Living Sermons

A BILLY GRAHAM CLASSIC SERMON

DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES

JOHN 11:25

"You can be physically alive, socially alive, but spiritually dead."

BILLY GRAHAM

A Stadium Crusade

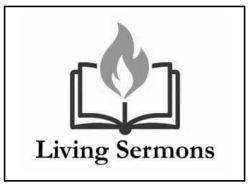
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DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES

Preacher: Billy Graham

Publisher: LivingSermons.com

Watch Live Video Here



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Living Sermons

FOREWORD

"I am the resurrection, and the life." Jesus spoke these words to Martha beside the tomb of her brother Lazarus. In this message Billy Graham stands at that same tomb and asks a searching question: you may be alive in body, but is your spirit alive toward God?

Dr. Graham explains the three parts of every human being. The body lets us walk and see and shake a hand. The soul is the personality, which even his two German shepherds share. The spirit alone sets us apart from the animals: the God-given capacity to know and enjoy the God of the universe. That spirit, he says, has been made dead by sin.

Then, looking at Lazarus in the tomb, he finds six marks of spiritual death: no appetite, no activity, no awareness, blindness, corruption and the grave clothes that bind. Neither food nor housing nor entertainment can meet the dead man's need. He needs life, and only Christ can give it. Along the way he speaks of a country song, the earthquake in Guatemala and why Jesus wept.

In preparing this edition, we have preserved the preacher's message and wording. We removed time stamps and broadcast material, trimmed a few spoken repetitions, arranged the transcript into chapters with subheadings, and corrected punctuation, capitalization and obvious transcription errors.

As you read, hear the question Jesus asked Martha: "Believest thou this?"

Wisdom Epsi
— The Chief Editor, LivingSermons.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword 3
Table of Contents 4
Publisher's Note 5
Main Message Begins Here 6
“I Am the Resurrection and the Life” 7
The Body 8
The Soul 10
The Spirit 11
Dead in Sin 12
Lessons from the Tomb 14
Man’s Greatest Need 17
Life from the Dead 19
Jesus Wept 21
“Loose Him” 23
The Invitation 24
Scripture References 26
About The Speaker 27
About Living Sermons 28
Join Our Team 29

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This book is a faithful transcript of a live sermon delivered by the preacher under the inspiration and unction of the Holy Spirit. Every effort has been made to preserve the preacher's exact words, tone, flow, and spiritual authority, while carefully proofreading and formatting the message into a clear and readable ebook format.

The message you are about to read was originally ministered in a live congregational setting. As such, it carries the weight, urgency, and atmosphere of that sacred gathering. Minor grammatical and structural adjustments have been made solely to enhance readability, without altering the substance, intent, or power of the original delivery.

Watch the live sermon from which this message was transcribed on YouTube

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Our standard is reverence for the Word of God. Our daily goal is to transform powerful live sermons into polished PDF and ebook editions for the edification of the Body of Christ. It is our prayer that as you read, the same grace, conviction, clarity, and impartation present in the live service will minister to you afresh.

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MAIN MESSAGE BEGINS HERE

CHAPTER 1

“I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE”

JOHN 11:25

I want to speak on John’s Gospel, the eleventh chapter, the twenty-fifth verse. Jesus is speaking to Martha. Lazarus has died, and Lazarus is in the tomb, and Jesus is trying to comfort Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus. And here’s what He says:

> *Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.*
>
> **JOHN 11:25-27**

THREE PARTS OF US

You know, the Bible talks about three parts of us. The Bible says we are built with three things.

CHAPTER 2

THE BODY

THE BODY CAN NEVER MAKE A FRIEND

First, we have a body. Now your body allows you to see people, to walk, to hear, to shake a hand. But the body can never make a friend. It is the soul and the personality that has the capacity to love a person and to have social relationships.

