

America Shall Be Saved!

Don't believe the window of opportunity for our nation is closing? Tell that to evangelistic giants Reinhard Bonnke and Billy Graham, who, along with other evangelists, are focusing on Americans' spiritual salvation like never before.

Reinhard Bonnke moved to the United States to make an evangelistic film series—or so he thought. In 2001 the world-renowned evangelist was involved with major Hollywood players Universal Studios and Lucas Films in creating the Full Flame Film Series, which aimed to ignite Christians worldwide with a passion for the lost and equip them with key evangelistic principles. Relocating his ministry and personal home to America, then, seemed natural.

Yet for the man known as “the Billy Graham of Africa” whose ministry has led a staggering 74 million people to Christ, his heart was still in Africa. Bonnke had been called to the continent from Germany as a 9-year-old and had spent his life since 1967 reaching the lost in various African nations. Still believing Africa was his God-given assignment, he felt America was primarily a place to rest his head and conduct the administrative—and fundraising—aspects of his ministry, Christ for all Nations (CfaN).

That all changed in the middle of last year.

“I always thought God had sent me here [to America] for the sake of preaching the gospel in Africa,” Bonnke says. “But the Lord spoke to my heart and said, ‘I did not just send you to America for America to be the offering plate to Africa. I’ve sent you to America for the sake of America. She also needs the gospel desperately.’”

That may be an understatement in the eyes of a growing number of evangelists redirecting their entire ministry focus in an acute attempt to save America. Most sense a divine directive

from God like never before—with an added belief that this nation's window of opportunity is quickly closing.

Many with international ministries have scaled back on global initiatives to allocate more resources to reaching their home country. Although CfaN is an exception to this—its operations in Africa continue to expand and its founder still preaches there regularly—Bonnke has taken it upon himself to lead the stateside push.

He's not alone.

Crisis Point

"My heart aches for America and its deceived people," Billy Graham wrote last year in a sobering letter to the nation that began with a story about his late wife, Ruth. Years ago, after reading a section in one of her husband's books lamenting the country's downward spiral, she responded with a now-famous yet searing statement: "If God doesn't punish America, He'll have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah."

In what could be his final book, *The Reason for My Hope*, releasing next month, Graham acknowledges that things have grown even worse since his wife spoke those words.

"Not long ago, when the most precious human institution—marriage—came under brutal attack in my home state of North Carolina, I wondered what Ruth would think of America if she were alive today," he says. "In the few short years that she's been gone, our nation has wandered further down the moral ladder. ... There was a time when other nations looked up to the United States and desired to emulate what made America great. It wasn't prosperity and living the American dream that made America great but reverence for God and living according to His Word. The results were untold blessings. God used America to spread the gospel to the world. Now we see many of its citizens shaking their fists in the face of Almighty God."

Indeed, the spiritual and moral decline of this nation has reached an unprecedented low, as each month seems to usher in new evidence of our defiance against God. To put our so-called cultural “progress” in perspective, consider that in the past five months alone America has moved closer to legalizing same-sex marriage across the land, has hailed the first professional team sports athlete to come out of the closet as the “new Jackie Robinson,” has forced Christian organizations to sponsor abortion, has praised a vote from the Boy Scouts that now openly welcomes gays and has threatened to court-martial any Christian soldiers who share their faith.

God bless America?

“No question, we’re in a spiritual crisis,” says Franklin Graham, son of Billy and Ruth and president and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA). “We see it at the very top of our country, from the White House to Congress. We have turned our back on God as a nation. [We think] God’s laws don’t apply, and our government doesn’t want God’s standards.”

For some Christian leaders, however, the lament over America’s decline has shifted into a full-fledged death knell.

“Without divine intervention, what we call America will be gone within the next couple of years. It’s that critical,” evangelist Rodney Howard-Browne says, citing personal government connections with behind-the-scenes evidence he’s gained of an imminent economic collapse and crackdown on religious liberties. “The handwriting is on the wall. Only God can save us now. This is not a game. If we don’t see a turn in the next two or three years, America as we know it will sink into the abyss and will be gone forever.”

Of course, this sense of an impending downfall—what most agree is God’s protection and blessing being lifted from the nation—is nothing new, nor is it relegated to Christian

circles. With increased frequency, secular news outlets such as Fox News and CNN mention a “countdown to Armageddon” not only in Middle East-related stories, but also in reference to America. Even *The New York Times*’ best-seller list proves that Americans have heard—or at least read—the prophetic warnings, as books such as Jonathan Cahn’s *The Harbinger* and Joel Rosenberg’s *Implosion* have topped the charts since 2012 (with *The Harbinger* remaining there an astounding 80-plus weeks and counting as of press time).

