Living Sermons

A BILLY GRAHAM CLASSIC SERMON

TRUTH AND FREEDOM

JOHN 8:32

"Our problem is not a race problem. Our problem is not a poverty problem. Our problem is not a war problem. Our problem is a heart problem."

BILLY GRAHAM

New York

Transcribed and Published by Livingsermons.com

TRUTH AND FREEDOM

Preacher: Billy Graham

Publisher: LivingSermons.com

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First Edition — 2026

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Living Sermons

FOREWORD

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." In this message, preached at the Garden in New York, Billy Graham takes the words of Jesus in John 8:32 and asks the oldest question of all, the question Pilate asked: What is truth?

Dr. Graham shows that every field of study is a search for truth, and that a whole generation was trying to find it through psychedelic drugs. Then he sets before us the astounding claim of Jesus: "I am the truth." Either He was deranged, or He lied, or He is exactly who He said He is. And if He is the truth, to reject Him is a fatal error for eternity.

He shows what Jesus told the truth about: sin as a disease of the heart, our responsibility to the needy, judgment, repentance and conversion. With a story of his three-year-old son steering a boat toward the rocks, he shows how we insist we can run our own lives. Then he explains how the truth sets us free from the penalty, the power and, one day, the very presence of sin.

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.

May you come to know the One who is the truth, and find the freedom only He can give.

Wisdom Epsi
— The Chief Editor, LivingSermons.com

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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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MAIN MESSAGE BEGINS HERE

CHAPTER 1

YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH

JOHN 8:32

Tonight I want to turn to John's Gospel, the eighth chapter—the eighth chapter of John's Gospel—and this passage of Scripture, the thirty-second verse:

> *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*
> JOHN 8:32

These are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. He's having a debate with some of the religious leaders of His day, and He said, "Ye shall know the truth." Now that word *shall* could be translated *must*: you must know the truth if you are to be free.

THE WHOLE TRUTH

Tonight I want to talk about truth and freedom. We hear a great deal about both today.

You know, there's an old Scottish oath upon which our American oath is based, and it reads this way: "I pledge before Almighty God, before whom I will give an answer on the day of judgment, to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

CHAPTER 2

THE TRUTH AND THE LIE

TWO PERSONALITIES

Now in this passage of Scripture Jesus discussed two personalities. He discussed God on the one hand, who is truth, and Satan on the other, who is a liar and the author of lies.

Now here's what Jesus said. He was pretty rough in some of the things He said. He turned to these religious leaders and He said:

> *You are of your father the devil, and the lust of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth; there was no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he's a liar, and the father of lies.*
>
> **JOHN 8:44**

Jesus said that there's the lie and the truth.

A SYSTEM CALLED THE LIE

And in Second Thessalonians, the second chapter, we are told that in the latter days of this age there will be a system called the lie, and a great delusion will sweep over the people of that generation. They will believe a lie, and they will reject the truth. Many people think we're living in that generation.

THE TRUTH EXCHANGED

And the apostle Paul said in the first chapter of Romans that the people of that day had changed the truth of God into a lie.

THE TRUTH HELD IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

And then, secondly, not only do we exchange the truth of God for a lie, but Paul said in Romans, the first chapter, the eighteenth verse, that men "hold the truth in unrighteousness." In other words, you can know the truth and not live it. This is holding the truth of God in unrighteousness, and the Bible says the wrath of God is against such people.

That's why Christ was so bitter in His denunciation of the hypocrites. You hold the truth intellectually, but you don't live it. Jesus said, "You serve Me with your lips, but your heart is far from Me." You can hold the truth in unrighteousness, and that brings about the wrath of God.

JUDGMENT ACCORDING TO TRUTH

And then, thirdly, Paul spoke of judgment according to truth, Romans 2:2: "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth."

In other words, someday God is going to judge the world. Yes, there's a day of judgment coming. Just as certain as I'm standing here, a day of judgment is coming, and God is going to judge us according to the truth. Did we live by the truth? Did we believe the truth? Did we accept the truth? What was our attitude toward the truth? Or did we exchange the truth for a lie, or did we hold the truth in unrighteousness? God will hold us accountable, the Scripture says.