THE FEAR OF DEATH

And most of us don't like to go to funerals. We don't like to talk about death. And we in America have a great fear of death. The Bible says in Hebrews, the second chapter, "Who through the fear of death were all their lifetime in bondage." The fear of death can hold you in bondage all your life, says the Bible.

In Genesis 3:19 the Bible says, "For dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return." And in Genesis 5 it says this eleven times: "And he died."

You're going to die. Are you prepared to die? The Scripture says, "Prepare to die." "Prepare to meet God." "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment."

"THOU SHALT NOT SURELY DIE"

But Satan whispered to Adam and Eve, "Thou shalt not surely die." And he still uses the lie on you. You say, "Somebody else is going to be killed in that automobile crash. It's somebody else that's going to get pneumonia and die. It's going to be somebody else that gets cancer. It's somebody else that's going to have a heart attack." But one of these days it will be you.

We look at our screens and we see motion pictures like *Gable and Lombard*, or pictures on Marilyn Monroe, and we think that they're alive. Or we even see former President Kennedy come back on the screen, or Martin Luther King come back on the screen. And somehow we get it in our minds that they're alive right now, just like that, in the same old body. But they're not; they're dead.

So the body dies. Everybody's body is going to die. Your body will go to the grave.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOUL

WHAT IS THE SOUL?

The second part of us is called the soul. Sometimes we interchange the words *soul* and *spirit*, but I believe there's a difference between the soul and the spirit.

What is the soul? The soul can think. The soul can decide. The soul can desire. The soul can know. It can love; it can hate; it can react. To sum it up, the soul is that part of us that we call personality.

TWO GERMAN SHEPHERDS

Now I have two dogs at home—German shepherds. Highly trained dogs, I might add. One of them is trained to run when you come, and the other one is trained to growl, or bite if necessary.

But, you know, I've noticed that those dogs have emotions. They grieve. They seem to worry if they're not fed on time. And they get angry, and they love. And they each have their own personalities. Because, you see, a dog has a soul, just like you do. The whole animal world has a soul.

If an animal has a body and a personality similar to humans, then what makes humans different? Have you ever thought of that? What makes you different from your dog? What makes you superior to an elephant? What makes you superior to any other animal?

CHAPTER 4

THE SPIRIT

SOMETHING ONLY HUMANS HAVE

The third thing. The animals have bodies; the animals have souls; but no animal has a spirit. The spirit is something only humans have. Man possesses something in addition to his body and his soul that the animal does not have: he has the spirit. And the spirit is totally unique.

FELLOWSHIP WITH ALMIGHTY GOD

You know what the spirit is? The spirit is the ability to know and to enjoy and to have fellowship with Almighty God: the God of the universe, the God that made the stars and the moon and the sun and the whole world. You—just little old you—can have fellowship with that mighty God, because God gave you a spirit.

You are a spirit. Your spirit lives in your body. You're born with that spirit, that ability to have fellowship with God. And the spirit makes even the lowest person in the whole world superior to the highest animal.

Thus the human race operates on three levels: physically, with the body; socially, with the soul; spiritually, with the spirit.

CHAPTER 5

DEAD IN SIN

OUR SPIRITS ARE DEAD

Now the question is, what has happened to our spirits? The Bible says that our spirits are dead in sins and trespasses. We've rebelled against God, and our spirits have been cut off from God, and our spirits are dead. And the reason Jesus Christ came and died on the cross was to reconcile us to God.

Sin has separated my spirit from God. I cannot fellowship with God. I cannot know God. I might study theology all my life and never find God. I might study philosophy all my life and never find God. I may be the most brilliant scientist in the whole world and never find God, because something has come between my spirit and God, and that something is sin.

The Bible says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." You are a sinner. I am a sinner, separated from God. This is a planet in which all human beings are born separated from God.

ALIVE BUT DEAD

You can be physically alive, socially alive, but spiritually dead. The Bible says, "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she lives."

