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West Suffolk Epistle

West Suffolk Baptist Church

“Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant”



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Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America

The Preacher: Billy Graham and American Evangelicalism

February 22, 2018

Billy Graham died yesterday (February 21, 2018) at the age of 99. Graham was one of the titanic figures of American evangelicalism and his life spanned some of the interesting and tumultuous years of world history. We cannot even speak about 20th-century evangelicalism without referencing the impact of the ministry of Billy Graham and the movement he led. Born to a farmer in North Carolina in 1918, Graham lived a rather traditional childhood in rural America and he also experienced the tumult of adolescence, describing himself in retrospect as rebellious, though it was a rather quiet and uneventful rebellion.

All that changed when in 1934 Graham went to a revival meeting. The evangelist was one of the best known of the early 20th century, Mordecai Ham. At this meeting Graham responded to the gospel and eventually felt the call to ministry—a call which would shape evangelicalism both in the last century and the current one.

I first became aware of Billy Graham watching him on television when I was a child. I later came to know him personally when he spoke at my inauguration as President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. From those days watching him as a child even to my inauguration, Graham was characterized by one great message, the salvation provided by Jesus Christ.

Billy Graham came to adulthood in the aftermath of what was known as the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy in the United States. Liberal theology began to creep into mainline northern denominations in the last decades of the 19th century. By the time the 20th century came along, theological liberalism flourished in those denominations. This led conservatives to respond to the theological liberalism with an affirmation of the fundamentals of the faith. Eventually it became a movement known as Fundamentalism, and in the battle for control of those northern Protestant denominations, it was the Conservatives who lost and the Liberals who won.

As America entered World War II, it appeared, at least to those in control of the liberal Protestant denominations, that they were in the driver's seat not only in the leadership of their denominations but the leadership of American culture. They thought they had decisively silenced orthodox Christianity and they had largely expunged conservative ministers from the pulpits of their denomination, especially from the most prestigious and elite pulpits. But when Billy Graham arrived on the scene, he and others perceived the need for a distinctively evangelical form of Protestant Christianity that wasn't mired in what was considered to be the combativeness of American fundamentalism and its disengagement from the culture.

Graham became one of the singularly most important figures in forging what became known as American evangelicalism. In the late 1940s these men described themselves as the New Evangelicals because they affirmed the classic doctrines of Christianity without compromise, but at the same time they were representing the future, not just a return to something like the cultural conservatism of the 19th century.



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Billy Graham was himself indispensable in that movement. He became the founder of many important evangelical institutions such as Christianity Today and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, as well as serving as President of Youth for Christ.

What made Billy Graham such an innovator there in the last part of the 1940s was that he understood the power of mass evangelism, or as he called them “crusades.” By the first decade of the 21st century, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association had estimated that Billy Graham had preached in person to more than 250 million people. And as Graham’s cultural influence surged, so too did his relationships with positions of power. Most notably, Graham became an unofficial counselor to almost all US presidents beginning with Harry S. Truman.

Perhaps one of the most notable aspects of Graham’s life and most commendable is his sterling moral character. One of the things we must observe on the day after the death of Billy Graham, is that during his lifetime there was never even a hint of moral scandal in his ministry. He surrounded himself with people who would handle the finances. He was scrupulously careful that there could never be any hint or accusation of moral impropriety on matters of sexuality. What many in the cultural left now deride as “the Mike Pence rule” has been known to many Christians for decades as “the Billy Graham rule” and it served him well.

Finally, let me add a personal word about Billy Graham. When I became president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1993, Graham indicated to me directly that he wanted to do whatever he could to help me in the cause of recovering and reforming this institution, and moving it in a clearly, confessional and decidedly conservative direction. In that case I told Dr. Graham, who had an out-sized influence in the Southern Baptist Convention as well as American evangelicalism, that he could help me by coming to speak at my inauguration as President. He agreed to do so and delivered an address downtown at Freedom Hall, then the largest auditorium in the city of Louisville. He preached on the question, “Can revival come?” and he pointed to the future, to the gospel, to Christ, and gave an enormous word of affirmation that was invaluable to the great cause of recovering Southern Seminary. Furthermore, Billy Graham, in very tangible ways lent the power of his organization and some of his closest associates to recover Southern Seminary in the months and years that followed.

