Living Sermons

A BILLY GRAHAM CLASSIC SERMON

LONELINESS

PSALM 102:6-7

"I'm like a pelican of the wilderness, I'm like an owl of the desert. I watch and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop."

BILLY GRAHAM

Denver, Colorado

Transcribed and Published by **Livingsermons.com**

LONELINESS

Preacher: Billy Graham

Publisher: LivingSermons.com

Watch Live Video Here

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Living Sermons

FOREWORD

Loneliness can follow a person into a crowded stadium, a busy city, even a church pew. In this message, preached in Denver, Colorado, Billy Graham begins with a lonely bird on a fence post and the psalmist's cry, "I watch and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop," and asks a question every heart understands: why are we lonely, and can anything truly cure it?

Dr. Graham traces loneliness to its root in the Garden of Eden, follows it through the backslidden heart and the empty promises of pleasure, and then leads the reader to the cross, where Christ was forsaken so that we need never be alone again. His tone is warm, personal and searching, with stories of his wife, his grandmother, his mother and his own children woven through it.

In preparing this edition, we have preserved the message and the preacher's wording as delivered. We have only removed time stamps, arranged the transcript into chapters with subheadings, and corrected punctuation and capitalization for easy reading.

Read slowly, with your Bible open. If you feel alone tonight, may you hear the One who stands at the door and knocks. And if you already know Him, may this message send you out to reach the lonely with the friendship of Christ.

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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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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A Spirit-led Publishing Stewardship

MAIN MESSAGE BEGINS HERE

CHAPTER 1

A LONELY BIRD

THE TEXT: PSALM 102

Now, tonight, the 102nd Psalm and beginning with verse five, well, say just six,

> *I'm like a pelican of the wilderness, I'm like an owl of the desert. I watch and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop.*
>
> **PSALM 102:6-7**

A WALK IN THE FOOTHILLS

Today, I went for a few minutes out into the foothills. Took a little walk down a little road. I didn't want to go too far because they told me there were rattlesnakes around there. I'm not a friend of rattlesnakes for some reason, or they're not my friend.

We have a lot of them where I live, so we have experience with them. I let my wife kill those. And she does. She's not afraid of, well, she's not afraid of anything that I ever heard of. But she's certainly not afraid of snakes.

She was born and reared in China in a town that she said she never went to sleep a single night that she didn't hear gunshots. And so she learned not to be afraid, because she never saw fear in her father and mother, because the town would change hands every once in a while as bandits or warlords would come in, and then finally the Japanese came. And my father-in-law had a big hospital and he lived through all that. And she was there seventeen years.

A BIRD ON A FENCE POST

But I want to say that today, as I walked out on that little place, I began to think and meditate a little bit. And I watched a bird. I don't know the name of that bird. It's a big bird and it has different colors. It may be a magpie, I'm not sure, but it certainly has a strange sound to North Carolina ears.

And then the bird sat on a fence post and he sat there by himself. No mate came around. Now, we have a lot of doves where I live. As you know, they mate for life. And they'll go around together, and they have friendship and fellowship, and produce little children, little birds.

(Laughter)

But this bird today seemed to be all alone, and I thought about this passage of Scripture that's found in the 102nd Psalm.

> *I'm like a pelican in the wilderness, I'm like an owl in the desert. I watch and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop.*
>
> **PSALM 102:6-7**

CHAPTER 2

A LONELY WORLD

LONELY IN THE CITY

Do you know, tonight, there are many lonely people here. Many single people in the city of Denver. Fifty-one percent of your population is single. And many of those people are lonely. And one of the supreme problems of modern society is loneliness. The modern city is a lonely place.

Here in America, seventy percent more people are living alone in one-person dwellings than ten years ago. A New York psychiatrist was quoted the other day as saying, “New York City is the loneliest place in the world for millions.” What would you say about Denver, or the town you come from?

An American university study reported that university students are the loneliest people in the United States, followed by divorced people. Are you lonely?

TRYING TO ESCAPE

One of the principal causes of loneliness is alcoholism and drug use. Alcohol and drugs are efforts to escape loneliness. Drugs take you on a trip, and being drunk makes you feel that you’ve got somebody with you. On the other hand, going with Christ is a trip in which you really always have Jesus with you as your Lord and companion. You cannot drink your way out of loneliness.