CHAPTER 3

THE QUEST FOR TRUTH

SEARCHING FOR TRUTH

Jesus said you must know the truth, and the truth will make you free.

Now, you know, that's what philosophy has been doing, and that's what science does, and that's what we do in psychology. In every field of study, in every discipline, we're searching for truth. We're trying to find what the laws are; we're trying to find what the truth is.

Early in childhood we soon learned the truth that fire is hot. We learned that ice is cold. We learned that doing wrong makes us feel guilty and doing good makes us feel good. We learned that early.

You see, all of us really are on a quest for truth. What is the truth about myself? Where did I come from? Why in the world did God ever put us on this planet, if there's a God? And where are we going? Is there life after death? I'm searching for answers. All of us are, consciously or unconsciously. We ask ourselves these questions: What is truth?—the same question Pilate asked two thousand years ago.

And that's why a lot of these kids are taking LSD and mind-expanding psychedelic drugs. They're trying to find some experiences that will lead them into some sort of spiritual truth.

NO GUESSWORK

Now truth is important in mathematics. It's important in chemistry. It's important in science. And it's important in the spiritual life; it's important in morality. It's important to find the truth.

Jesus said, “Ye shall know the truth.” No guesswork, no speculation is allowed. In aviation you can make one mistake nowadays and crash into another plane. You must know the truth.

Now Job said, “I know my redeemer lives.” The apostle Paul said, “I know in whom I have believed.” The apostle John said you can know that you’re saved. The Bible teaches that you can know the truth. You can find the truth. You can believe the truth.

But what is the truth? Every religion and every philosophy may have some of the truth, but there is one place you can find all the truth. Where is it? Jesus said, “Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice.”

CHAPTER 4

"I AM THE TRUTH"

AN ASTOUNDING CLAIM

Buddha said at the end of his life, "I'm still searching for truth." But Jesus made this astounding claim. Jesus said, "I am the truth." Jesus said, "I am the truth: I am the embodiment of all truth." And if you're going to get to heaven, you've got to believe that, and you've got to take it by faith.

Well, you say, "Anybody who would come along and say, 'I'm the embodiment of all truth,' must be mentally deranged. He's an egomaniac." Yes, you can make a case for that. Or maybe Jesus just told a lie. He knew it wasn't true, and He just lied. Yes, that's one of the options.

But suppose He is the truth. Suppose He is the embodiment of all truth, and you reject it and exchange the truth for a lie. Then you have made a fatal error for eternity.

TRUTH IN SIMPLICITY

Now I personally believe that Jesus is the truth. I believe that He is the embodiment of all truth. I have accepted that by faith. And when I took that step and took that stand, it changed my life.

And it's very simple. He made it so simple that you can know the truth. A blind man, a deaf man, a black man, a yellow man or a red man can come and know the truth. The educated man can know the truth; the uneducated can know the truth. I know people that don't have any education at all, and they know this truth, and it gives them a satisfaction and a joy. And I know professors at the great universities, and I know some of the great scientists; they have come and

accepted this as the truth, and bowed in humility before Christ, and it's changed their lives.

Profound is the truth, but it is truth in simplicity, so that anybody can come, and anybody can believe—even children. Whittier once said:

We search the world for truth; we cull
The good, the pure, the beautiful,
From graven stone and written scroll,
From all old flower-fields of the soul;
And, weary seekers of the best,
We come back laden from our quest,
To find that all the sages said
Is in the Book our mothers read.

It's here: Jesus Christ, the story of Christ. He is the truth.

"YE SHALL DIE IN YOUR SINS"

And Jesus said this in that same chapter, in the twenty-fourth verse. Listen to this: "If you believe not that I am He, you will die in your sins." If you believe not that I am the embodiment of all truth, you're going to die in your sins. You must come and believe and accept and commit. Yes, Christ claimed to be ultimate truth.