Concretely, the greatest gift that Billy Graham gave to the Southern Seminary during those very crucial years was to allow us to establish the first graduate school anywhere in the world that would bear his name: The Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry. This school is now an integral part of this institution and in carrying forward the mission Billy Graham loved so dearly. The establishment of this school gave enormous momentum to recovering the institution and reclaiming its original evangelical identity and convictions.

The last time I saw Billy Graham in person was at his house there in Montreat, North Carolina. We both knew it would likely be the last time we would see one another in this life. During that time with faint breath but with very firm conviction, Dr. Graham told me that he longed to be with his wife Ruth and that he longed to be with Christ in heaven. He spoke often of heaven. He yearned for what he had preached to others.



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Billy Graham's simple gospel message came down to human sin, and the fact that every single human being is a sinner and that our plight is absolutely impossible, except for the fact that God in Christ made atonement for our sins.

Billy Graham was a humble man with sterling moral character. He was so humble that he opened himself up to historical and theological critique even by those who were his most severe critics. He was unapologetic about his evangelistic methodology. He said at one point that his task was not mass evangelism, but rather personal evangelism on a mass scale. He pointed repeatedly to the historical truths of the crucifixion and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. He pointed to justification by faith and the promise of the gospel, that all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. He heralded the truth that if we profess with our lips that Jesus Christ is Lord and believe in our hearts that God has raised him from the dead, we shall be saved. He firmly believed that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ. That was the gospel he preached in the beginning, that was the gospel he preached in the end. And that means that yesterday morning when Billy Graham drew his final breath in his 99th year, he died confident in the promises he had for so long preached. Many people will honor Billy Graham in the coming months. But I'm confident that Billy Graham would say the real way to honor him is to preach the gospel he preached, starting here, starting now. ~ *Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.*

The Significance of Genesis 3:15

With the possible exception of John 3:16, no verse in the Bible is more crucial and definitive than Genesis 3:15: *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."* As Alec Motyer writes, "The whole of Scripture is not packed into every scripture, but we may allowably expect every scripture to prepare and make room for the whole. This is what happens in Genesis 3:15" (Look to the Rock, IVP, p. 34). Several important issues emerge all at once:

First, it establishes a principle that runs throughout the Old Testament, creating an expectation of a Redeemer who would be a descendent (a "seed") of Adam and Eve. Prematurely and horribly wrong, Eve thus thought her firstborn son, Cain, was its fulfillment (Genesis 4:1). Equally, in a deliberate echo of this line of thought God's covenant with the patriarch Abraham sounds the note of a "seed" that rings like a tolling church bell (Genesis 12:7; 13:15–16; 15:3, 13, 18; 17:7–10, 12, 19; 21:12; 22:17–18; and so on). No one reading the Bible can miss the connecting threads: God is doing something in the history of Israel that has its genesis in a promise given in Eden. When Mary discovers that she is expecting a baby, Gabriel announces to her concerning her future son: *"He will be great"* (Luke 1:32), clearly picking up a phrase already made to both Abraham and David (Genesis 12:2; 2 Samuel 7:9). The *"He"* is Jesus, of course. The Latin Vulgate rendered it *"she"* implying that it was Mary, but this was exegesis in the interests of dogma. It is not the woman who conquers but her seed.

Second, it establishes the parameters by which God will redeem His people from their sin. From the earliest times, Genesis 3:15 has been called the proto-evangelium because it is the first note of God's redemptive intention following the fall in the garden of Eden.



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The Significance of Genesis 3:15 - Cont'd

When Adam and Eve failed to obey the terms of the covenant of works (Genesis 3:6), God did not destroy them (which would have served justice), but instead revealed His covenant of grace to them by promising a Savior (Genesis 3:15), one who would restore the kingdom that had latterly been destroyed. God's method of grace is costly: the heel of the Savior will be bruised. Clearly, this is a metaphor that in the context is to be contrasted with the blow the serpent receives (the crushing of his head), but it is immediately apparent what this involves—the shedding of substitutionary blood. That seems to be what lies behind the provision of animal skins as a covering for Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:21. Blood needs to be shed for sin to be forgiven, something that accounts for why it is that Abel's offering (the firstborn of his flock) is accepted but Cain's (the fruits of the soil) is not (Genesis 4:3–5). The way is now clear: *“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins”* (Hebrews 9:22).

