security in your own life-why? You have everything to make a person happy, according to the textbooks, but you haven't found the inward peace you are looking for. Why? Because you have forgotten one thing: you have forgotten you are also a soul created in the image of Almighty God, and that soul, as Saint Augustine said long ago, is restless until it rests in God.

So we produced an age of frustration. Everybody is frustrated. There is nervous tension. I think if historians write up this age, they will call it the Vitamin Capsule Age. We are taking aspirin by the million. In the United States we are taking over three million sleeping tablets every month to go to sleep at night, and then we are taking dexedrine to wake us up in the morning. We have every type of tablet you can possibly think of.

This is an age of selfishness, an age of fear. Look at the titles of the best sellers: The Decline of the West, The Decay and Restoration of Civilization, Civilization on Trial, The End of Our Time, The Crisis of Our Age, The Crisis of Civilization, The Annihilation of Man, The Abolition of Man.

Professor Albert Webber has said: "We are now at the end of history, and we know it."

William Voght, in his Road to Survival, says: "The day of judgment is at hand."

Pessimistic titles! We missed it somewhere. Where did we miss it? We have accepted alternatives to religion and all around us we view the ruins of the secular state offered to humanity as a substitute for religion.

Five years ago, before Mr. Eisenhower's inauguration as President, I had the privilege of being invited to the Commodore Hotel in New York City. I came in, and there sat the man who was to be President of the United States. He got up and greeted me and then went to the window for a full minute. When he turned around, he said: "Billy, do you know why I believe I have been elected President?"

I said, "I think I know several reasons, Sir."

He said: "I think one of them is to help lead America in a religious revival which we must have."

Some time ago it was my privilege to spend forty minutes alone with Sir Winston Churchill when he was Prime Minister at his office at Number 10 Downing Street. In the midst of that conversation he made this statement: "We must have a religious renaissance."

Arnold Toynbee, the great British historian, has said that only a revival of Christianity can save us.

If this is true - and the President has said it, the Prime Minister has said it, the Historian has said it, the scientists are saying it, then I say to you today that you and I, as ordinary citizens, had better be about it! It is the only way out of our dilemma. If the only way for the survival of our boys and girls, the next generation, is a religious revival, we had better be about it in every way we can.

But there is another reason, and that is that you and I have everlasting souls that are accountable to Almighty God. If you are to find peace for the rest of the days of your life, and peace in those last moments and in that hour when you shall stand before your Maker, you had better do something about it!

There was a Man-He wasn't an ordinary man, He was different from any man who ever lived-who came along two thousand years ago and said: "I have an answer." He gave to us in the Sermon on the Mount the greatest moral and social document the world has ever known, but we have never been able to live up to it. Oh, we have tried, but we have failed Why? Because we find no strength within ourselves to live up to it. Everyone has tried to live up to the Sermon on the Mount at some period in his life, but failed. You have no strength, you are not man enough, because when you want to do good, you do bad, and there is something that seems to pull you down all the time and makes you do the things you really don't want to do.

What is it? What is the answer? We forgot one thing this Man said. He was born a man, but He was the God-Man, walking in human flesh; and He said this: "Ye must be born again." What did He mean by this? That is a strange statement. He said it to an educated man, to an intellectual. He said it to a great leader. He said to Nicodemus: "Ye must be born again." He said that human nature must have a renaissance, a turn-about, it must be changed.

You find lying, cheating, bigotry, greed, hatred and immorality wherever you go. Go to India, go to China . . . I defy you to go any place in the world where you don't find these things. It is a disease of human nature, and the Bible calls it sin. Jesus Christ said that a man must be born again, he must have a change of human nature, he must be transformed. And Jesus said that He could do it.

You say, "Well, Billy, that is too simple." I know it sounds simple, and it also sounds illogical, and it may not be very academic.

Nicodemus asked Jesus: "How can these things be?" Jesus answered: Marvel not, Nicodemus, you will never understand it. And then the word that followed is faith. "Faith" is used ninety-two times in one book

of the Bible alone. And by faith, the Bible promises, if we receive Christ into our hearts as Saviour, Lord and Master, we can have our lives changed and transformed.

When I first heard that I; laughed, as some of you are smiling inside now, although I knew that human nature needed a transformation. The necessity of the re-birth was taught by Wesley and Whitefield, and it led Britain into a religious revival that saved Britain from a bloody revolution such as France was having-almost all historians agree to that. It was an old word that John Whitefield and John Wesley used over and over again: "Ye must be born again." What was meant by that? I laughed at it-I said it couldn't happen.

