

Guide to
Billy Sunday Sermon Notes

Circa 1927, 1968

12 leaves

Accession Number: 2005-22
Collection Number: CN 012

Prepared by Lolana Thompson
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Abstract: Notes by Billy Sunday for a sermon about the victory Christians have over death.

Preferred Citation:

[Identification of the Item], Billy Sunday Sermon, CN 012, Folder [number], Archives, Dallas Theological Seminary.

Archives, Dallas Theological Seminary, 3909 Swiss Ave., Dallas, TX 75204

Biographical Sketch: William (Billy) Ashley Sunday was born November 19, 1862 in Ames, Iowa. His father died while serving in the Civil War. Unable to provide for her family, Billy's mother sent her sons to an orphanage. Sunday started playing professional baseball in 1883 with the Chicago White Stockings, and later played with Pittsburgh and Philadelphia clubs. He was converted about 1886 and became active in Bible studies as well as Sunday services. He married Helen Amelia ("Nell") Thompson on September 5, 1888, and they had four children. In 1891 Sunday began working full time for the Chicago YMCA in the Religious Department. Later Sunday spent three years assisting evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman in his meetings, until Chapman returned to the pastorate. Sunday began his own evangelistic crusade ministry in Garner, Iowa, in 1896. He was ordained in 1903 by the Chicago Presbytery. He received invitations to hold campaigns in other towns, and attendance outgrew the capacity of the auditoriums in the communities. Sunday had the idea to construct inexpensive board tabernacles with sawdust floors to house the meetings. "Hitting the sawdust trail" became synonymous with making a profession of faith. Sunday used colorful language and gestured as he paced the platform. He was described as "clear," "fiery," "magnetic," and "outspoken." He favored prohibition and strongly criticized alcohol. Sunday developed a well organized staff to conduct the evangelistic campaigns, including a team that arrived a few weeks before Billy. Almost one hundred thousand conversions were recorded during the ten week campaign Sunday held in New York in 1917. Sunday supported the U.S. during World War I by helping sell war bonds, promoting enlistment, and encouraging conservation of food and fuel. He was active in the Winona Bible Conference. Sunday's popularity declined after 1918 because of changes in public opinion and damages to his reputation due to accusations of plagiarism and lack of financial accountability. Sunday continued traveling through the country preaching until he died of a heart attack November 5, 1935.

References:

"Biography of William Ashley Sunday, Sr." undated. Online. Billy Graham Center Archives. <http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/GUIDES/061.htm#3>, Accessed 15 August 2005.

Bruns, Roger A. Preacher: *Billy Sunday and Big-Time American Evangelism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992.

Lockerbie, D. Bruce. *Billy Sunday*. Word Books, 1965.

Pahl, Jon. "Billy Sunday" In *Twentieth-Century Shapers of American Popular Religion*, ed. Charles H. Lippy, 410-417. New York: Greenwood Press, 1989.

Scope and Content Note: This collection, housed in one file folder, consists of pages 2-13 of notes for a sermon by Billy Sunday and the letter from the donor.

Selected Search Terms:

Sunday, Billy, 1862-1935

Donor/Source: Mr. Paul Beckwith donated these sermon notes in 1968.

Custodial History: Paul Beckwith served as secretary and pianist for Billy Sunday during the campaign in Bangor-Brewer, Maine, in 1927. Beckwith typed the material into a note book and retained the original notes until he sent them to the seminary.

Literary Rights: Copyright restrictions may apply.

Related Material:

The Papers of William and Helen Sunday, Chicago: University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library, Photoduplication Dept., [1978]. Microfilm.

Note to the Researcher: See the Container List below for more details about this collection. The handwriting of these sermon notes appears to match the handwriting of sermon notes in the Papers of William and Helen Sunday on microfilm. Paul Beckwith's letter accompanying the donation seems to imply that the sermon is from the 1927 campaign in Bangor-Brewer, Maine. In his biography of Sunday, Roger Bruns indicates that Sunday had a great memory and seldom referred to his notes. Paul Beckwith, however, commented that Billy Sunday "read his sermons." More research might help explain the seeming contradiction.

Processing Information:

The donor's letter was included with the collection because it contains relevant information.

Container List

Series I.	Sermon and Donor Letter	circa 1927, 1968
<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Title, Dates, Description</u>	
1	Notes Handwritten, penciled manuscript of pages 2-13 of a sermon by Sunday about the victory Christians have over death; some pages are on the back of letterhead for Billy Sunday's evangelistic campaign in Bangor-Brewer, Maine, May-July, 1927; letter explaining Beckwith typed Sunday's notes and kept the originals.	circa 1927, 1968