

While Preaching, Billy Graham Once Wrestled Over What Bible Teaches, Son Admits

Many people have asked how my father is doing. He is a little bit stronger, and his vitals continue to be good. It seems the heat of the summer has been good for him.

Sixty-five years ago this August was a pivotal time in my father's life. In fact, my son Will Graham recently traveled to San Bernardino, California, to help commemorate, on behalf of my father and me, a decisive step of faith that occurred at Forest Home Conference Center that summer of 1949. My father was 30 years old and preaching around the country. Another young preacher he knew had been questioning whether the Bible was truly and entirely the authoritative Word of God.

The issues this preacher raised began to trouble my father. Although he never doubted the truth of the Gospel, he wrestled over whether he could fully believe everything the Bible teaches. He even started wondering if his questions might cause him to give up preaching. He took his struggle with him when he traveled to California, where he was scheduled to speak at Forest Home in August and then begin a citywide tent crusade in Los Angeles a few weeks later.

Late one night at Forest Home, discouraged and unable to sleep because of the burden that filled his mind, he got up and went out into the moonlight for a walk. In the nearby woods he came upon a tree stump, and he opened his Bible and laid it on the stump. Then he poured out the agony of his heart to God. He knew the matter had to be resolved one way or the other. Finally he knelt in the shadows by the stump with the Bible open before him and prayed, "Father, I am going to accept this as Thy Word—by faith! I will believe this to be Your inspired

Word.” At that moment, he later said, he felt the burden lift and sensed the freedom and power of the Holy Spirit in and around him.

This same struggle stirs within many people today. There are voices across our land that emphasize parts of the Word of God while minimizing scriptures that make them uncomfortable. As I contemplate the havoc this creates within the church, I am reminded of an old Bible teacher, now in heaven, who once told me that the best way to interpret Scripture is with other passages of Scripture. The Bible is true from cover to cover. “This Book ... shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success” (Joshua 1:8, NKJV).

I am convinced that my father’s commitment by faith to the Word of God was the key to what happened next in his ministry. At the time, he was a young, relatively little-known evangelist. A few weeks later, when the Los Angeles tent crusade got under way, God began to pour out blessings in ways no one could have imagined. The response to the gospel exceeded anything my father and his small team had ever seen up to that point, and God used that crusade to open a flood of opportunities to preach the glorious Good News of Jesus Christ in cities all over the nation and around the world.

Sometimes I think about that stump where my father laid his Bible. Many people feel that their lives have become a lot like a stump—cut down—and there’s nothing they can do. But God can renew and use anyone who, in faith, holds fast to His Word. The Bible says, “There is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its tender shoots will not cease” (Job 14:7). When you give yourself 100 percent to following God’s direction, there is no end to what He can do through you.

This summer I hope you can arrange an opportunity to get away from the distractions of daily life, spend some in-depth time in the Bible, and pour your heart out to the Lord in prayer—whether in repentance for sin, recommitment to obey His Word, or seeking renewal and fresh direction for your life. Remember also to thank Him for His faithfulness and to pray by name for the salvation of loved ones and friends who need Jesus Christ in their lives.

My father can no longer take walks or kneel in the woods to pray. His eyesight has dimmed, and his conversations are brief. But I can tell you that he kneels in spirit to the Lord as he prays for lost souls and looks forward to eternal fellowship with His Savior in heaven someday. Because he will be 96 on November 7, his thoughts are constantly on heaven, and we have captured these in a video that the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association is excited about airing this November through the nationwide *My Hope 2014* outreach. It's a powerful evangelistic film that weaves this new message from my father on heaven around several real-life stories of how the gospel changes hearts.

There are people you know and people all over America who do not yet understand that the only way to heaven is through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. They need to hear this message, and we ask for your help to make that happen. Be sure your pastor and others in your church know about *My Hope 2014 with Billy Graham*.

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