Most young people turn to drugs for kicks and get hooked, or peer pressure. But thousands turn to drugs because of loneliness.

A NEGLECT OF THE SPIRIT

A magazine cover story recently had “Our Neglected Youth.” It said that actually most of them are properly clothed and fed, but something is missing in the lives of millions. It’s a neglect of the spirit, the article said, which leaves them lonely and prone to drugs and alcohol, but all too often leads to suicide. What can be done about it?

HE CAN BECOME YOUR FRIEND

One of the key words in the Bible is communion, from which we get our word communication. Jesus came to a man one time that was lonely and sick and paralyzed. Thirty-eight years he’d sat in the same spot. Lonely and tired, without a friend. And Jesus looked at him and said, “Do you need a friend?” And he said, “Yes.”

This bundle of loneliness and human pain had been buffeted by the surging tides of thousands of people. But Jesus singled him out. He became his friend that day and He healed him. He can become your friend tonight, if you’ll let Him.

CHAPTER 3

WHERE LONELINESS BEGAN

A CHOICE IN THE GARDEN

Loneliness began, actually, in the Garden of Eden. In a perfect paradise. When man and woman declared their independence of God. They said, “We don’t need You, God. We can build this world without You.” So they made a terrible choice. They chose to turn away from God. They went their own way. Tried to build their world, and sin entered at that beautiful garden.

And it was given to the next generation, the next generation, the next, the next, down to you and me. And we all have the disease and it’s a fatal disease. Nobody ever escapes the judgment of the disease of sin. So the roots of loneliness were planted in the human soul, and it has been inherited by every inhabitant ever.

"ADAM, WHERE ARE YOU?"

Because, you see, in that garden God went looking for Adam. He knew where he was. But He went looking for him. He wanted Adam to know where he was. He said, “Adam, where are you?” And Adam tried to hide. Got some fig leaves and sewed them on. He didn’t know he was naked till then. But he couldn’t hide.

NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS

Loneliness has never been a respecter of persons. The world’s greatest artists, writers and composers, kings and queens and carpenters and plumbers and everybody, have felt this terrible thing called loneliness.

CHAPTER 4

AND IT WAS NIGHT

JUDAS WENT OUT

In John 13 it tells about the Last Supper. And it tells about the betrayal of Judas. And the Scripture says, "He went out and it was night." No one ever went away from Jesus but what it was night.

THE BACKSLIDDEN HEART

Perhaps there was a time that you knew the fellowship of God's people and you had peace with God. But you've backslidden. You've gone away, you've turned away. You've fallen aside. There was a time when you knew Christ; you felt you knew Him. There was a time when you felt you meant business with God. But now your heart has grown cold and hard towards spiritual things.

You've been pulled away by others, and other things and other gods and other pleasures that you know to be wrong. And you went out from the presence of God, and you have found that it's night out there. You don't have fellowship with true believers, and you don't really feel at home in the world you're living in. And certainly you no longer have fellowship with Christ.

And there is no loneliness quite so bitter as the loneliness of a backslidden Christian who claims with his mouth that he knows Christ, but deep in his heart he knows he doesn't.

STRADDLING THE FENCE

How many of you are straddling the fence, trying to put one foot in God's kingdom and one foot in the world's kingdom?

CHAPTER 5

SIN SEPARATES

FLEETING SATISFACTION

Sin makes us lonely because it separates us from God. And it was never in God's intention for you to be lonely. Hundreds of surveys prove that our society has not made us a better adjusted or happier society. Oh yes, we can have fleeting moments of sensual satisfaction. Creates a bitterness and a loss of sense of pleasure that no psychiatrist can cure.

The Bible says that "the wicked are like a troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose water casts up mire and dirt."

THE WOMAN AT THE WELL

Remember the story of Jesus with the woman at the well? She was a lonely woman. She had several husbands. Had had several husbands. No satisfaction, no peace, no joy. Jesus came and talked to her, forgave her her sins, transformed her life, made her a new person.

