

# Billy Graham: My Moment of Decision

I'll never forget my first year in high school. Babe Ruth, the great "king of swat," came to my hometown of Charlotte, N.C., to play an exhibition game. All of us were on the front seats shouting and yelling at the top of our lungs.

My father, who had taken us to the game, arranged for me to shake hands with the great Babe. I will never forget the thrill of shaking hands with the fellow who was the idol of all our young hearts. I didn't wash my hand for about three days. The next day at school, I was the envy of all my friends.

During my last years in high school, my keenest ambition was to be a professional baseball player. I dreamed of playing in Wrigley Field in Chicago and Yankee Stadium in New York. I "ate up" the sports pages.

When I was 16, after finishing a game, I was invited to a church. I was told that a "fighting preacher" was to preach. I was interested, for anything about a scrap or a fight was all I wanted. I forsook my studies and went to church. To my amazement, it was a great evangelistic campaign, and 5,000 people were gathered.

I sat in the rear of the building, curiously watching all the strange happenings. I wasn't quite sure what would take place next. I had always thought of religion as more or less "sissy stuff," and that a fellow who was going to be an athlete would have no time for such things. It was all right for old men and girls, but not for real "he-men" with red blood in their veins. I had gone to church some, but that was all.

A great giant of a man stood and began to preach in such a way as I had never heard a man preach. Halfway through his message

he pointed right in my direction and said, "Young man, you are a sinner."

I thought he was talking to me, so I ducked behind the person in front of me and hid my face! The idea of his calling me a sinner!

"Why, I'm as good as anybody," I told myself. "I live a good, clean, healthy, moral life. I'm even a member of a church, though I seldom go."

But then he began to quote Scripture. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10), and others. For the first time in my life I realized I was a sinner, that my soul was bound for hell and that I indeed needed a Savior.

But when he gave the invitation, I rushed out into the night and made my way home.

I'll never forget the struggle that followed. All night long I wrestled and fought. The next day I could hardly wait for evening, so I could get back to the service. This night I sat near the front.

When the preacher got up this time, he seemed to smile at me. He said in tenderest tones that "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

I thought, "This is for me! I'm a sinner. God loves me."

When the invitation was given I made my way to the front with others. I gave my hand to the preacher (Mordecai Ham) and my heart to the Savior. Immediately joy, peace and assurance flooded my soul. My sins, which were many, I knew were gone. For the first time I had met the Person who became the hero of my life.

I had sought thrills! I found them in Christ. I had looked for

something that would bring pleasure and that would satisfy the deepest longing of my heart! I found it in Christ. "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11).

Christ is the hero and idol of my heart. He challenges, thrills and satisfies. "Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them." (Hebrews 7:25, NIV).