

BILLY GRAHAM SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

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A Servant of Christ**

Today in 2007 Billy Graham stands at the threshold of entering into his eternal reward. If one were to measure his service by the present world popularity he has accumulated through the years, he would conclude that Billy Graham was very successful. However, if one were to measure Billy's service by his record of compliance with the admonitions from the Word of God for ministers of Jesus Christ he would quickly learn, to the surprise of most, that Billy Graham has been an abysmal failure. Obviously writing these things is not going to make me popular in the eyes of those who glory in popularity and superficial religiosity. But I am not trying to be popular in the eyes of the world—rather faithful to the Word of God. According to the Bible a minister of Christ cannot have both. Faithfulness to God's Word makes one very unpopular. We will note Christ's example and the reality of faithful rebuke to those who compromise.

“Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise REBUKE thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him” (Lev. 19:17).

“Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: REBUKE a wise man, and he will love thee” (Prov. 9:8).

“OPEN REBUKE is better than secret love” (Prov. 27:5).

“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed...But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter BEFORE THEM ALL...” (Galatians 2:11-14).

“Them that sin REBUKE before all, that others also may fear” (I Tim. 5:20).

“According to the grace of God which was given to me (the Apostle Paul), as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day shall declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire” (I Corinthians 3:10-15).

“Therefore the world will hate you. Remember the word that I (Jesus Christ) said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his Lord.’ If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:19,20).

The following is a transcription of a radio message delivered back in 1971.
This was right at the peak of Billy Graham's success.

If the attitudes and sentiments of the average Christian in this day of apostasy and confusion are a criterion, then in all probability many, if not most of you, will not be my friends after hearing this particular message. However, I have learned that it is far better to be faithful to the Word of God and to the burden of God's order, which brings future rewards, than to cater to mere popular opinions. Also you could not regard me as a minister of Christ if you thought that I catered to popular opinions and pressures of the age, rather than delivering what I am compelled to believe is the truth of God, and a burning message from my heart. So then I have looked to God for direction, and I will be praying for you that you will allow God to prepare your hearts and minds in hearing these words. I am speaking primarily to those of you who are genuine Christians and who have some appreciation and fear of the Word of God.

THIS MINISTER'S JEALOUSY

I am going to criticize Billy Graham, I believe with prayerful, thoughtful and Biblical criticism. I am not envious or jealous, but rather I covet for him God's blessings, and I desire that he properly honor Jesus Christ Whom he professes to preach and serve. However, there is a sense in which I should be jealous towards Billy Graham and all believers—the sense in which the apostle Paul meant when he said, “For I am jealous over (not—of) you with godly jealousy...lest you should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (II Cor. 11:2,3).

I desire to be a friend to Billy Graham. But, perhaps there are some of you who are already thinking that anyone who criticizes Billy Graham is certainly not his friend! Allow me to remind you of the words of Proverbs 27:6, “*Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*” So, in criticizing, I desire to be a faithful friend. Also, there is a place and a time for a minister of Christ to obey the charge given in I Timothy 5:20—“*Them that sin, REBUKE before all, that others also may fear.*” Thus God orders that public sins are to be publicly reproved.

CARNAL POPULARITY

I was recently (in the Spring of 1971) driving home from a Christian Bible study meeting in Dallas, Texas one evening when I heard over the car radio a program on which Billy Graham was to pay tribute to the highly popular American entertainer, Bob Hope. This program originated from the exclusive International Ball Room of the Fairmont Hotel in Dallas. The occasion was the Byron Nelson Classic Golf Tournament Celebrity Party to honor Bob Hope, and to launch the Bryon Nelson Golf Tournament. Billy Graham had been selected because of his immense popularity, his up-coming Dallas Crusade, and his ability to play golf, to give the key praise and introduction to Bob Hope.

PERSONALLY, I HAD GIVEN UP HOPE YEARS AGO THAT Billy Graham was trying to only be “*a good soldier of Jesus Christ,*” as Paul charged Timothy, and beyond him to all ministers of Christ in II Timothy 2:3,4. In that passage Paul charged

further, *“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life: that he may please Him Who has chosen him to be a soldier.”*

SUFFERING OR SUCCESS?

