

Billy Graham: Death the Enemy

BY **BILLY GRAHAM**

© MAY 1, 2020

[BILLY GRAHAM \(/CATEGORY/BILLY-GRAHAM/\)](#)

Billy Graham: Death the Enemy

by **Billy Graham**

© May 1, 2020

From the moment we are born, we start to die. Death is the most democratic experience in life, for we all participate in it. I stood once at the emergency entrance to a hospital and watched the ambulances as they rolled up. Doors were opened, and hospital personnel brought in people who had been involved in an accident, or shot, knifed or mugged. Others were cardiac patients. *How quickly death comes*, I thought. *Like the snap of a finger!*

But we think of it happening only to other people. We don't like to grow old, and we don't like the thought of dying. Our culture is unable to deal with the orderly process of aging and dying. If we can understand death and get a proper perspective on death, it will help us to live. I want you to look at death through the eyes of the Bible and learn what God's Word has to say about it.

First, the Bible teaches that death is an enemy of mankind and God (see 1 Corinthians 15:26). I am not speaking of the weakness and fear and pain and distress now, I am speaking of death itself. It is an enemy. It snatches away people in the prime of life, when they are still needed by their family, their work, their nation. It leaves behind the sorrowing widow, widower and children.

God never meant that people should die. There was no death in the Garden of Eden, no pain, no tears, no suffering. No military or police forces were needed; mankind was perfect in a perfect environment. But men and women had a will of their own, and they rebelled against God. That rebellion is called sin. The Bible teaches that death came because of sin, and death reigns today over the whole human race. It is a judgment upon mankind because of our sin. We sinners are all under the sentence of death. We age and we deteriorate because of sin. And because we are sinners, death, in a sense, is a blessing. It has delivered the world from people like Hitler and Himmler and Stalin. It gives every generation a chance to start over.

“It's more than making an appointment with God; you really have to know Jesus Christ. It's more than being a member of a church, more than being baptized, more than just living a good moral life. It is an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.”

But the Bible also teaches that this enemy, death, will ultimately be destroyed forever. The day is coming when Jesus Christ will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. Everything that resists the will of God will be destroyed, and “the last enemy that will be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:26). Those who are in Jesus Christ will participate in the

resurrection and will be given new bodies. These bodies will be glorious, powerful, spiritual, immortal, imperishable, sin-proof, age-proof and death-proof. We will have bodies like the body of the Lord Jesus.

Now, the Bible teaches that this enemy, death, has already been defeated. It was defeated at the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The final destruction of death lies in the future, and the fight with death continues at this hour, but the defeat of death belongs in the past, at the cross and the resurrection. Today death doesn't seem to be defeated. We read in the obituary columns of people who suddenly are no longer with us. But death is like a poisonous insect whose sting has been withdrawn.

One of the reasons we fear death is that the Bible teaches that after death comes judgment. In tribes all over the world there exists an innate belief that we are going to a judgment. We are afraid of that judgment because we have a sense of guilt. We know we have offended our God or our gods. That is the reason every culture practices some form of blood atonement. I majored in anthropology in college, and I learned that there is not a tribe or a people anywhere that at some time in history has not practiced blood sacrifice.

Scripture says that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness; and that is the reason Jesus died on the cross. In 1 John we are told, "The blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Apart from that blood there is no cleansing; apart from that death there is no conquest of death. Jesus had to die so that we could live; and He removed the sting of death by taking away the fear of judgment. As the Scripture teaches, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

When I preach at a funeral, I say to the mourners, "Go ahead and cry." There is nothing wrong with shedding tears over the passing of a loved one, but Scripture says we are not to sorrow like those without hope. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (Revelation 14:13). Those who have gone to Heaven in Christ are a lot happier than we are; they wouldn't come back for anything in the world.

I have heard preachers say about Lazarus, who was brought back from the tomb, “He didn’t want to come back. That’s the reason Jesus had to talk to him in a loud voice: ‘Lazarus, come forth!’ (John 11:43). He had already tasted the glory of Heaven, and he didn’t want to come back.”