CHAPTER 5

THE TRUTH ABOUT SIN

A DISEASE OF THE HEART

And Jesus told the truth. He told the truth about sin: where the lust and the greed and the pride and the hate and the jealousy and the fighting come from. Why do a lot of people hate each other? Why do they fight and kill? And every generation has a war. We've had 55 wars since World War II. Why all of this throughout history? The Bible tells us man has a disease of the heart called sin. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, and adulteries, and fornications, and murders, and thefts, and covetousness, and wickedness, and deceit, and blasphemy, and pride. All of these things come from within, and defile a man."

A HEART PROBLEM

We're suffering from only one disease in the world. Our problem is not really a race problem. Our problem is not a poverty problem. Our problem is not a war problem. Our problem is a heart problem. We need to get the heart changed, the heart transformed. That's why Jesus said, "You must be born again." You must have a new nature, a new heart that will be dominated by love. Ah, but we go out and say, "We ought to love each other," and we soon find that we don't have the capacity to love each other. Where are we going to get it? We get it from Jesus. You see, the Spirit of God comes into our heart the moment we receive Christ, and He begins to produce in your heart love and joy and peace and patience and temperance. All of these fruits of the Spirit are produced supernaturally by the Holy Spirit when you receive Christ. He told the truth about what is wrong with the world.

CHAPTER 6

THE TRUTH ABOUT JUDGMENT AND CONVERSION

OUR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

And then He told the truth about our social responsibility, our responsibility to our fellow man. In the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, beginning at verse 35, you'll find it. People were hungry; they were sick; they were tired; they were cold; they were in prison. And they were visited, and they were helped. And at the judgment Jesus commended those who helped them. They said, "But, Lord, we didn't know that we visited You. We didn't know that we fed You. We didn't know that we did that for You." Jesus said, "If you did it unto the least of these, you've done it unto Me." Every time that you give of your time and your energy and your money to help those in need, you're helping Jesus. You're giving to Him.

JUDGMENT AND REPENTANCE

And then He told the truth about judgment. He warned us to flee the wrath of God. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they will give an account in the day of judgment." He said there is a judgment coming.

He told the truth about repentance. He said, "Except you repent, you shall perish." You say, "But how do I repent?" You say, "O God, I've sinned. I'm willing to change my way of living. I'm willing to live in a new dimension of life. I'm willing to follow You and serve You, no matter what the cost." That's repentance. And Jesus said if you don't repent, you're going to perish. He told the truth about that.

CONVERSION

He told the truth about conversion. He said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." Be converted!

We're frightened of that word in religion. We use it in everything else, but not in religion. Young people want an experience. They want something that means something. They have their happenings, and they want to do their thing, and they want to take their drugs; they want their kicks. And in the church we've stifled out any kind of religious experience. Jesus said you need to be converted.

I can remember the day I was converted. I had an experience with God. It wasn't an emotional experience with me; with some people it is. There's nothing wrong with emotion. We've certainly got emotional intellectualism today on campus. I see these intellectuals on campus and on television, and, boy, they shout it up pretty loud for their cause and what they believe. We allow emotion for everything except Christ. If anybody sheds a tear over religion, they say, "Too much emotion." And that's one of the devil's lies and the devil's tricks, so that we've lost all feeling in our faith, and all joy in our faith, and all the excitement and the thrill that these early Christians had.

TURN AROUND

Jesus said you need to be converted. Now the word *conversion* simply means to change, to turn around. You're going in one direction, on the broad road that leads to destruction. Turn around and go in the right direction; go the narrow road that leads to eternal life. That's what conversion means: to change, to turn around. Has that happened to you? Have you changed your way of living? Have you had an experience with Christ? Do you know Him personally? "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

CHAPTER 7

HEADING FOR THE ROCKS

A WAY THAT SEEMS RIGHT

Now I know that there are many people who think they're free already, and they don't know Christ. They think they know how to live. The Bible says there is a way—a way outside of Christ—that seems right unto a man. It seems the right thing, but the end is death and judgment.

"I KNOW HOW TO RUN IT"

I have a little boy, and when he was much smaller—three years of age—we were loaned a boat down in Florida, and we were going down the river. My friend Lee Fisher was back there trying to get the fishing gear ready, and I was running the boat. And my little boy Ned said, "Daddy, I want to run this boat."