What *is* new, however, is the evangelistic blitz emerging this fall as world-renowned evangelists such as Billy Graham and Bonnke lead the way for what could be a final large-scale effort to save America.

Another Africa

In Bonnke’s case, Sept. 27-28 marks a pivotal weekend, one the 73-year-old evangelist prays will set a precedence for his ministry’s future plans in the U.S. Held in Orlando, Fla., the location of CfaN’s headquarters, the Good News Orlando crusade will launch Bonnke’s first effort in the ministry’s 39-year history to hold evangelistic crusades across America as he has done so successfully in Africa. Though Bonnke hopes to pack out the 20,000-seat Amway Arena in downtown Orlando, his vision is bigger—which isn’t surprising from a man who in 2000 saw more than 1.6 million people gather for a single meeting in Lagos, Nigeria.

“God spoke to me that the time has come for a mighty wave of salvation to sweep the U.S. from city to city, from state to state and from coast to coast,” says Bonnke, who recently became an American citizen. “I’ve seen God shake whole nations in Africa—nations I thought God had given up on suddenly were in the grip of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And then I came to the only conclusion one can come to: I have turned into an incurable believer that God is able to do the same in America than what I’ve seen done in Africa. I’ve seen

it. I've experienced it. I've got witnesses by the millions that this is the truth. And I will not join the choir of the prophets of doom and gloom. This day is the day of salvation!"

In February, Bonnke proclaimed at a two-day meeting in his hometown of Vero Beach, Fla., that "America shall be saved!" He also sensed the Holy Spirit leading him to announce the beginning of something greater.

"We started in Vero Beach, which is a small town with 14,000 inhabitants, and we had up to 5,000 people per service, and it was wonderful," he says. "And then the Lord spoke to me that I should go to Orlando. ... From there, we'll go from city to city, whether it's Houston or New Orleans or wherever. We will go from coast to coast and proclaim it, and I believe the momentum will be so great that we will fill the biggest stadiums in Jesus' name."

Part of Bonnke's fervency stems from a belief that God is extending mercy to America because of the many years this nation funded most of the global church's efforts to share the Good News with unbelievers. But Bonnke has no plans to change his method or style of delivering the gospel message to cater to American audiences, believing the key to changing this nation begins the same way it does anywhere else: with the proclamation of the gospel.

... And It Starts With the Church

Mention this point—that preaching the gospel is a necessary precursor for an awakening—to Steve Hill, the Brownsville Revival evangelist, and you're likely to get a tear-filled response that blends desperation with lament. Like Howard Browne, who has spent the last 20-plus years dedicated to awakening America, Hill believes this nation has already had enough warnings and has made its decision to willingly turn from God. The only hope, Hill believes, is at a grass-roots level—with believers declaring the gospel of salvation on an

individual basis like never before.

The problem, Hill says, is that most American Christians are as apathetic as unbelievers in actually doing something to change the nation's course.

"[The evangelists] are like the angels that came running into Sodom and warned them, 'Get out! Get out! Get out!'" he says. "Jesus, before He left this planet, said things like, 'Remember Lot's wife,' and, 'As in the days of Noah, so shall it be.' But we're not like that; instead, we just think, *Que sera, sera*."

Franklin Graham echoes this concern and, like Hill, sees a stark difference in the American church's fervency compared to believers elsewhere.

"Our churches are in a spiritual crisis," he says. "In working with churches around the world, there is a sense universally that the Lord Jesus is about to appear on the horizon ... that if we are going to reach our brothers and sisters and our neighbors and friends and colleagues with the gospel, we better do it now because we may never have another opportunity. There is an urgency that we should get the job done."

"But I don't think our churches in this country have the same sense as churches around the world. ... There's not a strong desire for evangelism today as it was 20 or 30 years ago. This is a great burden to me to see that our churches have lost that zeal—that desire to see the unsaved get saved."

A Message (and Model) of Hope

It's troubling enough to both Franklin and Billy Graham—whom Franklin says "has as much of a burden today to see lost sinners get saved as he's ever had"—that the BGEA has now applied its highly successful international model to America in hopes that the church will awaken to the need for

evangelism.

My Hope America With Billy Graham will culminate during the week of Nov. 3-9, coinciding with Graham's 95th birthday, with a nationwide outreach effort that involves no stadiums, arenas or outdoor festivals. The centerpiece of this mass evangelism effort? A believer's living room and a TV.