The death of an unbeliever was well described by Samuel Johnson as he witnessed the passing of a friend: “I felt a sensation never known to me before, a confusion of passions, an awful stillness of sorrow, a gloomy terror without a name.”

The novelist Somerset Maugham, said, “Dying is a hellish experience.” But what happens to a believer—to a person who has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? First, death brings permanent freedom from evil. For those of us who have tasted the delights of God’s righteousness, there is a longing to be totally pure. We long to live in a society that is holy, in which there is no lying, cheating, hatred or crime. As long as we live on this earth, that will not be attained, for you cannot build a perfect society on the cracked foundation of human nature.

When I die in Christ, the Bible says I go immediately into the presence of Christ, into a new world that is free from the pull of sin and pain and care and anxiety. The Apostle Paul uses the word *depart*, carrying with it the idea of sailing away on a ship, or the freeing of a slave, or the solving of a great problem, or of going home. That is part of what death brings to the Christian.

*“The last enemy that will be
destroyed is death.”*

—1 Corinthians 15:26

It also means that the believer will be like Jesus. Death brings a final perfection to that sanctification of the believer that is begun on earth. Paul calls it a “crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day” (2 Timothy 4:8). The thought to

me is almost breathtaking. Crowned with righteousness! We have only tasted it here. I’m so excited about the moment when I will have the privilege of being crowned with righteousness that sometimes I can hardly bear it.

We will be like Christ in knowledge. In my library are hundreds of books, but I have read only a few of them. I wish I knew all that is in them, but I'll not know that until I get to Heaven. Here we see and know imperfectly. History is a puzzle to us; we cannot understand. We hold up a color slide to the light and see an imperfect picture; only when we put it on the screen with a powerful light can we see its detail. So it is with our knowledge of God and man. Here we know so little, but one day we shall see through the powerful light of God.

We shall be like Christ in love. So much of self is involved in what we do here, but one day in Christ we will have perfect love. What a glorious time it will be when we get to Heaven!

Some time ago a columnist suggested five things that ought to be done about death. He said, "First, accept the fact that you will die; second, make arrangements, if you are past 50 years, for the mechanics of dying; third, make provision for those you are leaving behind (check your insurance); fourth, make a will. Fifth," he said, "make an appointment with God, but I don't know how to suggest you do that."

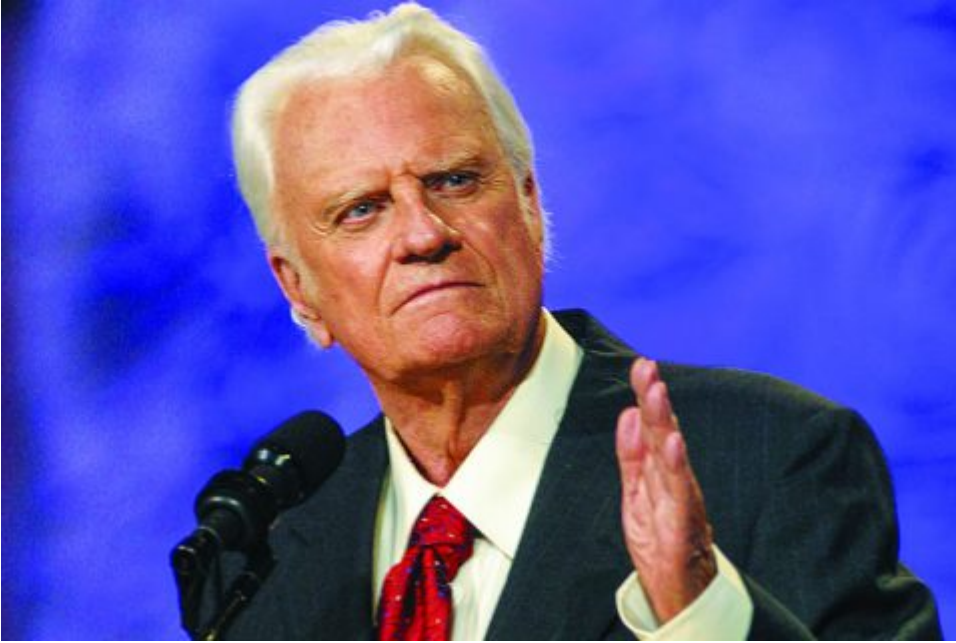
Well, I want to make a suggestion about how to do it. Repent of your sins, and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. You can do it now. It's more than making an appointment with God; you really have to know Jesus Christ. It's more than being a member of a church, more than being baptized, more than just living a good moral life. It is an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ in which you have become willing to take up your cross and follow Him; you have become willing to deny self and make Him your Lord and Master and Savior.