She went into the village of Sychar and told all the people that here was Someone that knows all about you. Come and see Him. And they all went out to see Jesus.

CHAPTER 6

THE LONELINESS OF THE CROSS

DESPISED AND REJECTED

The Bible says, “He’s despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Even though great crowds surrounded Him at times, He was alone. Even at the end the Scripture says, all the disciples forsook Him and fled. The crowds who shouted one day, “Hosanna!” that same week, five days later, they were crucifying Him.

"MY GOD, MY GOD"

And at last, we hear from the cross. Jesus, on the cross, dying for you and for me. God laying on Him all of our sins and our judgment and our hell, which He took on that cross. He says, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

In that terrible moment, something mysterious happened. No theologian can explain it. Jesus took your sins, your judgment, your hell. All the penalty that I deserve for my sins, He took on that cross, and it was a lonely moment. A lonely period when He alone had to bear the cross. And He became guilty of all the sins of the whole world! He experienced ultimate loneliness as He died for you and died for me.

NEVER TO BE LONELY AGAIN

I’ve never understood how a person can turn away from Jesus when they actually see Him on that cross, dying for you, and to reject Him, to turn away when He offers you forgiveness. He offers you a new life. He offers you peace and joy and friendship. Never to be lonely again.

Through His death Christ dealt with the primary cause of human loneliness: separation from God. Because hell, essentially, is separation from God. Hell is the loneliest place in the universe. Jesus suffered its agonies for you. Jesus was lonely for you.

CHAPTER 7

THE LAST HOUR

MY GRANDMOTHER

I remember when my grandmother died, I had the privilege of being there at that time. She sat up in bed with a smile and a glow on her face. Her husband had been wounded at Gettysburg. Lost an eye, lost a leg at Gettysburg. And she sat up and said, "I see Ben," her husband, who had died some years earlier. And she said, "Oh, the music is so beautiful!" And then she fell back on the pillow, out in eternity.

MY MOTHER

I remember when my mother was dying a relatively short time ago, and all the wonderful sayings that she left behind on her deathbed, because she just lived only for the Lord. She had a joy and a peace. You never went into her room that you didn't come out and feel that she was ministering to you. You didn't minister to her.

And even when she was in a coma, she woke up one night and quoted Scripture. And the nurse said she never saw such a look on anybody's face. And fell back into her coma and went into eternity.

There's a great difference, even in the last hour, between those who know Christ and those who don't know Him.

CHAPTER 8

THE LONELINESS OF DECISION

HE OFFERS YOU A TOUGH LIFE

Then there's the loneliness of your decision. Because, you see, Christ died for you, He rose again, He's living. He wants to come into your heart. He offers you forgiveness and salvation and assurance and peace and joy. And He offers you a tough life.

I'm not going to play games with you and tell you that it's easy to follow Christ. It's not. He said if you're not willing to deny self and take up a cross and follow Me, you can't be My disciple.

TAKE UP THE CROSS

Now the cross was a place where they executed criminals. It would be like today He'd say, "Take up the electric chair, and follow Me." He said, I'm going to suffer, I'm going to die. And He said, "If you follow Me," He said, "you're going to have troubles and difficulties and problems and persecution and maybe death!" Are you willing to do that? Are you willing to go all the way with Me to the cross?

Oh yes, in the midst of it there'll be His peace and His joy and His friendship and His forgiveness and His promise and the hope that He offers for the future. But there will also be the possibility of persecution and suffering and problems that you never dreamed of when you come to Christ. We've been in those parts of the world where people suffer because they come to Christ.

You must make the decision about Christ yourself.

CHAPTER 9

THE CAUSE, NOT THE SYMPTOMS

STRUGGLING IN QUICKSAND

Our reaction to loneliness is often to deal with the symptoms rather than the cause. We get involved in pleasures, parties, good times, sex. We get involved in our work. We throw ourselves into the social whirl at the school. We read one of the best-selling books which urges us to take control of our lives.

Any attempt to deal with sin without conversion is like struggling in quicksand. And how many young people today and older people are struggling in quicksand? Trying to save yourself, but you can't! You've come to the end of your rope. Turn your life over to Christ. Let Him bear your burdens. Help you solve your problems. Help direct and lead you in your life.