And I said, "No, I don't think you know how to run it."

"Oh, yes, I know exactly how to do it," he said. And he pushed my hands out of the way. So I let him have the wheel, and he was heading right toward the rocks.

You see, we all say, "Lord, we know how to run our lives. Don't You interfere. We're going to be all right. We can handle it. There's nothing we can't handle." But Jesus warns us that you're heading for the rocks. You're in trouble. Emptiness, neuroses, complexes—the various assaults set in, and ultimately the judgment. Repent, be converted, while you can. "Now is the accepted time; today is the day of salvation."

CHAPTER 8

THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE

FREE FROM WHAT?

Now, what does the truth do? It sets you free. “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Free from what?

FREE FROM THE PENALTY OF SIN

First, Christ sets you free from the penalty of sin. Yes, there’s a penalty to sin. Now we’re all sinners—every one of us a sinner—and we’re all under the penalty of sin, which is death. “The wages of sin is death,” the Bible says. Now death carries with it the idea of separation from God, in this life and in the life to come.

THE RICH YOUNG RULER

The rich young ruler came to Jesus, and he said, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” He wanted life here, and he wanted life to come, because he felt the deadness of his spirit and the deadness of his soul. But he wasn’t willing to pay the price. There’s a price if you come to Christ.

The rich young ruler tried to bargain with Jesus. He wanted Jesus to lower the flag. He wanted Jesus to change the rules for him, so he could get into the kingdom. But Jesus will never lower the flag. He’ll never compromise. He’ll never change the rules. You’ve got to come to Christ just like people did two thousand years ago, if you’re ever to get to heaven.

SOPHISTICATED AMERICA

We live in sophisticated America. We thought we had all the answers. And look at us: sending a man to the moon with one hand, and building gigantic bombs and rockets with the other to blow the world to pieces. Campuses torn apart; society being ripped apart. No, we don't have all the answers, because, you see, we rejected the truth. We rejected Christ.

Receive Christ in your life. Let Him come and put the pieces back together in your life, forgive your sin, give you purpose and meaning in your life, and take the penalty of sin away. "There is therefore now no judgment to them which are in Christ." He removes the penalty.

FREE FROM THE POWER OF SIN

Secondly, He can set you free from the power of sin. He said in this chapter, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." But when you receive Christ, this power of sin to dominate your life is broken. "Sin shall no longer have dominion over you," said Paul to the Romans. You can reckon yourself to be dead to sin.

Sin may be in your life. You may commit a sin, but it doesn't dominate you. You don't make a practice of it in your life. You have power over sin: the Spirit of God living in you, through a new nature that God gives you.

FREE FROM THE PRESENCE OF SIN

And then, thirdly, He sets us free ultimately from the very presence of sin. You read the Revelation, the twenty-first chapter and the twenty-second chapter, and you will see the most glorious description of heaven and the future world. And then it says this. It says that on the outside of this new world, this utopia that is called heaven, that God is building now for those that trust Him—"without are… sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." All people that live a lie will be on the outside, He said, excluded and banished from the presence of God.

Jesus said, "I am the truth." "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

CHAPTER 9

COME TO LIFE

"COME TO LIFE"

There was an ad in the *New York Times* today, a whole page, that said, "Come to life"—a great big Buick car. "Come to life." I'm asking you tonight to come to life: come to the truth, to the source of life, to Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Someday we'll be removed from the very presence of sin and the devil and all lies. We shall overcome someday! Till then we can have God's life right here on this earth. We can have a little bit of heaven. We can be set free from the bondage of sin and slavery and the devil right now. Christ can set you free.

BY FAITH

I'm asking you tonight by faith to receive Him, to receive the truth. Notice I said by faith. You cannot come with your mind alone, because your mind was affected by sin. You have to come like a little child. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children," said Jesus. You have to come like a little child, by simple, childlike faith, in receiving. And if you will, He comes into your heart and gives you a new nature, and you can go out and live a new life.

Now it's hard, and it's tough, and it's rough to follow Christ. I don't want you to come under any false illusion. But when you make that commitment, you don't go back into the world and back to your house and back to your neighborhood to live the Christian life alone. He goes with you.