I am asking you to make sure that Jesus Christ is in your heart and that you are ready to face the last great enemy of mankind—death. Are you ready to go through the valley of the shadow of death, fearing no evil? Will His rod and staff comfort you? Is Christ yours? Will He be in that room with you when the last moment comes? ©1975 BGEA

Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, New King James Version.

Photo: Russ Busby/©1972 BGEA

Related Stories



[Billy Graham: The Empty Tomb and the Bodily Resurrection](https://decisionmagazine.com/billy-graham-the-empty-tomb-and-the-bodily-resurrection/)

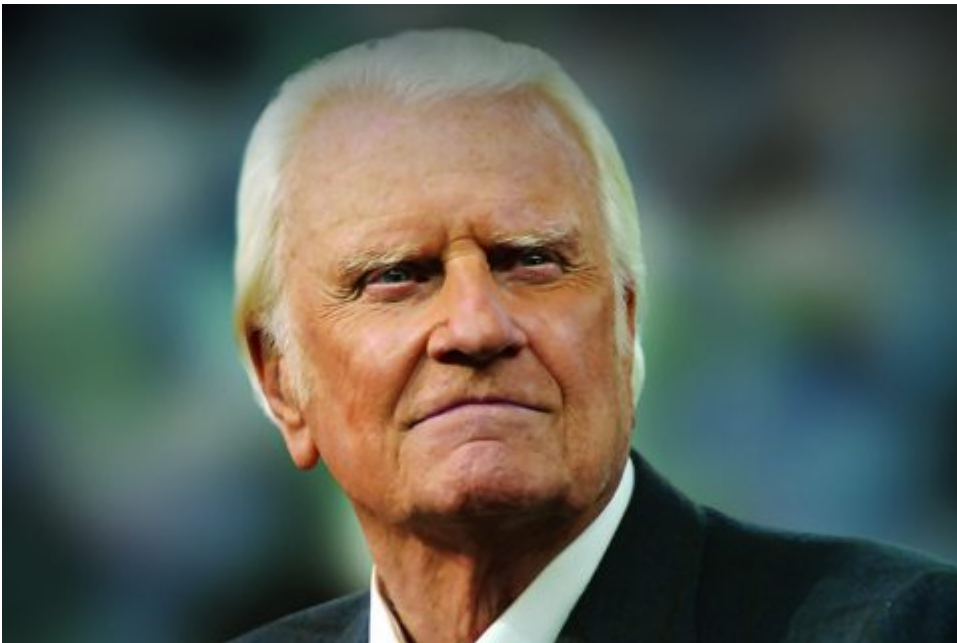
[\(https://decisionmagazine.com/billy-graham-the-empty-tomb-and-the-bodily-resurrection/\)](https://decisionmagazine.com/billy-graham-the-empty-tomb-and-the-bodily-resurrection/)





Billy Graham: Turn to God Before It's Too Late

(<https://decisionmagazine.com/billy-graham-turn-to-god-before-its-too-late/>)



On Two Year Anniversary of His Homegoing, Billy Graham's Legacy Lives On

(<https://decisionmagazine.com/on-two-year-anniversary-of-his-homegoing-billy-grahams-legacy-lives-on/>)





Billy Graham: The Answer to Our Deepest Needs

(<https://decisionmagazine.com/billy-graham-the-answer-to-our-deepest-needs/>)