

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018

Remarks at a Lying in Honor Ceremony for Billy Graham at the United States Capitol
February 28, 2018

Thank you, Speaker Ryan and Leader McConnell. And most importantly, thank you to the entire Graham family for honoring us with your presence here today. Thank you.

In the spring of 1934, Billy Graham's father allowed a group of Charlotte businessmen to use a portion of the family's dairy farm to gather for a day of prayer. On that day, the men prayed for the city. They prayed that, "Out of Charlotte, the Lord would raise up someone to preach the Gospel to the ends of the Earth."

We are here today, more than 80 years later, because that prayer was truly answered.

Billy Graham was 15 years old at the time. Just a few months later, he accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. That choice didn't just change Billy's life, it changed our lives. It changed our country, and it changed, in fact, the entire world.

The North Carolina farm boy walked out of those fields into a great and beautiful history. Starting at a small Bible school in Florida, he soon led a nationwide revival: from a large tent in Los Angeles, to 100,000 people in a single day at Yankee Stadium, to more than 2 million people at Madison Square Garden, over 16 weeks in 1957.

And I remember that, because my father said to me, "Come on, son," and by the way, he said, "Come on, mom. Let's go see Billy Graham at Yankee Stadium." And it was something very special.

But Americans came in droves to hear that great young preacher. Fred Trump was a big fan. Fred Trump was my father.

In London, Tokyo, Seoul, Bogota, Moscow, New Delhi, Saigon, Johannesburg, and scores of other places all over the world, Reverend Graham shared the power of God's word with more than 200 million people in person and countless others through television and radio, where people loved to watch and listen.

In 1978, with the support of the Catholic Bishop who would soon become Pope John Paul II, Reverend Graham went to Poland and spoke of the meaning of the cross to a people suffering under the soulless oppression of communism.

Billy Graham carried his message around the world, but his heart, as Franklin will tell you, was always in America. He took his message to the poorest places, to the downtrodden and to the brokenhearted, to inmates in prison, and to the overlooked and the neglected. He felt a great passion for those that were neglected.

Everywhere he went, Reverend Graham delivered the same beautiful message: God loves you. That was his message. God loves you.

We can only imagine the number of lives touched by the preaching and the prayers of Billy Graham: the hearts he changed, the sorrows he eased, and the joy he brought to so many. The testimony is endless.

Today we give thanks for this extraordinary life. And it's very fitting that we do so right here in the Rotunda of the United States Capitol, where the memory of the American people is enshrined.

Here in this room, we are reminded that America is a nation sustained by prayer. The painting to my left is of the pilgrims as they embarked for America, holding fast to the Bible and bowing their heads in prayer. Along these walls, we see the faces of Americans who prayed as they stood on the Lexington Green, who prayed as they headed west, prayed as they headed into battle, and prayed as they marched for justice, and always marched for victory.

Around us stand the statues of heroes who led the Nation in prayer during the great and difficult times, from Washington to Lincoln to Eisenhower to King. And today, in the center of this great Chamber lies legendary Billy Graham, an ambassador for Christ who reminded the world of the power of prayer and the gift of God's grace. Today we honor him as only three private citizens before him have been so honored.

And like the faithful of Charlotte once did, today we say a prayer for our country, that all across this land the Lord will raise up men and women like Billy Graham to spread a message of love and hope to every precious child of God.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless America. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:21 a.m. in the Rotunda. In his remarks, he referred to W. Franklin Graham III, son of Billy Graham and president and chief executive officer, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

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