GOD'S MAN OR GOD'S WOMAN

How many young people here tonight do not really know what you want to do with your life? Or help you in your marriage. Who you ought to marry. There's a lady talked to me tonight who said she's just waiting for the right man to come along. And there are many like that. Be sure it's God's man or God's woman.

I remember I took my three daughters aside when they were, oh, they couldn't have been more than eight, nine or ten years of age. And I said, "Let's stop here in the mountain and pray for your husbands who you're going to marry. They're boys somewhere. And let's just pray that God will lead them and lead you, and that they will be men of God." Well, they looked at me as though their dad had gone crazy.

(Laughter)

But we prayed, and they got the right men too! One of them's here tonight. And we prayed the same way for our sons. For the first time in many, several years, at least both of my sons are here tonight. I don't know where they are, but they're here somewhere.

"BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR"

But you have to make this decision alone. If we search for an antidote to loneliness in drugs and alcohol and sex and encounter groups and psychological experiences, often it only serves to mire us deeper in despair, without a remedy.

Through Jesus Christ we can have the most fundamental relationship in life restored. He says,

> *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with Me.*
>
> **REVELATION 3:20**

CHAPTER 10

REACH OUT TO THE CROSS

THE PSALMIST'S ANSWER

The psalmist that wrote that about the pelican and the owl said, "O my soul, why be so gloomy and discouraged? Trust in God! I shall again praise Him for His wondrous help. He will make me smile again, for He is my God."

Loneliness is often God's way of letting us know it is time to reach out, reach out to the cross. And you'll never be lonely again.

A LETTER FROM A LONELY MAN

A couple of weeks ago I received a letter which said, quote, "About a month ago, my wife and I separated. She moved out of our house saying that she could not stand to be around me anymore. We'd gotten to a point where we could not communicate with each other anymore. We were throwing accusations, some founded and some not, and bitter, spiteful words at each other. So she moved out and went to live with another man until she could get an apartment of her own.

"On June the eighth, this year, I had come home from work, and after dinner, I felt a compulsion to turn on the tube. I attributed it to the loneliness and frustration I was feeling. Sometimes the tube can be an excellent fire escape for a short while, but it's not a good fire extinguisher," he said. "Anyway, I turned the set on and randomly flipped the dial. The station I had chosen was just announcing the beginning of the Billy Graham Crusade from South Carolina.

"I don't mind telling you, I was more than a little skeptical about televised religious programs, but I continued to watch. At the end of your sermon, which I felt was directed at me and my situation, when you called those people who

wanted to change the direction of their lives to come forward and receive Christ as their Savior, I hesitated, but then I did. At this time, my wife and I are starting to put things back on track."

CHAPTER 11

PUT YOUR NAME IN THE VERSE

"FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD"

Another one. Last night, I preached on John 3:16, and the people here said it all together.

> *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

And last night more than seventeen hundred people came and made their commitment to Christ. A few weeks ago... No, no...

(Applause)

YOU ARE THE "WHOSOEVER"

A few weeks ago, in one of our crusades, a man looked at that same verse, and the counselor told him, you can put your name in that verse. You are the "whosoever." For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoso—and put your name there—whosoever believeth, or committed his life to Him, will never perish but have everlasting life. Then he had a grin on his face and he said, "I like that."

You can put your name tonight in that same way as all of those did last night. God so loved the world, for you, that He gave His Son, and you put your name and say, "Lord, I open my heart and my life to You. I commit myself to You."

For some of you, it may be that you are going to recommit your life. For others, you're going to make a brand-new start. You want to be sure how you stand before God tonight.

WHY COME PUBLICLY?

I'm going to ask you to do what we saw those people do last night, and we've seen people in every continent of the world do. In more than threescore countries we've seen people do what I'm asking you to do. I'm going to ask you to get out of your seat, hundreds of you, and say tonight, "I want to serve Christ. I want to follow Christ. I want to receive Christ. I want to come to the cross. I want to put my confidence and my trust in Him. I want my sins forgiven. I want to know I'm going to heaven. I want to be sure that Christ lives in my heart." And after you've all come, I'm going to say a word to you and have a prayer with you.