My confidence in Billy Graham’s faithfulness had been taken away as it became obvious that he was merely interested in preaching the “gospel” to big crowds, rather than to “suffer the offence of the gospel,” as did the faithful Apostle Paul. Paul, you may remember, because of his faithful preaching was notoriously known by the world as a “Trouble Maker” (see Acts 16:20 & 17:8). In addition, in Acts 24:5 the orator Tertullus referred to Paul as a “pestilent fellow” before the elite gathering of Roman and Jewish dignitaries. Furthermore, the aged Apostle, after he had exhorted Timothy to be a good soldier and not to be entangled with the world, said, “I have suffered trouble as an ‘Evil Doer,’ even unto bonds” (II Tim. 2:9). Billy Graham himself, back in 1955, in referring to this splendid Apostle and his example, made the following observations in his message entitled, “The Scars of Battle.” This was delivered over the radio and also put into print:

“The Apostle Paul said, ‘I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus’ ...The word ‘mark’ is where we get our word ‘stigma’...Five times Paul received thirty-nine lashes. Three times he had been beaten with rods. Imprisonment, stoning, shipwrecks, fasting, sickness, cold, nakedness— These made him look the part when he called himself a ‘spectacle of the world and the offscouring of all things.’ Paul was certainly NOT POPULAR in his day. He was little known, despised and rejected by the world. It does not sound very much like the way we paint the ministry today...But this age is interested in MEDALS, not SCARS. James and John wanted choice seats, but Christ answered and said, He was not offering seats but SUFFERING. Nowhere in the New Testament do I find that Christians are to expect to be EASY, POPULAR, COMFORTABLE and SUCCESSFUL IN THE EYES OF THIS AGE. The servant is not better than his Lord.”

Oh! Billy! How you have so obviously departed from the paths of suffering to the paths of success! How soon you forgot the One Who said, “the servant is not better than his Lord,” and Who said, “How can you believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?” (see John 5:44).

BILLY’S COMEDY ROUTINE

As I stayed tuned in to that “Party Program,” with its worldly entertainers mixing suggestive and sensual jokes with light-hearted jests toward Christ and the Bible, I was sick and nauseated in heart. A godly Christian woman would have blushed and been embarrassed at some of the spicy jokes. I thought as I listened to Billy’s compliments to Hollywood’s best, and his “holy” humor, “Has Billy Graham become so callous by his long road of compromise and “cooperation” with the world, the flesh and the Devil, that now he can virtually become a comedian at will?” How accurate the newspapers were when they reported the next day, “But, Dr. Graham and singer Glen Campbell also stepped in on Hope’s comedy routine, whereas astronaut Gene Cernan provided most of the serious talk. The astronaut discussed his feelings in space...(and about God).” Oh!

How you have fallen from your professed “high calling” with a sickening thud amidst cheap laughter, Billy!

IMITATORS OF PAUL

Allow me to read Philippians 3:14-20 concerning the “high calling” of a minister of Jesus Christ the Lord as I give three reasons from the Bible why spiritual Christians MUST AVIOD Billy Graham.

“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus...Brethren, BE IMITATORS together of ME, and MARK (to point out and take notice of) them which walk so as you have US for an EXAMPLE, For many walk, as I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose GLORY is in their SHAME, who mind earthly things. For our conversation is in heaven...”

GOD’S PROVISIONS FOR PROPER JUDGMENT

There is a most important truth taught in the passage above. Christ Who said, “Judge not according to appearance but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24), and again through Paul, “he that is spiritual judges all things” (I Cor. 2:15), NOW gives us a standard by which we can judge professed ministers of Christ. Note again the words of Philip. 3:17—“Be imitators together of ME, and MARK them which walk AS YOU HAVE US FOR AN EXAMPLE.” The life and ministry of the godly Apostle Paul, is God’s standard whereby we can take a careful look at professed ministers of Christ, and spiritually and righteously judge them.

This command to follow Paul’s example is repeated at least five other times in his epistles. Note them:

- (2) II Tim. 1:13—“Hold fast the form of sound words, which you have heard of me.” This means that our speech and ministry should be modeled after Paul’s.
- (3) Philip. 4:9—“Those things which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do.” Paul’s teaching and conduct is our example.
- (4) I Cor. 4:16—“Wherefore I beseech you, be imitators of me.”
- (5) I Cor. 11:1—“Be imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ.”
- (6) II Thessalonians 3:6 & 7—

REASON NUMBER ONE

As we read this passage of Scripture I shall note that this is the first reason why Christians should avoid Billy Graham—namely, because he has failed to obey these commands of following the example of Paul in his ministry.

