

Evangelist Billy Graham Still Making Impact at 95

Billy Graham, one of the most well-known and beloved evangelists in American history, turned 95 Thursday. And while he has not actively preached messages to mass audiences since 2009, Graham continues to make a major impact on American culture. The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association recently launched one of its boldest campaigns ever, My Hope With Billy Graham, to bring the gospel to lost souls of this country in chaotic and perilous times.

Below is an interview Graham did in 1952 with Robert Walker, then the editor of *Christian Life* magazine, about the presidential election of that year featuring Dwight D. Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson. At the time, the election was said to be one of the most crucial in American history concerning the future of the country.

Here is the 1952 text article in its entirety:

Billy Graham on the Election

It is scriptural to be actively interested in political affairs. The unconcerned are contributing to the decline of our country.

Whether you like it or not, you—as a Christian—are deeply involved in politics. At least this is the view of Billy Graham, world evangelist and interpreter of things Christopolitical to a nation-wide radio and TV audience.

If you take an active interest in local and national government, you are acting on a Scriptural basis. If such events give you little concern, you are unintentionally contributing to the moral and spiritual decline of your country, says Graham.

This interview was electronically recorded in the Chicago editorial office of *Christian Life* magazine.

Question: Do you believe there is any special significance for Christians in the coming presidential election?

Answer: Yes, definitely. I believe this country is facing today one of the most serious and crucial elections in its history. I do not believe there has ever been a time—even in the days prior to the Civil War—that we as Americans have gone to the polls with greater issues than those at stake in the coming presidential election.

Question: What are your reasons for this assertion?

Answer: Simply because I am convinced that the direction we take from this point on will determine not only the ultimate fate of our nation, but also the fate of the entire democratic world as we know it today. I have been in Europe seven times since the war. On those visits I have talked with military men, statesmen, and religious leaders. Their convictions are probably best summed up by the British historian Arnold J. Toynbee when he says, "The future of the world rests with the United States."

Question: Is there any single factor in connection with the coming election which you believe will affect our nation—and hence the world—more than any other?

Answer: Yes. It is the drift toward the socialistic or materialistic solution for problems. For instance, in my travels abroad I have discovered that Americans are not as popular as they used to be. Nor am I alone in my observations. I have talked with others who have traveled even more widely than I. They agree, too, that our effort to buy friendships all over the world with dollar bills is having a reverse effect.

This is only logical. In our foreign policy we have forgotten that men are spiritual and moral creatures. Hence, when we make a materialistic approach, we get only a materialistic answer. About the only thanks we get for such help is a request for more. Unless we change this policy, we will not only lose faith in our own sense of values, but drag the whole world down with us.

Question: What do you think should be done?

Answer: Instead of sending only material aid to foreign countries, we should send spiritual help as well. There is a great spiritual vacuum abroad that we are doing nothing to fill. No money out of the billions we are giving away is being allocated to meet the spiritual needs of Europe. Take Great Britain as a case in point. This has been a country of church-going people. Today, however, only eight per cent of the British people are identified with any church. Less than five per cent attend church.

Britain today is bogged down in a spiritual depression coupled with an economic pressure. In my opinion, this can very well lead to Marxist-socialism, which is only a hairline from communism. But unless we couple this physical aid with spiritual help, the economic assistance will be in vain.

After all, we must remember that man does not live by bread alone. He must have the consciousness of an abiding heavenly Father Who loves and cares for him in order to be well-balanced enough to face the problem of successful living in our world today.

Question: You have mentioned Great Britain as one spot needing spiritual help. Can you pin point for us a few of the most important areas spiritually—or the spots which you believe to be the most significant for the spread of the Gospel today?

Answer: First is America. America is the last bastion of Christianity. If America falls, the Christian civilization

will be in an eclipse. Second is Great Britain. Third is Germany, for Germany is the key to the continent of Europe. Right now Germany is producing one hundred and twenty-five percent above her pre-war level—that is, Western Germany. And Christian leaders with whom I have talked in both Great Britain and on the continent tell me there are evidences of a turning to Christ in Western Germany that they do not see even in Great Britain. We must capitalize upon this opportunity immediately. The fourth most important spot for us, I believe, is Japan. This is an aggressive hard-working nation, our frontier against communism on the west. Missionaries working there still report great results to the preaching of the Gospel. As I see it, these four nations control the democratic world. As Christians we must do everything we can to pray and ask God to send a spiritual awakening and revival to them.

