

Franklin Graham: God Allowed Donald Trump to Win

The Rev. Franklin Graham isn't sure which Scripture he'll read at the Jan. 20 inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump.

The evangelist and head of both the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Christian international relief organization Samaritan's Purse won't get to make remarks at the event, but he will get to pick his own Bible passage, which could say a lot.

Will it be something hopeful to heal a divided nation? Something pointed about the importance of praying for leaders?

Graham was praying about that Thursday (Dec. 29), he told RNS, the day after it was announced he is one of six clergy chosen to offer the invocation, benediction and several readings at the swearing-in ceremony.

"You want it to be meaningful not only to your president-elect, but you want it to be meaningful also to the nation," Graham said.

"I'm taking time just to pray and ask God to give me wisdom and guidance, because it's a responsibility I take very seriously."

This is the third inauguration Graham will have attended, he noted. The first was to assist his father Billy Graham at the second inaugural of President Bill Clinton in 1997; the second, to offer the invocation at the first inaugural of President George W. Bush in 2001.

It follows his Decision America Tour, during which he held rallies in each of the 50 U.S. state capitals to urge evangelical Christians to pray about the upcoming election and

vote for candidates of any party who agree with their values.

Weeks before launching the tour, Graham announced he had resigned from the Republican Party and declared himself an independent. And he was careful to note throughout the campaign that he endorsed neither Trump, a Republican, nor Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton.

But, he said, he got the sense “God was going to do something in our country—just from the people coming early in the day, standing in hot sun, standing in freezing cold, standing in snow, standing in rain, and they came to pray. They didn’t come to hear me. They came to pray for their nation.”

Graham has had some supportive words for Trump, noting the president-elect has surrounded himself from the start with a number of evangelical Christians in a way he said Clinton didn’t. That included Vice President-elect Mike Pence; his choice to lead the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Ben Carson; Liberty University President Jerry Falwell Jr.; and former Arkansas governor and Baptist minister Mike Huckabee.

“Even though Donald Trump has some rough edges, there’s something inside of him that desires the counsel of Christian men and women, and I don’t know one Christian on Hillary Clinton’s team,” he said.

Clinton has spoken openly about her United Methodist faith. And asked about her choice of running mate, Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine, who volunteered with Jesuit missionaries in Honduras as a young man, Graham said the Democrat had difficulty connecting with evangelical Christians in the same way because he was Catholic and because of his party’s support for abortion rights and same-sex marriage.

He also pointed to the list of potential Supreme Court justices the Trump campaign had released, saying, as he had before the election, “It’s not about her emails. It’s not

about his bad language. It's about the Supreme Court ... and who do you trust to appoint judges that are going to be in favor of Christian liberty?"

"I think maybe God has allowed Donald Trump to win this election to protect this nation for the next few years by giving maybe an opportunity to have some good judges," he said.

It's not the first time Graham expressed his belief God had played a role in the results of the November election. He tweeted earlier this month suggesting it was God, not Russia, who had interfered with the outcome.

In an interview Thursday, he said he doesn't know if Russia hacked the election, and he doesn't presume to know how God works. But he knows God answers prayer.

And, Graham said, "All I know is Donald Trump was supposed to lose the election," according to projections of the results.

"For these states to go the way they did, in my opinion, I think it was the hand of God," he said. "It wasn't hacking. It wasn't Wiki-leaky or whatever. It was God, in my opinion, and I believe His hand was at work, and I think He's given Christians an opportunity." {eo}

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