

It is a transcript of the sermon which Billy Graham preached at the Charlotte Crusade. September 21 - 1958

Excerpt from the sermon: Christ's Answer to the World

And there are many of us today that believe in God, but we really don't know Him. When we wake up in the morning, His presence does not instill our room. When we go to bed at night, our last thought is not on Him. When we go to pray, we spend so little time, and we get no answers to our prayers. And God means so little to us. We go to church because it's the traditional thing and social thing. We don't go because we really love Christ. We've never had a true experience with Him until He fills our lives.

Paul said, "I want to tell you about this God" [verse 23]. Yet, we are becoming conscious of God today. The Bible tells us that God is creator and preserver of the universe [see Genesis 1:1]. But the Bible says, "God is a Spirit" [John 4:24]. The Bible says God is unchanging. The Bible says that God does not change one iota. He doesn't change the batting of an eyelash. [See Malachi 3:6.] God is the same yesterday, today, and forever [see Hebrews 13:8].

We have an idea in this country that God is changed to accommodate Himself for Americans.

We have an idea that we Americans are God's chosen people, that God loves us more than any other people, and that we are God's blessed. I tell you that God doesn't love us any more than He does the Russians. He doesn't love us any more than He does the Chinese. He doesn't love us any more than He does the Africans. God doesn't love us any more than any other people. There is no changing with God, and there is no partiality with God.

The Bible says God is righteous [see Psalm 145:17]. And there are a lot of you who can't understand the Old Testament when you read it. You know why? Because the Old Testament is teaching one thing: The Old Testament is teaching the holiness and the righteousness of God. You'll never understand it until you understand that God was teaching that He is a holy God. And no sin can come into God's presence because He's holy [see Habakkuk 1:13]. God is a holy and righteous God. And the Bible says that God will judge the world [see Acts 17:31].

We have an idea today that God is like a Santa Claus, sitting on a cloud somewhere with a harp in His hand, forgiving everybody. God is not like that at all. God is a God of judgment. He is the God of righteousness and holiness, and the Bible says here that He will not wink at sin [see Acts 17:30,31]. You think that you can get away with your lying. I'll tell you, you cannot. You think you can get away with your cheating. I tell you, you cannot. You think you can get away with your adultery, your jealousy, your sins, and the lust in your heart, and the evil thoughts that you have, and the evil moments that you have. I tell you, God says we shall be judged.

The Bible says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" [Romans 3:23].

I am a sinner and you are a sinner. Every one of us is a sinner in God's sight.

But the Bible also tells us that God is a God of love.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life" [John 3:16].

The Bible tells us God commended His love to us and that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" [Romans 5:8].

The Bible tells us that because God is love, He created man. Why did God create us in the first place? He put us here and He created us because He is love and He wanted to have an object to love; and so He created the human race. We were perfect, and we had fellowship with God. Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the day. They were friends. God and man were friends. They walked together, they talked together, they planned together. But then one day something happened, because when God created you, He gave you the ability to choose between right and wrong. He gave you the ability to choose whether you would follow God and serve God, or whether you would live your own life and build your own life apart from God. When man came to that great decisive moment in his life, he turned away from God and decided that he could build his own life without God. And he broke his covenant with God; he broke his relationship with God; he sinned against God. [See Genesis 2,3.]

And that's the reason we have war today. That's the reason we have racial tension today. That's the reason we have all these problems in the world today. It is because the hearts of men are sinful. We are away from God. And that's the reason you have the problems in your personal life that you can't solve. That's the reason there are things within your own heart that you don't understand.

God, looking down from heaven one day, saw this earth in its turmoil and strife and sinfulness, saw us in our lost condition, saw us in our sins. And the Bible says that God said, "I love you. I love you. I love you. I want to save you."

But how could God? He fills all of space. He is the mighty God of creation that flung those billions of stars out into space. So God did something that astounded the universe. God became a man. That's who Jesus Christ was. He was God. And when I see Jesus making the blind to see, I see God. When I see Jesus feeding the five thousand, I see God interested in the hunger and the desires of men. When I see Jesus dying on the cross,

I see God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. I see the nails in His hands. I see the spike in His feet. I see the crown of thorns on His brow. I hear Him say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" [see Matthew 27:46]. In that terrible moment, Jesus was separated from God in a mysterious way that none of us understood. And now God said, "This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased. Believe in Him. Receive Him. And I will save you." [See Matthew 17:5.]

But Jesus didn't stay on the cross. They put Him in the tomb, and on the third day He rose again. And I do not offer you this afternoon a dead Christ. I offer you a risen Christ, a Christ that is at the right hand of God the Father, and who is some day going to come to judge the quick and the dead [see Acts 10:41,42]. I offer you a triumphant Christ who is going to win.

A lot of people say, "Do you think communism is going to win the world?" They might win it temporarily, but it will only be temporarily. Because the Bible says that Jesus Christ is going to establish His kingdom, and the church shall some day triumph. Some day those of us who know Christ shall reign with Him [see Revelation 5:10]. God within Christ is reconciling the world unto Himself [see

2 Corinthians 5:19]. But God said, "I gave my Son to die."

Now there are three things you have to do to get to heaven and have your sins forgiven; if you're to have Christ in your life, and if you're to have a new life and a transformed nature, if you're to have your sins forgiven. If you're to go to heaven, you're going to have to do three things. I've studied this Bible for twenty years, and I do not believe any man or woman will get to heaven who hasn't done these three things. I don't care who you are. You may be a Sunday school teacher, you may be a deacon, an elder, or a steward. I don't care who you are. If you haven't done these three things, I do not believe you can get to heaven.

First, you must repent of your sins.

