

Billy Graham's Grandson Urges Church to 'Wake Up'

In Ferguson, Missouri, burned buildings still lay in piles of rubble, a silent testament to the violence that engulfed the city following the death of Michael Brown and the subsequent grand jury decision.

A crossbeam that once held a roof aloft now sits crookedly on the ground, spray painted with the simple words, "Jesus Help Us!"

On Sunday, Jan. 25, hundreds of Christians of various races from across Ferguson and the greater St. Louis area joined with area pastors and political leaders to cry out with the same message. This gathering, called "We Are One," focused on repentance, reconciliation and unity.

From the very beginning of the event, the name of Jesus was lifted up as the answer to racism.

Will Graham, grandson of Billy Graham, joined with Dr. Tony Evans of Dallas, Bishop Harry Jackson Jr. of Washington, D.C., Aeneas Williams (NFL Hall of Famer and St. Louis area pastor) and others in calling those in the audience to draw their hope and truth from Christ alone.

During his allotted time near the beginning of the program, Will Graham urged repentance.

"As a church we've lost our first love. Instead of putting Jesus Christ at the forefront of everything we do, we put ourselves up front," Graham said. "My friends, we need to repent. As leaders, how can we ever expect to have the community experience repentance if we don't repent ourselves?"

"The church has fallen asleep. It's not just a problem in

Ferguson, or a problem in St. Louis, or in America, but around the world.”

Paraphrasing Romans 13:11, Graham proclaimed, “Now is the time to wake out of that sleep!”

Aeneas Williams, who is well known for intercepting passes and entering the Pro Football Hall of Fame, is the pastor of The Spirit Church in St. Louis. He brought the same passion he once displayed on the gridiron when he spoke from the pulpit at “We Are One.”

“We shall unify! We shall—in our own generation—be a part of the generation of people that bring law enforcement together, that bring all ethnicities together,” said Williams. “We’re not going to leave here and pass on the baton of division to the next generation!”

Dr. Tony Evans, who pastors Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, provided the keynote message and called upon the audience and churches to be united as one in Jesus Christ and to impact the world around them.

He shared an anecdote of a couple that was in a car accident. The man feared his fiancée would bleed to death, but he found a home nearby with a sign hanging from it announcing the doctor who lived there. After answering the door, the doctor rebuffed the wounded couple, saying he was no longer practicing, despite the sign by the door.

Evans then made the connection to the church today, as society is bleeding. “It’s time now for Ferguson to make a choice. Either be what we say we are, or take down the sign. Don’t say I’m a church, but be segregated. Don’t say I’m a church and be racist. Don’t say I’m a church, and be full of injustice! Either take down your sign, or be the real thing!”

Will Graham and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association were invited to be a part of the program due to the ministry

efforts of the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team following the riots that engulfed Ferguson. Over the course of several weeks from late November 2014 to early January 2015, some 81 crisis-trained chaplains prayed with more than 1,500 people from in and around the community.