There's a country-western song this year that has an older cowboy singing to a younger one that what's needed is faster horses, younger women, older whiskey and more money. And that's what the world is: alive but dead. Faster horses—alive but dead.

"THOU FOOL"

It's very much like the man Jesus told about, who was a rich man, and he said, "Soul, take thine ease, drink, and be merry. You've got many years. Build bigger barns." And God called him a fool, and God killed him that night. God said, "Thou fool."

Many of you think that you have years and years and years and years. And you don't know that at this very moment there is appointed a day that you are to meet God. And it may be this week. We never know.

CHAPTER 6

LESSONS FROM THE TOMB

THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD

In this passage that I read, Lazarus—a person that Jesus loved very much, one of His closest friends—had died.

I watched the other night, on television, a replay of that magnificent picture of George Stevens, *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. And I thought one of the most dramatic scenes in the whole picture is when Lazarus is raised from the dead. And I thought about Lazarus when he was in that tomb. He'd been there for several days. And there are several things about him that came to me as I looked and thought about him.

NO APPETITE

Lazarus didn't have any appetite. When he was alive he got hungry regularly, but while he's dead he doesn't have any appetite.

Did you know that if you are spiritually dead—if your spirit is dead—you don't have any appetite for God? You don't have any appetite to read the Scriptures, and to pray, and to talk about spiritual things. You're spiritually dead. You can go to church. Thousands of people today belong to the church who are spiritually dead. They don't really have any appetite for God, for fellowship with God.

NO ACTIVITY

The second thing about Lazarus I thought about was that there was no activity. A spiritually dead person has no spiritual activity. They have much physical activity and social activity, but little activity on behalf of the kingdom of God.

A few months ago my wife and I went down to Guatemala with Luis Palau, who is here tonight, right after the earthquake. And we saw devastation on a scale we had never seen anywhere in the world. And our hearts ached for those people. And I said, “By the grace of God, we’re going to do all we can for the hungry and the needy and the hurting people of the world, whether they’re at home or whether they’re abroad.” Activity for the kingdom of God!

NO AWARENESS

And then another thing about Lazarus: there was no awareness. He was not aware of his friends. Dead men don’t love. Dead men don’t see danger. Dead men are unmoved by hunger. Dead men don’t weep.

BLIND

And then the fourth thing: he was blind. And the Bible says that we too are blind. We have spiritual blindness. Your spirit can be blind. The Bible says the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not. You are spiritually blind.

"HE STINKETH"

And then the fifth thing about him was, he smelled. He’d been dead four days, and they said, “He already stinks.”

But you know what the Bible says? The Bible says all of our righteousness and our goodness that we try to pile up to please God smells in the sight of God. It’s like filthy rags, the Scripture says in Isaiah 64:6. We’re saved by grace, through faith, and that not of ourselves. It’s the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

BOUND

And then the sixth thing about Lazarus was, he was bound. You know, the Oriental method of embalming was one of the most effective the world has ever known. It consisted of endless wrappings.

And yet you are alive tonight physically; you're alive as far as your social activity is concerned. But you are bound and spiritually dead. You are bound by habits and sin. Johnny Cash talked a moment ago about drugs and alcohol. And men are bound by the chain of habit: the lust and sin of drugs, the lust for money, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, sex sins. All of that indicates spiritual deadness. Socially you're alive; physically you're alive; but your spirit is dead toward God.

Would you like to be made alive tonight—totally, completely fulfilled, totally alive spiritually?

CHAPTER 7

MAN'S GREATEST NEED

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

What can you do? Well, let's think: what can we do for Lazarus, now that he's dead? Let's give him some food!

They say, "Well, what we need to do is feed everybody." Jesus didn't feed everybody when He came. Did you know that? There are thousands of millions of hungry people in the world, and we have compassion. We are to do what we can. But that does not bring about reconciliation with God. They have a deeper hunger, a deeper need to be met, and that's the need of reconciliation with God.