Then one day I said: I am going to give it a trial. So one night, without emotion (it is not an emotional experience, though it can be), very calmly and very quietly I said: All right, God, I am going to give You a trial. I am going to do what You said to do. I am going to tell You I am willing. I don't have the strength, but I am willing to turn from my, sins, and I am really ready to open my heart to You.

When I did that, something happened in my life. I can't explain it to you, I can't analyze it, I can't put it in a test tube. But I will give you one illustration. I come from the part of the country where men look with bias on those who have different coloured skins than they have, and there is discrimination. When I received Christ, I began to look through different eyes at men of different races, and the colour was gone. There was one of God's creatures, no matter what colour skin or shape of nose he had, and the racial prejudice was gone. I began to love instead of to be prejudiced. My life was changed. It didn't become perfect, and it is not perfect today, but I realized I had a new strength, a new power and a new dynamic for living that gave me the ability to say "No" to temptations that normally come. I had found a new resource.

It wasn't the type of religion that gives one a long face and droopy shoulders. It put a smile on my face, it gave me a spring in my step, a joy in my soul, and the happiness and the peace I longed and looked for.

I have seen men of every walk of life try it. I have seen lords and ladies and royalty, I have seen congressmen and senators, I have seen university professors give their lives to Christ. It has happened right here in Toronto in the last few days. One of your professors at the University of Toronto shook my hand last night and said: "Billy, for the last five days I have been living! I didn't know what living was. I would have laughed at this whole thing two weeks ago, but my life is different. I can't explain it. Some of my friends laugh at me, but my life is different."

Why? Because you are a soul, as well as a body and a mind, you will never find an inward joy, peace, forgiveness and sense of security with God until your soul has been satisfied; and your soul cannot be satisfied apart from God.

Now, how would that affect world affairs, you ask. This is an Empire Club . . . we are interested in discussing political and economic affairs. How can that solve the problems of the world?

Let me ask you this: Do you see any solution during the next hundred years to the problems we face the way we are going? How many of you would agree with me when I tell you that as long as men lie and hate and cheat, as long as there is prejudice and greed in the world, there is the possibility that at X point, somewhere out there, some madman will push a button and make the whole world his funeral pyre? Don't you think Hitler would have done it in his last days if he had had the power?

All right. Suppose we could give the whole world an injection of love instead of hate, suppose we could find a serum we could give the human race that would change them over night . . . do you know any serum like that? It is certainly not education alone, because it was the educated in the civilized nations who fought it out in the last war-it wasn't the primitive nations.

Do you know any answer? The answer I am giving today you may not accept-that is your privilege. It is one answer. I believe it is the answer: that human nature can be transformed. Your life can be transformed. If enough people receive Christ and have their lives transformed by His power, I believe it would make an impact on world affairs.

I am not in favour of war, but neither am I in favour of appeasement. I am in favour of a third force that is very rarely mentioned: I am in favour of gathering such a spiritual and moral force in the world that it will make its weight felt in the affairs of men, that we will have such a religious renaissance in the Western World-and in the whole world, for that matter-that we will demand of our leaders "peace in our time". I believe it can be done. I believe there are many evidences that it is happening in Great Britain, it is happening in Germany, it is happening in the United States, and I believe it is happening in Canada, because men today are beginning to turn back to God, back to the church and back to the Bible. I believe it is the only road out of the confusion and bewilderment that we face today.

There is a picture of a chess game hanging in Paris. On one side of the painting is the Devil, and on the other side is a lad about sixteen years of age. They are playing chess. The Devil has a leering, triumphant expression on his face. He has just licked this boy at chess, and the boy is sitting there with his head bowed and big tears trickling down his cheeks. The Devil has just won in the game of life over this lad. He has no strength, he has no way out, and he has given up. The title of the picture is "Check Mate". He had him.

A famous chess player came through one day. He looked at the painting. He felt sorry for the boy and he hated the looks of the Devil. He began to study the board where the men were placed, and all of a sudden he shouted: "Son, I have found a move, one move . . . if you will make that move you can lick the Devil." He forgot himself, he forgot it was a painting-he was so engrossed in it.

We see all the men of chess in the game of life there, and in some of our lives it seems the Devil has almost got us. We look at the whole world picture ... it seems dark at times with its little bright intervals, but by and large the basic issues have not changed, in spite of the recent smiles on both sides of the Iron Curtain. We see the shadow of the hydrogen bomb and all the vast and terrible weapons being created behind scientific laboratories, and, as we look into the future of the next two or three generations, it seems that we are almost ready to say "Check Mate."

But I believe there is One looking down from above who looks upon the board and says to you and me: There is a move, there is one move that you can make, and you can win! That move is toward Jesus Christ. You can make that move today in your own souls.

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