“NOW WE COMMAN YOU BRETHERN, IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST (that is to say, this is Christ’s command and/or by His direct authority) THAT YOU WITHDRAW YOURSELVES

from every brother that WALKS DISORDERLY, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how you ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you."

DISORDERLY CONDUCT

The word "DISORDERLY" that is used here is said to be "a military term" by all the lexicons. It simply means conduct that is out of order from the military rules of conduct. In this immediate case Paul will apply it to brethren at Thessalonica who were not laboring for a living and were thus "disorderly." However, the use of the word could have a broad area of application. It is actually still a fact that in the military when a soldier disobeys the military rules he is charged with "Disorderly Conduct." It is appropriate that when Paul exhorts ministers to be "good soldiers of Jesus Christ" (II Tim. 2:3,4) it is understood they must maintain "Orderly Conduct."

Where has Billy Graham walked disorderly? It is not merely by his fraternity with cheap Hollywood entertainers, but far worse than that. The Christian soldier is specifically told in Ephesians 6:12 that his battle is against SPIRITUAL WICKEDNESS, "*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world, against Spiritual Wickedness.*" Spiritual wickedness has to do with the false religious forces in the world. In II Corinthians Paul commands us to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and SPIRIT." Again, spiritual filthiness is related to the world's religious and spiritual forces. **It is actually here that the real battle between light and darkness rages.** It was in this realm that Christ had His greatest battles. Once Christ spoke openly to the religious rulers of His day, "Ye are of your father THE DEVIL" (read John 8:44 in context).

This battle was exemplified in the life of John the Baptist and most certainly in Christ. Whenever they publicly met the false religious rulers, who were spiritually misdirecting the people, they REBUKED them PUBLICLY. This is why those leaders wanted to kill Christ. He faithfully exposed their religious hypocrisies over and over again. (See the whole 23rd chapter of Matthew as another example.) Christ met the liberal Sadducees and the Orthodox Pharisees and rebuked them. He met the political minded Herodians and Lawyers or Scribes and rebuked them. Stephen and Paul met the religious philosophers and also soundly rebuked them, as did Peter and many others as well. BILLY GRAHAM asks them to step up on his platform and "lead in PRAYER." Billy has adopted a philosophy of "Cooperation" with all religious leaders. They will form his crusade committees. And they will, of course, receive a good supply of the new converts to refurbish their corrupt religious systems. This is contemptible cowardice, ungodliness and most certainly the ultimate in "DISORDERLINESS."

BILLY'S RELIGIOUS COMEDY ROUTINE

The span of Billy Graham's acceptance in the religious world is staggering if not humorous. The most blasphemous system on earth, The Roman Catholic Church, conferred upon Graham the "Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters Degree" at the Belmont Abby College, praised him as "The twentieth century voice of the human spirit," and placed him in the company of such men as "Picasso, Einstein, Churchill, Pope John

23rd, and Schweitzer.” And Billy humbly took the praise. (What a pitiful company in the light of eternity.) But then, Billy hops to the opposite extremity of the “Christian Religion” and delivers the dedicatory address at the Pentecostal Oral Roberts University and is applauded by that institution. He is received by Jewish religionists, greeted by Seventh Day Adventists, and accepted by plenty of “Fundamentalist” institutions in between. The Archbishop of Canterbury and other Anglican clergy “BLESS” his London crusades. These men in the main are baptized infidels, or to use the words of Christ—“whited sepulchers” and “wolves in sheep’s clothing.” In a press conference in Japan, Billy praised the Buddhists saying, “We have much to learn from them.” Back in Boston (U.S.A.), Cardinal Cushing of the Roman Catholic Church held a special press conference for Billy Graham after his crusade there and said, “Billy Graham is extraordinarily gifted and I am 100% for him. No Catholic can do anything but become a better Catholic (after hearing Graham).”

NO LAUGHING MATTER!

At the largest crusade Billy Graham is reported to have had to date (at the Los Angeles Coliseum), he appointed “Bishop” Gerald Kennedy as Chairman of the General Committee. This modernist Methodist also led in prayer at an opening meeting, even though he repudiates the Virgin birth of Christ, the Deity of Christ and the Verbal Inspiration of the Scriptures. When faced with the question by some of his loyal “Fundamentalist” promoters, as to why he has these infidels up on the platform with him, Billy has one of his reps give the silly argument, which goes something like this: “What better place could we have for these men to hear the gospel than right up here on the platform?” And, honestly, some simple minded Christians are staggered by such a “profound” answer! Such Christians may be sincere, but they are surely ignorant of God’s Word on the subject.