You say, "Well, give people better housing." That's all good. We ought to give people better housing, and I'm for everything that can give better housing to people in this country and people all over the world. But that doesn't bring back the spirit. The spirit is dead. Man has a deeper need. Man's greatest need is reconciliation with God, and that's what Christ came to do on the cross.

You say, "Well, maybe they need more entertainment. Change their environment."

A SPIRITUAL PROBLEM

You know, many intellectuals today, I notice, are growing disillusioned with the whole human race. They're disillusioned because they fail to understand that the problem of the human race is a spiritual problem. The problem of the human race is not a soulish problem. The problem of the human race is not a physical problem. The problem of the human race is a spiritual problem. Man's spirit is separated from God. He hates, he lies, he cheats, he fights, he kills, he has war, because his spirit is not right with God. So man needs to get his spirit straightened out with God.

CHAPTER 8

LIFE FROM THE DEAD

HE NEEDS LIFE

There is one great thing that a dead man needs. Do you know what it is? He needs life. And Jesus Himself claims to be the life that spiritually dead men need. He said that the reason He came into the world was that He might give life more abundantly.

Here's one of the greatest passages in all of literature. He said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Now if you were a dead person lying in a grave, wouldn't you like to hear that? "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

You believe in Jesus Christ. That means to commit, to surrender your life to Him; to receive Him as your Lord and your Savior. And you can have spiritual life.

THE BODY RAISED

In addition, the Bible says your body is someday going to be raised from the dead. You say, "How can that be?" I don't know how it can be. I only know that science says that no chemical is lost in the world today, and the God that made it in the beginning can bring it together again. And your spirit will be joined to your body again in the future world, if you know Jesus Christ.

"I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never"—never, never—"die." Your spirit can be made alive and have fellowship with the God of the universe by believing in Jesus Christ.

GOOD NEWS

Now that is essentially and basically what the gospel is all about. And that's why it's called good news to the world. That's what the word *gospel* means: good news. And it's good news to millions and billions of people who are dead toward God to say that there is a Person who can give you spiritual life, and change you, and make you a new person.

You don't get eternal life when you die. You get eternal life the moment you receive Christ. You can have fellowship with God through Bible reading, through prayer, through fellowship with other Christians. You have fellowship with God; your spirit is alive.

Your body may get tired. Your body may get hungry. Your body may be imprisoned. Your body may be destroyed by the scars of sin that have already taken place. But God will forgive the sin that came between you and God. He will help you and restore you in a thousand ways.

ALL THE WAY

But you've got to be willing to go all the way. You know why some people never really find God? They're not willing to go all the way. They want to go part of the way: a third of the way, halfway, three quarters of the way, ninety percent of the way, ninety-nine percent of the way. But Jesus won't accept you. He says it's all the way.

That's the reason, in that chapter we read last night, He said, "I will not commit Myself to you. You believe in Me, but I don't believe in you. I know what's in your heart. I know what you're holding back." You've got to be willing to surrender all if you're to have eternal life.

CHAPTER 9

JESUS WEPT

"BELIEVEST THOU THIS?"

Then He turned and asked Martha, “Believest thou this?” And Martha answered and said, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God, that should come into the world.”

THE SHORTEST VERSE

And you know, Jesus did an interesting thing. He wept. The shortest verse in the Bible is “Jesus wept.”

Only three times did Jesus weep. He wept at the grave of Lazarus. He wept in Gethsemane, the night before Calvary. And He wept over the city of Jerusalem, when He saw that Jerusalem was rejecting Him as the Savior.

And He weeps tonight, I believe, over the great cities of America, as He sees the great majority of the people ignoring Him, going on in their spiritual deadness, like dancing on the *Titanic* before it hit the iceberg. And He weeps.

IN THE TOMB OF SIN

There are millions tonight in the tomb of sin. There are thousands here tonight in the tomb of sin. You need to be awakened. Many of you are in the grip of an evil habit, too strong to break, worse than a living death.

