

(Address by Dr. Billy Graham to
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MORAL COURAGE

This generation has been called "the tormented generation". Certainly this is the generation destined to live in the midst of crisis, danger, fear, war, and death. When we read of the scores of little wars in many parts of the world which never make headlines in America -- when we read the threatening statements of the Red Chinese and of her growing nuclear capabilities -- we sense that something is about to happen. We know that things cannot go on as they are. History is about to reach an impasse. We are now on a collision course. Something is about to give. Hard major decisions have to be made. The world crisis presses in around us -- we wish we could escape -- we wish it were just a bad dream that will be gone when we awaken tomorrow morning -- but there is no escape.

On that tragic November day in 1963, President Kennedy had prepared to say to the Dallas Citizens Council: "We in this generation are by destiny rather than by choice, watchmen on the walls of world freedom -- We did not seek this responsibility but we will not shrink from it." He was to close his speech after reviewing American military power, with these words: "Our strength is not in armament alone but as was written long ago, 'Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.'"

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There are two statements Jesus Christ made twenty centuries ago that are relevant today and that are rarely quoted. As a matter of fact, I have never heard a sermon on either of these passages.

Christ said, in Luke 12:49: "I am come to send fire on the earth." Then in Matthew 10:34 He made another strange statement -- He said: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his family. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

There are those who have tried to reduce Christ to the level of a genial and innocuous appeaser; but Jesus said, "You are wrong -- I have come as a fire-setter and a sword-wielder."

There were thousands of people in Christ's day who could not understand what He meant when He said He would set fire to the earth. There were good-hearted, kind people who were anxious to have a better world. They were idealistic but they were ignorant of the deep-seated disease of human nature. They looked at the world through rose tinted glasses. They were like the mother of Lee Oswald who said: "He was always such a good boy." They were like the professors of Heidelberg University who praised the goodness and character of Joseph Goebbels when he was getting his Ph.D. degree. They were like the people of Buenos Aires who thought Eichmann was a model citizen. They were like the people whom John F. Kennedy described in "While England Slept" -- they could not believe the crisis was as deep as it was.

The people of Jesus' day did not know, as He did, the deep-seated evil within human nature. They did not know how deeply fixed

were the roots of pride, greed, selfishness and lust in human society. They could not believe that Jeremiah was right when he said: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). They could not believe that the result of sin is spiritual death and that a holy God judges sin in nations as well as in individuals. Their understanding of evil in the world was shallow and superficial. It seemed to them that everything could easily be put right by better understanding between peoples, by better education, and by social solutions.

That first Christmas night when the announcement to the shepherds was made, it seemed to indicate that the optimists were right when the angels said: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). However, they had ignored the 53rd chapter of Isaiah which declared that He would be despised and rejected of men. They had ignored the many prophecies that indicated that the world would rebel against Him. They were certain that Jesus, with His wonderful personality and gentle nature, had come to lead them. They were certain that all would soon be peace and happiness in the world. But they were making a tragic mistake.

It is the same tragic mistake being made by many well-meaning people today who have only a superficial knowledge of the Bible. Jesus had to correct their easy optimism and warn them that His coming did not mean a quick utopia. He had to make clear to them that His coming, far from meaning peace, meant war. Far from being a drug to soothe society to sleep -- with man's evil nature still smoldering and liable to explode at any moment -- His message was a fire that would set society ablaze with division and strife.

He taught that His fire would eventually destroy the bonds of fear, ignorance, injustice and racial prejudice. But He also warned that this will mean division and strife. Those who are dominated by selfishness, lust and prejudice will fight the change that Christ wants to bring to their lives, to their family, and to their world. Thus, there will be division and strife.

This is a fundamental truth not only of the Bible but of the conditions round about us in 1966. We will only delude ourselves if we try to be more optimistic than Christ.

The basic problem facing our world is not just social inequity, lack of education, or even physical hunger. We are finding that highly educated and well-fed people have greeds, hate, passions and lust that are not eliminated by any known process of education. The roots of sin in our hearts are extremely deep and this is the basic cause of the world's problems -- and only the fire of the Lord can burn them out.

This is precisely what Christ came to do. He did not come to treat symptoms; He came to get at the very heart of man's disease. That is what Good Friday and Easter are all about.

This is why former Chancellor Konrad Adenauer wrote an article recently urging the world to turn to God. He says that only in a return to God can we find peace -- true peace -- and freedom.

These statements about fire and the sword of Christ are probably a shock to many of you here. We've been taught so long that Jesus was the Prince of Peace, and indeed He was. We've been taught that He was the very Incarnation of the everlasting love, and indeed He

was. But we have misunderstood the divine definition of peace, and we have misunderstood the divine definition of love.