Just ask the likes of “Bishop” Kennedy and the “Archbishop of Canterbury,” etc., etc., why they are there. They already know what Billy preaches! But they are there because they are vicious THIEVES. Christ said, “THEY ARE NOT COME BUT FOR TO STEAL AND TO KILL AND TO DESTROY” (John, the whole 10th chapter). And again Christ said they are “WOLVES IN SHEEP’S CLOTHING” (Matt. 7:15).

Oh! You poor Southern Baptists and Fundamentalists! You fight and fight to keep the Liberals and Modernists out of your denominations, and then you have to sit with them on Billy Graham’s platform as if all is sweet unity. Also your “Baptist” Graham turns over any number of professed converts to those Modernists and Liberal Churches. I pity your gnawing consciences.

A SOBER REMINDER

To some of you who still think that “the end justifies the means” and therefore I have no right to rebuke “soul winner” Graham, allow me to point out another Biblical principle. It is best exemplified by Paul’s severe public rebuke of the much used of God Apostle Peter. In Galatians 2:11-21 we are told that Paul rebuked Peter “to his face” and “before them all,” because, as Paul says, “HE WALKED NOT UPRIGHTLY ACCORDING TO THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL.” When Peter was frightened into

compromise and began to fraternize with the religious Judaizers and “false brethren” who came to steal the new Gentile believers of Antioch to their brand of “faith,” Paul rebuked him publicly. It is obvious from this, that as far as God is concerned, it is just as much a part of the Christian minister’s job to expose the false spiritual movements and compromising Christians as it is to preach the gospel. IN FACT, preaching the gospel and “walking according to the truth of the gospel” ARE INSEPARABLE!

Billy, you have not “WALKED ACCORDING TO THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL” for most of the years of your ministry, as you have allowed and encouraged the various religionists to brand away the sheep into their unbiblical and ungodly sects! Where will your popularity and fame be when you stand before the judgment seat of Christ? (I Cor. 3:11-15).

A MODERN KING SAUL

Though I have criticized Billy Graham, let it be said that he is only *the product* of modern sectarian Christendom. Most all the churches today are nothing but social entertainment houses, and even the so-called “Evangelicals” are characteristically compromisers. Billy Graham is like King Saul of old. Saul was “head and shoulders above every Israelite,” and a mighty fine fellow to look upon and thus the people’s choice, and for a short time he was valiant—but, keep and observe the Word of God? No! Saul was “disorderly” and that is why Samuel said, “God has also rejected you (Saul) from being king,” even though God permitted this carnal Saul to continue for forty years. Read I Samuel 15:7-23.

REASON NUMBER TWO

This brings us to the second reason why Christians must avoid Billy Graham—Romans 16:17,18—

“Now I beseech you brethren, MARK them which CAUSE DIVISIONS and OFFENCES CONTRARY TO THE DOCTRINE WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED; AND AVOID THEM. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own innermost affections; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”

This passage commands Christians to “AVOID” any who are causing divisions in the family of God, contrary to the “doctrine” that they had received. The basis of determining who is causing division is observing who is teaching and walking contrary to the truth about the Church in the Word of God. The Church Jesus Christ is building is not the Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal, Anglican or Roman Catholic, etc. To support any or all these man-made religious organizations is positively causing division among God’s people. Billy, “the Bible says,” “let there be no division among you”—I Cor. 1:10. Of all the problems the Corinthians had, this was the first and foremost Paul dwelt with. Yet, you, Mr. Graham, tell the young converts “to join the Church of Your choice.” Just where do you find that in the Bible? When you preach the gospel do you tell the listeners to just “believe the gospel of their choice?” You wouldn’t dare do that (I don’t think). According to the Bible there is only “ONE” gospel, and furthermore, “if any man preach

any other gospel, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8,9). And yet, the very same Bible says that there is just “ONE BODY or CHURCH” (Eph. 1:22,23 & 4:1-4). But in your compromising you have chosen to ignore this truth even though the Bible indicates division among Christians is the most serious cancer in Christendom today. According to the Bible, when a person is saved, he is automatically added to the ONLY CHURCH Christ is building—“the Church which is His body.” To add or join believers to man-made sects is causing and perpetuating “division contrary to the doctrine which you have learned”—Rom. 16:17 & 18.