What was Jesus’ answer? He went to the tomb, and He said, “Lazarus, come forth.”

WHY JESUS WEPT

Do you know why I believe Jesus wept? I don't believe Jesus wanted to call Lazarus back. Lazarus was already in heaven. I don't believe Lazarus wanted to come back.

You get a person that has died and gone to heaven for just one minute, and they see the glory of heaven—why, you couldn't pay them enough money in all the world to get them to come back. You and I weep for them. They're not weeping; they're happy. Their spirits are happy in total fellowship with God, and with their friends, and the reunion and the happiness that's taking place there.

Jesus wept, I believe, because He didn't want to have to call Lazarus back. But in order for His credentials as the Messiah to be established, He was going to raise the dead. So He said, "Lazarus, come forth." If He hadn't said the name Lazarus when He said "Come forth," every person that had ever died in the history of the world would have come out of the grave! So He said, "Lazarus, come forth." And Lazarus came forth.

CHAPTER 10

“LOOSE HIM”

STILL BOUND

But Lazarus was still tied in the old clothes. Jesus said, “Loose him.”

Now you and I, after we come to Christ, have to be loosed from our sins, from the things that bound us. We have to be set free.

"I DON’T THINK I COULD HOLD OUT"

And there’s many a person that says to me, “Billy, I would like to come to Christ, but I don’t think I could hold out.” You’re right. You can’t hold out. But He will hold you.

Johnny was telling us a moment ago about that verse in First Corinthians that he came across, and what a marvelous verse it is: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God will not allow you to be tempted above that which you are able to bear; but will with the temptation make a way to escape.” And even I forgot it, Johnny, because there is a phrase there that says, “God is faithful.” God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted.

In other words, God makes a provision for your Christian life. He gives you the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to live inside and gives you supernatural power to live a supernatural life. And your spirit is made alive, and you have fellowship with God.

CHAPTER 11

THE INVITATION

WILL YOU RECEIVE CHRIST?

I'm asking you tonight: Will you receive Christ? Are you willing to go all the way in with Him and commit everything to Him—your mind, your heart, your body, your friends, your family? And you would like to say tonight, "I want my sins forgiven. I want to know I'm going to heaven. I want eternal life. I want Jesus to come into my heart tonight."

STAND WHERE YOU ARE

I'm going to ask you to do something different tonight, because of something we cannot do. Every night this stadium has been almost filled—not quite like it is tonight. And we've put people on the floor tonight, and when we put you on the floor, we knew that we could not call people forward as we normally do.

So I'm going to ask all of you that want to receive Christ to stand up where you are. We're not going to ask you to come forward. Just stand up where you are, and stand there quietly and prayerfully, with bowed heads.

And I'm going to ask every head bowed and every eye closed, and everybody in an attitude of prayer. And tonight you want Christ in your heart. You want eternal life. Just stand up and keep standing, all over the place. Hundreds of you, just stand up right now. Everyone in prayer.

Just as I am, without one plea…

(Announcer) If you would like to commit your life to Jesus Christ, please call us right now, toll free at 1-877-772-4559. That's 1-877-772-4559.

…O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

SAY YES TO JESUS CHRIST

You that are watching by television, you can make your commitment to Jesus Christ right where you are, with these hundreds, and perhaps thousands, here that are making their commitment to Christ right now. You can say yes to Jesus Christ wherever you are. God help you to make that commitment right now.

CLOSING WORDS

(Closing Announcement) If you just prayed that prayer with my father, or if you have any questions about a relationship with Jesus Christ, why don't you call the number on the screen. There will be someone there to talk with you, pray with you and answer those questions. And remember, God loves you! If you would like to commit your life to Jesus Christ, please call us right now, toll free at 1-877-772-4559. That's 1-877-772-4559. Or you can write to us at: Billy Graham, 1 Billy Graham Parkway, Department C, Charlotte, North Carolina 28201. Or you can contact us on the web 24/7 at PeaceWithGod.tv. We'll get the same helps to you that we give to everyone who responds at the invitation.