Those tools have been key for the My Hope campaign in 57 countries since 2002, resulting in at least 13 million documented decisions for Christ. Whereas the BGEA's primary evangelistic vehicle before was stadium events, the My Hope model delivers the same gospel message—via a video broadcast of a prerecorded Billy Graham crusade—to an exponentially larger audience.

It starts with believers listing and praying for any unsaved family members, friends, neighbors or associates. Those willing to go beyond this can become "Matthews" who host gatherings in which they invite those they've prayed for to their home for a meal or coffee and then watch the special 30-minute broadcast together. Once the airing is over, the host simply asks: "Would you like to receive Christ just as Billy Graham has asked you to do?"

"This is mass evangelism, one living room at a time," Franklin Graham says. "Does people coming to a stadium still work? Absolutely. But we're talking about something bigger, where hundreds of thousands of homes on one night are praying for their unsaved family and friends, where hundreds of thousands of people are asking at one time. Just think what God might do to this country if something like that happens."

The BGEA team first took note of this approach in El Salvador, where after seeing 5,000 to 6,000 decisions for Christ from a live crusade, the My Hope model yielded 35,000 the following year. They applied the same technique in other Central American countries—buying TV air time, lip-synching a Billy

Graham message in the local language, and adding local testimonies and local musicians—and instantly found similar success.

The tipping point was in Colombia, where they added a training component in which local churches would teach lay people to share their testimonies. Rather than believers being trained to counsel and lead others to Jesus in a stadium environment, now they would simply pray with friends and family members in the comfort of their own homes. The four-night run in September 2004 resulted in an astounding 700,000 people committing their lives to Christ.

Yet Franklin Graham is quick to point out that, along with following the Holy Spirit's movement, preparation and training played key roles in their largest campaign to date.

"Evangelism doesn't just happen. It takes effort. It takes planning. It takes strategic planning and a real effort to win the lost," he says. "And that's what I hope we can see this year, where we see churches in America getting the vision again for reaching the unsaved."

Since December, the BGEA has hosted hundreds of leadership and training meetings in almost 50 major U.S. cities, and as of early August, more than 16,000 churches are participating in the My Hope effort.

The Final Act or Another Awakening?

Whether through a massive stadium crusade like Bonnke's or a broader yet more grass-roots approach like Billy Graham's, the twofold goal is the same: to rescue as many people in America as possible, regardless of the country's ongoing descent into ruin; and to awaken the church to the task at hand. Yet regardless of whether the American church rises from her slumber, the significance of two evangelistic giants honing in on this nation at the same time—for identical reasons and with an identical sense of urgency—is not to be lost.

Neither is the similar shift in evangelistic ministries of all sizes, ranging from those of Howard-Browne to Hill to Greg Laurie (whose Harvest America crusade runs the same weekend as Bonnke's) to prayer leader Lou Engle. Months ago, the founder of TheCall opened the Ekballo House of Prayer in Pasadena, Calif., where a small community of intercessors now prays continuously for "the Lord of the harvest to send out [ekballo in Greek] laborers into His harvest" (Matt. 9:38). Though Engle's new launch doesn't exclusively focus on evangelizing America, the core vision of Ekballo is the calling forth—through prayer—of a generation of missionaries and evangelists who will venture into the global harvest field.

It's that next generation, birthed amid a previous generation's cries for another national awakening, that Bonnke sees when he envisions America's future. Why is he hopeful, despite the increasing prophetic warnings and signs of God's hand being lifted from our nation? Because the gospel, as the evangelist loves—and lives—to proclaim, truly is good news.

"God has given us that glorious gospel, and as we proclaim it, it's going to work. It's going to be effective," he says. "If we preach the original gospel, we will have original results. If we preach what the apostles preach, we will have the results the apostles had. ... But evangelism must always lead into the church. This is a central truth I have practiced everywhere. I, the evangelist, bring my nets and borrow the boats of the local churches. Together we will cast the net into the human ocean and pull it in, to be emptied on the beach. My promise to you is not to take a single fish but leave them all with the local churches. Then I will dry and mend my nets and move to the next place.

"I believe that those people who have a burden for America to be saved and for God to send another awakening from coast to coast, we will move together. We will stand together. We will forget our logos and egos, as Bill Bright used to say, and we'll say, 'Yes, here we are at the foot of the cross.' Jesus

will fulfill His work for America to be saved.”

Clearly, God has set the stage for what could be the final act of America’s dramatic story. The climax is nearing, the tension higher than ever. And though the enemy seems to be winning, having backed the main character into a corner, all that remains is that she—a slumbering church—awakens to play her part.



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Reinhard Bonnke explains why now is the time for him to bring the gospel to the United States. Visit for more.

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