MORE RELIGIOUS POLITICS

The big Graham campaigns are always sponsored by the local denominational divisions. In fact, the success of Billy Graham’s operation demands it! In turn, the local denominations are rewarded with more members in their sects. So Billy’s action is actually feeding the very cancer that sucks the strength from The Body. Now Billy knows that divisions are wrong (cancers) and he also knows what the true Church is (the body of Christ), but if he were to consistently preach against the sin of sectarianism, then he would not be able to preach to the big crowds. And this is what is important to him—success in the eyes of the world. So, he sometimes glorifies the contributions of the denominations. Of course, when the religious climate is right, he turns around and glorifies the ecumenical movement for trying desperately to get rid of all the denominational confusion, which is such an awful scandal to Christ. And the world jokes about the politicians being crooked! Is it true, Billy, as the papers have sometimes reported, that down deep inside you were considering running for president? I am sure you could have gotten a lot of votes from just about everybody in religion.

REASON NUMBER THREE

The third reason why Christians should withdraw from Billy Graham is found in I Timothy 6:3-5—

“If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the DOCTRINE WHICH IS ACCORDING TO GODLINESS; he is PROUD...supposing that GAIN is GODLINESS: FROM SUCH WITHDRAW THYSELF.”

Paul in this passage states a principle that in the immediate context he applies to Servant-Master relationships. However, it should be clear that the same principle applies to a minister’s overall message. A minister must not place “GAIN” and “success” over the consistent proclamation of the “Doctrine which is according to godliness” in both his preaching and his walk or conduct. I have heard it said that though Billy Graham has compromised with religionists (or they prefer to use the word “cooperated”) he has actually never compromised his message, and the fundamental truths of the Bible. Those who thus argue have forgotten that a preacher’s godly “WALK” must match his “TALK” according to the Bible. Though 3000 were saved the first time Peter preached the gospel, yet later, as we have already noted, he distorted the truth of the gospel by his compromising “WALK,” and was publicly rebuked for it by Paul.

Thus, the Bible makes it very clear that there is more than one way to preach the gospel! The Lord prayed to the Father in John 17 this way, *“I pray that they (the believers) all may be one that the world MAY BELIEVE that Thou hast sent Me.”* Again Christ prayed for this demonstrated unity when He further said, *“That they may be made perfect in ONE, that the world may KNOW that Thou hast sent Me.”* It is not accidental that for Billy’s campaign to be a success the denominational differences must temporarily be suspended. But, what God wants is for these divisions to be suspended **permanently**. And therein is the fatal flaw in Billy’s message. He doesn’t really mean a permanent cessation of the confusion. No, indeed! He is actually feeding the very division that gives the lie to his message of the gospel.

True “UNITY OF THE SPIRIT” is to be “separated” from sectarian division entirely, and to live in the light of the one true Church Christ is building. Only then can the world really get the power of the message of the gospel in its intended fullness and understand the reality of Christ. Christ’s program is not for all the denominations to lay aside their divisions and come and hear Billy preach and then turn right around and go back to their denominational programs with more converts to fill the pews in their church buildings—which are nothing but monuments to the confusion. The sectarian confusion that reigns in Christendom is blasphemous to the gospel of Christ.

The Bible says that a godly Christian wife can win her husband by her LIFE, without saying a word (I Peter 3:1-6). Also, that a Christian wife who does not obey the Scripture by her CONDUCT, has actually “Blasphemed the Word of God” (Titus 2:4,5). In another place we are told that a Christian servant who does not obey his master, is causing the “Word of God to be blasphemed” (I Tim. 6:1). If this is true of Christian wives and servants, HOW MUCH MORE of PREACHERS who disobey the Word of God in their walk!

THE LAST LAUGH ?

Oh! Billy, have you so completely sold out your profession—your “high calling”—and are now so accustomed to lending yourself to the worldly politicians, the Babylonish religious fraternities and to adulterous Hollywood entertainers that your “gospel” has no more meaning to it than that expressed by Bob Hope when he joked, “BILLY DOES MORE REDEEMING THAN GREEN STAMPS???” Did I hear you laugh, along with the rest, Billy? I think one worldly commentator said it accurately when he observed that though “Billy Graham was a great and popular preacher, but he is most certainly not a John the Baptist!”