On behalf of Franklin Graham and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, thank you for watching and thank you for your prayers.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Passages quoted or alluded to in this message, in order of appearance. An asterisk (*) marks a passage the preacher did not name by chapter and verse; the editors identified it.

John 11:25-27 — I am the resurrection and the life. (Named by chapter and verse.) *(Chapters 1, 8, 9)*

Hebrews 2:15 — Through fear of death subject to bondage. (Chapter named.) *(Chapter 2)*

Genesis 3:19 — Dust thou art. (Named by chapter and verse.) *(Chapter 2)*

Genesis 5 — "And he died." (Chapter named.) *(Chapter 2)*

Amos 4:12* — Prepare to meet thy God. *(Chapter 2)*

Hebrews 9:27* — It is appointed unto men once to die. *(Chapter 2)*

Genesis 3:4* — "Ye shall not surely die." *(Chapter 2)*

Ephesians 2:1* — Dead in trespasses and sins. *(Chapter 5)*

Romans 3:23* — All have sinned. *(Chapter 5)*

1 Timothy 5:6* — She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. *(Chapter 5)*

Luke 12:16-20* — The rich fool: "Thou fool." *(Chapter 5)*

2 Corinthians 4:4* — The god of this world hath blinded the minds. *(Chapter 6)*

John 11:39* — "By this time he stinketh." *(Chapter 6)*

Isaiah 64:6 — Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. (Named by chapter and verse.) *(Chapter 6)*

Ephesians 2:8-9* — Saved by grace through faith. *(Chapter 6)*

1 John 2:16* — The lust of the flesh and the pride of life. *(Chapter 6)*

John 10:10* — Life more abundantly. *(Chapter 8)*

John 2:24-25* — Jesus did not commit Himself unto them. *(Chapter 8)*

John 11:35* — "Jesus wept." *(Chapter 9)*

Luke 22:44; Hebrews 5:7* — Agony and tears in Gethsemane. *(Chapter 9)*

Luke 19:41* — He wept over Jerusalem. *(Chapter 9)*

John 11:43-44* — "Lazarus, come forth"; "Loose him." *(Chapters 9, 10)*

1 Corinthians 10:13 — A way to escape; God is faithful. (Book named.) *(Chapter 10)*

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

William "Billy" F. Graham Jr. (1918–2018) was raised on a dairy farm in Charlotte, North Carolina. In 1934, at age 15, he made a commitment to faith during a revival led by Mordecai Ham. He was ordained in 1939, graduated from Florida Bible Institute in 1940, and earned a B.A. from Wheaton College in 1943, where he married Ruth McCue Bell.

After pastoring in Illinois and serving as the first full-time evangelist for Youth for Christ International, Graham was vaulted into national prominence by the 1949 Los Angeles Crusade. This event launched decades of global outreach, including historic, extended crusades in London (1954), New York City (1957), Seoul (1973), and Rio de Janeiro (1974). Overall, he preached live to nearly 215 million people in over 185 countries and territories.

In 1950, he founded the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA). Through BGEA, Graham hosted the syndicated *Hour of Decision* radio program for over 60 years, published *Decision* magazine, and authored 33 books—including bestsellers such as *Angels: God's Secret Agents* (1975) and his 1997 autobiography, *Just As I Am*.

A counselor to U.S. presidents, Graham appeared on Gallup's "Ten Most Admired Men in the World" list a record 61 times. His honors include the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1983), Congressional Gold Medal (1996), and an Honorary Knighthood (2001). Following his passing in 2018 at age 99, he lay in honor in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda, and a bronze statue of him was added to the U.S. Capitol in 2024. Billy and Ruth raised five children, 19 grandchildren, 44 great-grandchildren, and nine great-great-grandchildren.

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