Question: What, in your opinion, is the greatest need of the evangelical church within these countries now?

Answer: I think the desperate need in Europe at the moment is for Bible institutes. Clearly that is the need in Great Britain. Christian leaders there tell me they have no young people trained to minister the Gospel. One evangelist, for instance, told me that he has to do his own publicity and advance work, lead his own singing and do his own solo work—simply because he cannot find anyone in the country to help him.

Then, I believe the Christian leaders in these countries must be shown how to modernize their methods of presenting the Gospel. Somehow the church in these countries has been slow to adapt itself to the new and changing moods of the people. Our message is still the same old Gospel of Jesus Christ. But today we must use modern methods of presenting it, if we are to capture the attention of the people who have been conditioned to the propaganda techniques of the hour.

Some of the conservative British Christians, for

instance, were shocked at the exhibit of the World Evangelical Alliance in the "Festival of Britain" last year. They had never seen such modern methods of presenting the Gospel—motion pictures, colorful visual aids, etc. But neither had they seen so many people crowding around an exhibit primarily devoted to presenting the Gospel.

Question: Then you mean to say that you actually believe a spiritual awakening is possible through the use of modern means of communications, and that it would solve the social and economic problems of the world today?

Answer: I certainly do. By a spiritual revival, of course, I mean that a nation must first recognize God. Then I believe that those individuals in the nation must repent of sin and receive Christ as personal Savior. I believe, too, that the church must be revived. The reason the western world is failing now, in my opinion, is because the church has failed. If the church had been aggressive and dynamic and strong, and members of the church had been living wholly sanctified, separated lives, producing the fruit of the Spirit, we would not be in the economic mess that we are in today. The whole key to a successful democratic world, in my opinion, is the church.

Question: You may feel you have answered this before, but will you outline several specific things which the average Christian citizen can do about the situation as you have outlined it?

Answer: Well, I think it is the duty of every individual Christian at election time to study the issues and candidates and then go to the polls and vote. Moreover, I agree with Congressman O. K. Armstrong of Missouri who, in a recent issue of *Christian Life*, said that it is the duty of Christian men to offer themselves for public office.

One reason we have such bad political leaders is because

in some places only the bad ones offer themselves for office. There are many places in which Christian men could get the vote if they offered themselves. Daniel lived in one of the most heathen countries in the world, but he was prime minister under seven kings in two empires. We need more Daniels today.

Question: Do you think the local pastor should make recommendations to his people?

Answer: If I were a pastor of a church I believe I would. At least, I would explain to my people where each candidate stood morally, spiritually and in relation to the church. After all, Roman Catholic priests do; likewise the Negro leaders, labor leaders and others. If virtually all such groups recommend candidates to the special interests of their own groups, why not the church?

Question: Are you going to make recommendations as to which presidential candidate you would like to see elected?

Answer: No. I am going to recommend to the people that they vote. But because I feel that my message is to the whole nation, I believe I must not become politically involved.

Question: What will result if we fail to meet our political obligations?

Answer: I believe that eventually the result will be a socialistic nation—let's say a godless socialistic nation. I feel that we are going to have to meet our political obligations as Christians and make our voice known if America is to be preserved with the type of Christian heritage which has given us the liberties we now enjoy. For unless America does turn back to God, repent of its sin, and experience a spiritual revival, we will fail as a nation. I believe God honors leaders in high places who honor Him. That, I am convinced, is taught in the Scriptures. God is a sovereign God. If He is honored as God and His divine Providence is recognized in the affairs of a nation, I believe there is a

certain amount of honoring received in return from Him....And if a nation persistently fails to honor God, we have no better illustration of the end of that nation than the Biblical record of the once great nation of Israel.