Then how can this loving, peaceful Christ be reconciled with this flame-setting and sword-bearing Christ who comes to set the world on fire, you ask? There is no contradiction at all. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, interpreted this quote of Christ's as meaning: "I come to spread the fire of heavenly love over the earth."

There is a sense in which true love is a fire. Genuine love can never be complacent and passive. In the Bible it is spoken of as a "refiner's fire". It is the man who loves his school most who shouts the loudest for his team at a football game. It is the man who loves his country most who will fight to preserve its freedom. It is the man who loves his neighbor most who will fight against all that hurts, deprives and oppresses his neighbor. "Who is offended," shouted Paul the Apostle, "and I burn not."

Think how Christ, with righteous indignation, drove the money-changers out of the Temple -- how He often rebuked the Pharisees for plundering widows' houses -- and how He rebuked those who wanted to stone a poor, helpless adulterous woman.

Those who have a love of freedom will do everything in their power to keep the freedom that they have. Patrick Henry was burning with love of freedom when he said: "Give me liberty or give me death." George Washington was burning with love of country when he shivered from the cold and went hungry at Valley Forge. Those who hate tyranny and love freedom will take sides when little nations suffer terror and aggression from those who seek to take their freedom from them. But

Jesus warned when you take sides you will be opposed by those who do not understand the deep problem of human nature and a true definition of love.

To preserve some things, love must destroy others. It is never neutral!

When Abraham Lincoln was 22 years of age, he visited New Orleans and saw a slave girl being pinched, prodded and trotted up and down the room like a horse to show what good merchandise she was. Lincoln's heart bled. It was on this trip that he formed his opinion of slavery. It ran its seering iron into him then and there. Lincoln touched the arm of his companion and said tensely: "By God, boys, let's get away from this. If I ever get a chance to hit that thing, I'll hit it hard." Lincoln loved men -- whatever their color -- with a deep love and because he loved human beings, his soul blazed against the slave trade with an intense and relentless hatred. He fought against it with a passion that finally burned it out of existence. However, his love for men did not bring peace and unity. It did not bring him a high popularity rating. Read his biographies. It created strife and division. It took a war. It took a bloodbath because he hated tyranny, oppression and prejudice. He was damned and criticized more than any president in American history. It eventually cost him his life. However, it brought him the inward peace of conscience that a man can know only when he is morally right. Ultimately it brought him the admiration of the world and it made a place for him in history almost unparalleled by any other American.

Or, look at Winston Churchill. No man in history loved England

more, but during the '30s he was mercilessly criticized when he warned about the growing power and ambitions of Hitler.

In the same way, the love of God will force us to take sides when we are confronted with moral evil. If we love the poor and underprivileged, we will want to destroy the slums and ghettos that have no place in affluent America. If we love the young people of America, we will do everything in our power to destroy the things that hurt their character and jeopardize their future. But that will bring us inevitably into immediate opposition.

Even today in America if you are a patriot, salute the flag, sing "The Star Spangled Banner", and say you believe in America, you are immediately in conflict with those who are saying patriotism is passe.

Thus, we have found that as Jesus taught, love of God or love of neighbor or love of country does not necessarily bring peace.

God's love is ten thousand times more intense than any human love can possibly be. The Bible says: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." He came to burn out of the hearts of men and out of human society, lust, greed, selfishness and evil. He met with great opposition. He was despised and rejected. He was crucified. The blackest picture of the human heart is the Cross where evil Roman soldiers murdered Him. But though they killed Him, they could not destroy the flame of His love. The Bible teaches that He rose again and this Christ is in the world today with His sword and His fire -- fighting against evil, lust, selfishness, jealousy, hate and oppression.

But Jesus said, in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake."

It is my prayer today that we will recover our moral courage in this country. If we recover our moral courage, it will take a moral and a spiritual awakening that must sweep this country from coast to coast like a prairie fire. It could begin here. It could begin in your heart. I am asking you today to come to the Cross and re-dedicate yourself to Jesus Christ who loved you so much that He was willing to die for you.

The last verse of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" should challenge everyone of us:

He has sounded forth the trumpet
that shall never call retreat;

He is sifting out the hearts of men
before His judgment seat;

Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him!
be jubilant, my feet!

Our God is marching on.

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But there is a Confusion
Definition of Evangelism

1. ~~Manner~~ of Evangelism
2. ~~Manner~~ Message of Evangelism
3. Method of Evangelism

I disagree with the who say that salvation is possible - It is if we no longer believe that men are sinners at all - if we no longer believe in the judgment where men will give an account before God - if we no longer believe that men are lost in this life and in the life to come - ^{Certainly Evangelism takes any place at all - men in this world are} - men in their present power state - but I am not