CHAPTER 10

THE INVITATION

COME PUBLICLY

I'm going to ask you to come tonight and receive Him openly and publicly. Every person that He called in the New Testament, He called publicly. There was a reason for it. He said, "If you're not willing to acknowledge Me before men, I'll not acknowledge you before My Father which is in heaven." Come publicly.

I'm going to ask you, from all over this stadium, to get up out of your seat—hundreds of you—and come and stand in front of this platform quietly and reverently, and say tonight, "I want to receive Christ. I want the truth. I want the truth to dominate my life." You get up and come right now, from all over: men, women, young people. God has spoken to you tonight. You need Christ. You come. We're going to wait.

(Announcer) As hundreds are responding to Mr. Graham's invitation to make a public commitment to Jesus Christ, you can make that same commitment right where you are. Just pick up the phone and call the number you see on your screen. Special friends are waiting to talk with you and pray with you about this most important decision.

THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE

I do not know whether you can see this great scene here at the Garden in New York or not, but hundreds of people are coming from all over this great amphitheater to receive Christ as the way and the truth and the life in their hearts. You can make that same commitment right now, in your home, where you are watching by television. God help you to make that commitment tonight.

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, just call that number that is on the screen. There'll 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 8:32 — Ye shall know the truth. (Named by chapter and verse.) *(Chapters 1, 3, 8)*

John 8:44* — Ye are of your father the devil. *(Chapter 2)*

2 Thessalonians 2:10-11 — They shall believe a lie. (Chapter named.) *(Chapter 2)*

Romans 1:25 — Changed the truth of God into a lie. (Chapter named.) *(Chapter 2)*

Romans 1:18 — Who hold the truth in unrighteousness. (Named by chapter and verse.) *(Chapter 2)*

Matthew 15:8* — Honoring God with the lips; the heart far from Him. *(Chapter 2)*

Romans 2:2 — The judgment of God is according to truth. (Named by chapter and verse.) *(Chapter 2)*

John 18:38* — Pilate: "What is truth?" *(Chapter 3)*

Job 19:25* — "I know that my redeemer liveth." *(Chapter 3)*

2 Timothy 1:12* — "I know whom I have believed." *(Chapter 3)*

1 John 5:13* — That ye may know that ye have eternal life. *(Chapter 3)*

John 18:37* — Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice. *(Chapter 3)*

John 14:6* — "I am the way, the truth, and the life." *(Chapters 4, 10)*

John 8:24 — Ye shall die in your sins. (Named by chapter and verse.) *(Chapter 4)*

Mark 7:21-23* — Out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts. *(Chapter 5)*

John 3:7* — Ye must be born again. *(Chapter 5)*

Galatians 5:22-23* — The fruit of the Spirit. *(Chapter 5)*

Matthew 25:35-40 — The least of these. (Named by chapter and verse.) *(Chapter 6)*

Matthew 3:7* — Flee from the wrath to come. *(Chapter 6)*

Matthew 12:36* — Every idle word. *(Chapter 6)*

Luke 13:3* — Except ye repent, ye shall perish. *(Chapter 6)*

Matthew 18:3* — Except ye be converted. *(Chapters 6, 9)*

Matthew 7:13-14* — The broad road and the narrow road. *(Chapter 6)*

Proverbs 14:12* — A way which seemeth right unto a man. *(Chapter 7)*

2 Corinthians 6:2* — Now is the accepted time. *(Chapter 7)*

Romans 6:23* — The wages of sin is death. *(Chapter 8)*

Mark 10:17-22* — The rich young ruler. *(Chapter 8)*

Romans 8:1* — No condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. *(Chapter 8)*

John 8:34* — Whosoever committeth sin the servant of sin. *(Chapter 8)*

Romans 6:11, 14* — Dead unto sin; sin shall not have dominion. *(Chapter 8)*

Revelation 21–22 — The new heaven and earth. (Chapters named.) *(Chapter 8)*

Revelation 22:15* — Without are… whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. *(Chapter 8)*

Matthew 10:32-33* — Confess Me before men. *(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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