Third, this verse establishes a cosmic explanation for the disorder of the world: Satan is at work. True, there is no mention of Satan here, only a serpent. Adam and Eve are responsible for their actions and are punished accordingly, but their actions are inextricably entwined with the serpent's malevolence. There is more by way of explanation for sin than “free will.” The serpent is a part of that which *“the Lord God had made”* (Genesis 3:1), but he is no longer in the condition the Lord had made. Genesis draws a veil over the origins and nature of this rebellion (sin existed before the fall in Eden), and is only partially unveiled elsewhere (1 Chronicles 21:1; Job 1–2; Zechariah 3:1–2; and especially 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). Eve's sin was more than something internal; it came from outside, Genesis 3:1 seems to say. Did the serpent actually speak? Why not? But look at how he grows in the Bible to be the great red dragon of Revelation 12! The serpent is a murderer and a liar (John 8:44), as well as a deceiver (2 Corinthians 11:14; Ephesians 6:11).

Fourth, the principle of the victory of the kingdom of God over the kingdom of darkness is established from the beginning. It is echoed by Jesus at Caesarea Philippi: the *“gates of hell”* are resolutely set against the church of Jesus Christ, but Jesus assures His disciples that the church will be victorious (Matthew 16:18). The work of redemption unfolds in enemy occupied territory of deadly and tireless opposition by Satan and his minions. The enmity is one of unimaginable meanness and cruelty, which we ignore at our peril. The story of redemption is not in one sense a cliff-hanger to the very end, a tale the outcome of which is uncertain until the last page is turned. The precise nature of the serpent's destiny as the lake of fire is not disclosed until the end (Revelation 20:10), but from the outset his doom is sealed. Christian discipleship is to be worked out within the context of the assurance of victory rather than the prospect of defeat. We are to be equipped and ready for battle, but with the certainty that the decisive battle with the enemy has already taken place and has been won!
~ **Dr. Derek Thomas**



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On March 11th we had the pleasure and honor to have the Joyner's to be part of our worship time. Patrick Joyner preached a message from Philippians 1:1-30 entitled "Blessed Affections". After our service we had a time of fellowship and a meal. The Joyner's had four of their seven children in attendance.





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Please welcome into this world Jacob Daniel Kim born February 24, 2018 at 2:50 pm weighing in at 6 lbs. and 19 inches long. The proud parents are Daniel and Diana Kim.





