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SENATE MAJORITY LEADER BOB DOLE REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY TRIBUTE TO REVEREND AND MRS. BILLY GRAHAM CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL CEREMONY MAY 2, 1996

Historians and scholars will soon be issuing their conclusions as to who they regard as the five or ten most influential individuals of the 20th century.

I believe that any such list will be incomplete if it does not include the name of Billy Graham.

I am not alone in this belief. In fact, when the idea of awarding a Congressional Gold Medal to Dr. Graham was first raised, it received something rare in this building--unanimous approval.

So, too, did the idea of honoring Ruth Graham, Billy's remarkable partner of 53 years, and a distinguished communicator of god's power and peace in her own right. Together, they are shining role models for those seeking to live a Christian life.

No one in history has preached the gospel to more people in more countries with more results than Billy Graham. But the man we honor today is much more than the greatest evangelist of our time.

He is also, for example, a champion of human rights around the world.

In the 1950's, he personally removed the ropes set up by local authorities to divide whites from blacks at crusades in the then-segregated South.

In the 1970's, he had the courage to go to Johannesburg to call apartheid a "sin."

In the 1980's, he journeyed behind the still firmly closed Iron Curtain to give hope to all victims of religious persecution.

Billy and Ruth Graham are also philanthropists. The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association has provided relief in many parts of the world for victims of earthquake, famines, floods, and other disasters.

And the Grahams are also the driving force behind a Children's Health Center to be constructed in Asheville, North Carolina.

The Grahams also share the title of author.

Billy somehow found time in his travels to write 18 books, and Ruth--perhaps even more impressively--found the time to author six, while raising five children, and watching over 19 grandchildren, and seven great grandchildren.

I am looking forward to Ruth's seventh book, which will offer a humorous look at life with Billy. You can see the constant twinkle in Ruth's eyes in the title she has given the book--"How to marry a preacher and remain a Christian."

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In just a few minutes, we will have the privilege of hearing from Dr. Graham. And there has never been a time when his voice and his message are more relevant.

As we survey the great moral challenges that confront our nation, we would do well to remember a meeting held in 1954 between Dr. Graham and Winston Churchill, himself a recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal.

Dr. Graham had just concluded 12 consecutive weeks of meetings in London, when Churchill invited him to visit #10 Downing Street.

At the meeting, the Prime Minister pointed at the early editions of the London papers, and commented that they were filled with stories about murder and hate. "When I was a boy it was different," said Churchill, and he looked at Billy and asked, "What hope do you have for the world?"

Dr. Graham responded that because of God, the world was filled with hope, and he began to speak of faith, and his commitment to Christ.

Churchill's schedulers had allotted five minutes for his meeting with Billy. But it wasn't until 40 minutes later when the Prime Minister finally stood up and declared, "Young man, I do not see much hope for the future unless it is the hope you are talking about. We must have a return to God."

Churchill's words were true then, and no one can deny they are even more true today.

A few years back, Billy was asked whether or not he would be the last of the truly great evangelists. Billy shook his head, and said, "God will raise up different ones, who will do it far better than I."

Billy, I can't ever remember disagreeing with you, but I know I speak for millions around the world in saying that no one will ever preach the word of God better than you, and no one will ever preach it with a better partner at his side than Ruth.

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