The Scripture says in this passage, "God. . .commandeth all men every where to repent" [Acts 17:30]. That's not a command from me. I didn't say it. I want to ask you tonight, or this afternoon, have you repented? Has there been a time in your life when you repented? You might have been confirmed, you might have been baptized; and you might be born again in your heart, but you're not sure of it. You're not certain of it. You're not sure that there has ever been a moment when you really repented of your sins and renounced them. You can do it today.

"What do you mean by repentance?" I mean that you acknowledge to God that you have sinned, and that you are willing to turn from your sins. Notice I said willing. You may not have the strength to turn from your sins, but by faith you are willing to turn if God will give you the strength. You say, "Billy, there are things in my life that are wrong, but I cannot give them up. I've tried. I just can't do it." If you are willing, God will give you the strength to give them up and turn from them.

Secondly, you must receive Christ by faith;

An act of receiving Christ to die for you. Now that is a definite act. It may be unconscious, or it may be conscious. It may be a quiet moment; it may be a decisive, climactic moment as it was in the life of Paul. But if you're not sure by faith you've received Christ, you'd better do it today.

There are three little men who live inside us all--our intellect, our emotions, and our will. Intellectually, thousands of you believe in Christ. I doubt if there is anyone here who doesn't believe in Christ. You believe in Him with your minds. In fact, the Bible says the devil believes. And the devil does more than you do, because he trembles when he believes the Bible [see James 2:19]. But that's not enough. You may have some emotion in your religion. You may have had an emotional experience at some time, but you never have really received Christ. You must by faith receive Him, because it is an act of your will. You say, "I will trust Him, I will follow."

You know why I ask people to come forward in our meeting to receive Christ? Because all the way through the Scriptures, I learned that God wanted people to do something as a testimonial of their faith. When Jesus healed the man with the withered arm, He could have said, "Be healed," and he would have been healed. But He didn't do it. He said, "Stretch it forth," and the man stretched it forth. Now he had tried to stretch it forth many times, but he couldn't. But at the behest of Jesus, he did stretch it forth and it was healed. [See Matthew 12:10-13.] Jesus wanted him to do something. I am asking you to come today to give your life to Christ, to do something, to receive Christ who trusts you.

The third thing you must do: You must obey Christ.

You must be willing to follow Him and serve Him from this moment on. Follow and serve Him. It means self-denial, it means cross-bearing, it means obedience. It means that you are going to burn all of your bridges behind you and follow Christ, no matter what it costs. It means you go back to your business and back to your home and live Christ, no matter what it costs. It means you are going to renew your vows to the church. It means you are going to be faithful and loyal to your church as never before. You are going to start tithing to the church.

It means you are going to start praying in your home. It means you are going to start living for Christ, no matter what the costs, from this moment on. That's what it means. And if you are not willing to do that, don't come to Jesus Christ. He will not accept you just part of the way. You must be willing to go all the way.

When Paul had finished his sermon he stopped. And when the invitation was given that day, three things took place that are going to take place here this afternoon. One, there was derision. Some of them laughed at him and mocked him [see Acts 17:32]. They didn't mock him out loud; just quietly and sighed, "Well, that's not for me."

Somebody said I had come to Charlotte to try to get everybody in the Baptist church. I heard about a fellow with a cat some time ago. He was trying to sell a little kitten. He was taking it up and down the street. And he said, "This is a Baptist kitten, a Baptist kitten for sale." And he couldn't sell it. The next day he came around, he said, "It's a Methodist kitten." The man said, "Why, these are the same kittens as yesterday. Why do you call them Methodist kittens?" "Well, today they've got their eyes open."

You may be a Baptist, a Presbyterian, or Methodist, or Episcopal, or Moravian, or a Lutheran, or a Catholic, or Jew. But if you have never really had a vital encounter with Jesus Christ, you make sure today.

Secondly, there were some who said, "We will hear again of this matter" [see verse 32]. They put it off. Governor Felix said to Paul, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" [Acts 24:25]. I want to tell you, this is a dangerous action because you may never hear anyone present the Gospel again. Some of the philosophers were never able to climb Mars Hill again.

The Bible says,

"He that hardeneth his heart, being often reprov'd, shall suddenly be cut off and not without remedy" [see Proverbs 29:1].

You never know. To some of you who go out on the slick highways this afternoon, this may be the last sermon you will ever hear. In every crusade we have ever conducted anywhere, there have been people who have come to the meeting in good health and never came back because they were dead in the next few hours through an accident, or a heart attack, or something else.

We never know when our moment is coming. Maybe God spoke to you this afternoon, and your heart is in danger of being hardened. Some of you are older people; some of you are younger people. The Bible says once you hear the Gospel and do nothing about it, you are in danger of being hardening your heart.

But, last of all, there were some that made a decision [see Acts 17:34]. They received Christ and went their way rejoicing. I am going to ask you today to receive Him. I am not asking you this afternoon to join some special church. I'm asking you today to give your life to Christ.

You may be a member of a choir. I don't know who you are or what you are, but you want to give your life to Christ on this opening Sunday afternoon. I'm going to ask you to do a hard thing, because coming to Christ is not easy. So many people have made it too easy. Jesus went to the cross and died in your place. Certainly, you can come a few steps from where you are sitting and stand here, quietly and reverently, and with bowed head. And say, "I need God; I need Christ. I want to be forgiven of my sins. I want a new life, and I want to start a new direction today."

You may be a rich man;

you may be a poor man.

You may be a man of great intellectual capacities,
and you have to come by faith.

Because you'll never understand it all intellectually.

If you want to..... come to the cross and give your life to Christ,

I'm going to ask you to come. If you are with friends and relatives, they'll wait on you. There's plenty of time and I'm going to ask not a person to leave the Coliseum.