You say, "Well, Billy, why do you ask people to come forward publicly?" Because Jesus—every person Jesus called, He called publicly. And He said, "If you're not willing to acknowledge Me before men, I'll not acknowledge you before My Father which is in heaven." There's something about coming forward publicly and taking a stand in public that makes it count.

CHAPTER 12

THE INVITATION

THIS IS THE HOLY MOMENT

I'm going to ask you, if you come from that gallery up on top, it's going to take you two or three minutes, so start now. And I'm going to ask that no one leave the stadium, please. This is the holy moment, and God is speaking to you, wherever you are. And if you're with friends or relatives, they'll wait on you. If you've come in a bus, they'll wait on you.

And after you've all come, I'll say a word to you, have a prayer with you, give you some literature to help you in your Christian life. Or you can bring your friend with you, but just get up and come, quickly, hundreds of you. Back over here, over there, upstairs.

You may be in the choir, and God has spoken to you even though you're in the choir. You may be a Sunday school teacher, you may be a leader in your church, but God has spoken to you about your need of Christ. You get up and come. Over here on the ends, everywhere, quickly.

THE INVITATION HYMN

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

(Announcer) As you can see, many hundreds are responding to the invitation of Mr. Graham to make Jesus Christ Lord of their life. You too can make that same decision. There's a phone number on your screen right now. This is your number for spiritual help and counseling. Write the number down. If the lines

are busy, just wait a few moments and call again. Special friends are standing by to talk with you and pray with you. Make that call now.

O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

TO YOU WHO ARE WATCHING

And you in other parts of the country that have been watching by television, you can make this same commitment tonight. And whether you're at home or in a bar or in a hotel room, you can have that knowledge that your sins are forgiven. That you're justified. And the word justified means just as though you have never sinned in your life. That's how God looks at you through the blood of Christ.

He will come into your heart where you are. And if you'll make that commitment, pick up the telephone and call that number that you see on your screen. May God help you to make that commitment that so many hundreds here in Colorado are making on this beautiful Colorado evening.

(Announcer) God bless you. And this reminder again, as Mr. Graham has just told you, we'd like to talk with you and pray with you, so make that telephone call now. The number is there on your screen.

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, NC 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.

Psalm 102:6-7 — The pelican, the owl and the lonely sparrow; the text of the message. *(Chapter 1)*

John 5:1-9* — The man who waited thirty-eight years by the pool is healed by Jesus. *(Chapter 2)*

Genesis 3:1-10* — Man and woman turn from God; God calls, "Adam, where are you?" *(Chapter 3)*

Acts 10:34* — "No respecter of persons," applied to loneliness. *(Chapter 3)*

John 13:30* — Judas went out, "and it was night." (Chapter named, verse not.) *(Chapter 4)*

Isaiah 57:20* — The wicked are like the troubled sea that cannot rest. *(Chapter 5)*

John 4:5-42* — The woman at the well in Sychar. *(Chapter 5)*

Isaiah 53:3* — He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows. *(Chapter 6)*

Matthew 26:56* — All the disciples forsook Him and fled. *(Chapter 6)*

Matthew 21:9* — The crowds cry "Hosanna!" at His entry into Jerusalem. *(Chapter 6)*

Isaiah 53:6* — God laid on Him the sins of us all. *(Chapter 6)*

Matthew 27:46* — "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" *(Chapter 6)*

2 Corinthians 5:21* — Christ made sin for us on the cross. *(Chapter 6)*

Luke 9:23; 14:27* — Deny self, take up the cross and follow Me. *(Chapter 8)*

John 16:33* — Followers of Christ will face trouble and tribulation. *(Chapter 8)*

Revelation 3:20* — "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." *(Chapter 9)*

Psalm 42:11* — "O my soul, why be so gloomy and discouraged?" (the preacher's wording follows a modern paraphrase). *(Chapter 10)*

John 3:16 — For God so loved the world; put your name in the "whosoever." *(Chapter 11)*

Matthew 10:32-33* — Confess Me before men, and I will confess you before My Father. *(Chapter 11)*

Romans 5:1* — Justified: "just as though you have never sinned." *(Chapter 12)*

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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