It's the easiest thing in the world for us as Christians to think of national and world politics as something involving only men and women of the world. That's where we fail. Our job as Christians is to make the impact of Christ felt in every phase of life—religious, social, economic and political. But we must not do it in our own strength or wisdom. We can only do it as we surrender ourselves completely to God—allowing Him to work in us.

Religious Sidelights on the Presidential Candidates

Many Christian leaders assert the coming presidential election will be one of the most significant in the history of our nation. The following was prepared, believing that *Christian Life* readers would be interested in a few sidelights on the religious views of the two chief candidates. The facts were compiled from interviews, speeches and personal conversations. Even to the least discerning, it is obvious that neither of the candidates would feel at home in the average evangelical Christian church today. Nonetheless it is important to keep in mind the backgrounds of the men when making a choice, with the hope that subsequent events will force the man who is elected president to walk with the Lord. *Christian Life* is a non-partisan publication.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Republican nominee for president was born in Denison, Texas in 1890. His parents later moved to Abilene, Kansas, where his mother joined the local church of the Brethren in Christ and he attended Sunday school. Eisenhower is not a member of a church and upon his own admission, seldom attended church during his army life.

Christian Life informants who knew him then, and have

talked with him since, have noted a marked change since he has assumed the responsibility of candidacy. Referring to the news photographers who wait for him outside of church—which he attends quite frequently now—he said, “I told Mamie to put her head down and walk by them. We go to church to worship; not to be photographed.”

Although Billy Graham has presented him with a Bible, it is known that Eisenhower had his own personal Bible—a gift from his wife—on his desk.

In a statement compiled for him by his headquarters' staff from recent speeches, Eisenhower is quoted as saying, “It was part of the privilege into which I was born that my home was a religious home. My father and mother believed that ‘the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.’ The Bible was a daily and vital influence in their lives. They tried their best to instill its truths and its faith into their six sons...If each of us in his own mind would dwell upon the simple virtues—integrity, courage, self-confidence, and unshakable belief in his Bible—would not some of our problems tend to simplify themselves? Would not we, after having done our best with them, be content to leave the rest with the Almighty? I think it is possible that a contemplation, a study, a belief in those simple virtues would help us mightily.”

Eisenhower smokes. He drinks occasionally. Although he has not used profanity in his public addresses, he was heard to use the word “damn” before going on the air for a radio address one night in Indianapolis. Next day in Washington he opened a talk to Republican party workers with an apology. “It was unintentional...I here and now apologize.”

Although surrounded by the usual number of professional politicians, it is known that at least several of Eisenhower's close advisors are sincere Christians.

Adlai E. Stevenson, Democratic nominee for president was born in Los Angeles in 1900. When he was six his parents moved back to the family home in Bloomington, Illinois. His father was a member of the Presbyterian church; his mother, the Unitarian. His membership now is the Unitarian church in Bloomington. Since there is no Unitarian church in Springfield, he has attended fairly regularly the Second Presbyterian church in the state capital during his term as governor of Illinois. Since launching his campaign for the presidency he has attended church more or less regularly. His speeches have often been dotted with biblical allusions.

In a prepared statement in answer to the question, "How would you expect the precepts of your religious faith to influence your official acts as President," he said:

"...I believe that Christian faith has been the most significant single element in our history and our tradition. From the beginning it has been the most powerful influence in our national life. It has inspired our highest achievements. Religious faith remains, in my opinion, our greatest national resource...We believe that there is a Creator who has given us life and the capacity and obligation to distinguish good from evil. We feel under a constant obligation to measure up to the highest moral purposes we know, that that in the long run , the good will prove to be the wise and the practical and the lasting...The burdens attached to the office of President of the United States are enormous. I know that those responsibilities are so far beyond the limits of human wisdom and strength that, if I am called upon to bear them, I would be utterly dependent on the sustaining power of God as the source of truth and of wisdom in the endless hours of uncertainty and anxiety. In my public life I have always tried to follow the rule laid down 2,500 years ago by the prophet Micah: "To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God.'"

Stevenson was divorced from his wife three years ago. He

both drinks and smokes. Despite his frequent references to Scripture, he has used profanity in public addresses.

The Commonweal, Roman Catholic publication, has announced its support of him. This is the first time in six national elections it has recommended a candidate.