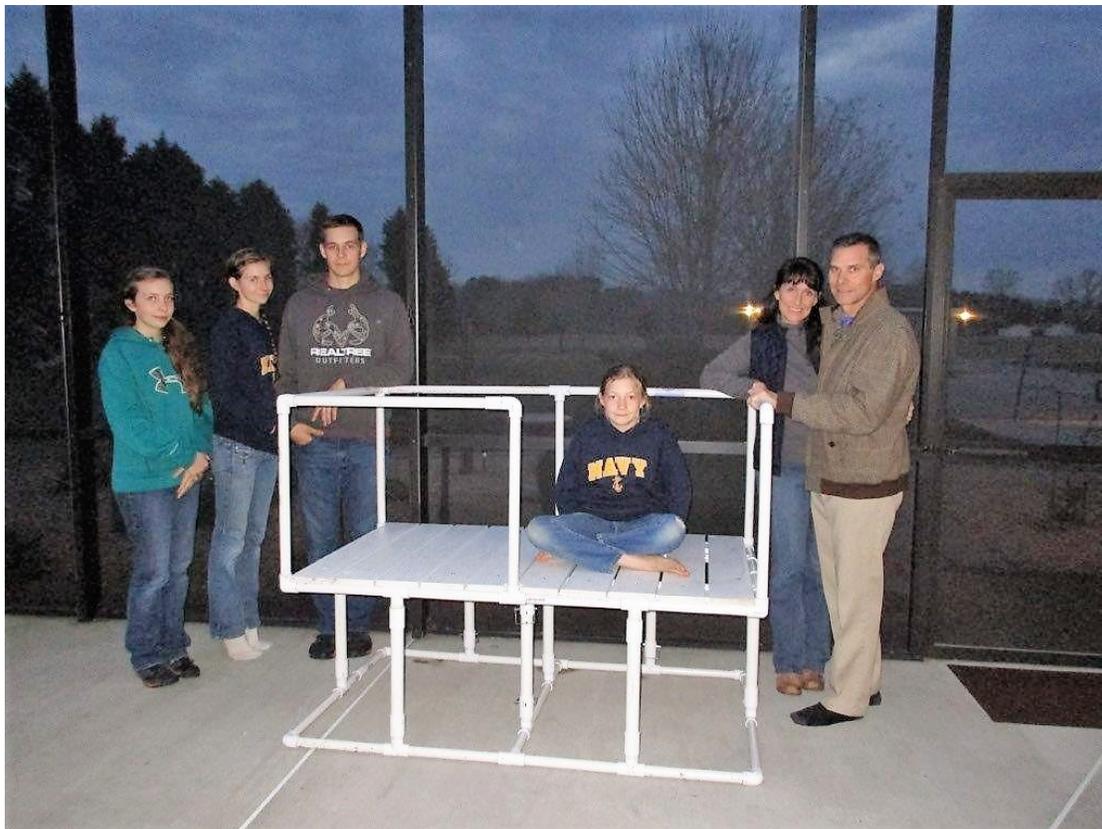
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Stationary Swim Platform

You may or may not know that the Joyner family built this swim platform for Luke Purser and brought it to the McPhatter's their most recent visit. LeAnn sometimes goes with Carrie to Luke's weekly aquatic therapy session which is helping him learn how to stand-up, balance and hopefully eventually walk. The pool at his therapy has a floor that the therapist can raise and lower with a remote control for Lukie's needs. There was a stationary swim platform in back of the room and LeAnn asked the therapist about it and she said it was for use in a pool that didn't have a floor that could be moved. Well the McPhatters have one of those at their home. LeAnn mentioned it to Rhonda Joyner in one of their million conversations and she asked what it looked like. So LeAnn sent her a picture. Well the next thing the Joyner family did was to build one for Lukie to use in the McPhatter's pool so that he can have his aquatic therapy more than once a week at the McPhatter's pool during the swimming season. This is an amazing blessing and a testament to how God knits together the hearts of His people to do such wonderfully sweet things for one another.





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Birthday and Anniversary Corner - March 2018

Birthdays

*Rose M. (15)
Les T. (19)
James D. (22)
Lydia H. (22)*

*Daniel K. (23)
Jonathan F. (26)
Tom S. (29)*

Anniversaries

None to Report

Enabled to Love

Here’s an excerpt from *Enabled to Love*, Dr. Burk Parsons’ contribution to the March issue of *Tabletalk*:

In Matthew’s gospel, we read that one of the Pharisees, a lawyer, confronted Jesus with a question in order to put Jesus to the test. He asked: “ ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets’ ” (Matthew 22:36–40). Jesus’ response is one of the most foundational teachings in all of sacred Scripture, as it summarizes for us the entirety of the law of God and what our duty is toward God and man. Jesus’ response is astonishingly simple and profoundly comprehensive in all it entails. Upon hearing Jesus’ teaching about loving the Lord with all our being and loving our neighbor as ourselves, we are left feeling like complete failures, for none of us loves the Lord or our neighbor as we should. Yet our ultimate hope is not in our own love but in the love of God for us and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit in us. It is only when we are empowered by God’s love that we are able to begin to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves (1 John 4:7–8). ~ **Dr. Burk Parsons**



West Suffolk Leadership

The West Suffolk Epistle is a monthly publication of West Suffolk Baptist Church.
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Please submit information to Walt Lawrence by the second Sunday of each month preceding publication by e-mail, in person or at the church office. The editor reserves the right to edit for content or space. May the Father be glorified in every word.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions from the contributors to this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of West Suffolk Baptist Church or it’s leadership.