Billy Graham And Blind Faith

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Opposition to the teaching of Billy Graham by those familiar with the gospel plan of salvation has often centered on the subject of baptism, and rightly so. But, as demonstrated in a rebroadcast of a 1970s Billy Graham Crusade on NBC Wednesday, March 15, 2006, opposition to his teaching should also include his view of faith. As he presented the subject of faith in that telecast, his view of faith is at best the advocating of a "blind faith" and at worst existentialism.* Consider first his *presentation*, then a brief, biblical *explanation* of the subject will follow.

The Presentation

As Graham urged his vast audience to have faith in Jesus, he gave two examples of faith that will be discussed here. One, he said when you sat down in the chair you are sitting in right now, you did not press on it and shake it to see whether or not it would hold you. You just sat right down on it because you trusted that someone who placed it there made sure it would hold you. Two, he said when you are driving your car up a hill over which you cannot see, you do not stop your car as it reaches the crest of the hill and walk over it in order to make sure someone else is not driving on the wrong side of the road and would obviously endanger you. You drive over the crest of the hill trusting that other drivers will stay on their side of the road. Both of these examples have in common the position that faith is not based on any evidence. Further, the implication strongly is made that to seek an evidentiary basis for that which one believes would express a lack of trust.

Since so many across the years have taken what Billy Graham says at face value without ever "searching the scriptures whether these things are so" or not, there is merit in exposing and cautioning against the misdirection he has given. Once he establishes the precedent that decisions and corresponding actions may be made without the examination of and basis of proof, then he has successfully trapped his followers and proceeds to suggest a course of action that does not have any basis in revealed, biblical truth.

Graham told the millions of viewers in his prime time mid-week audience to do what Saul of Tarsus was told to do when Jesus answered his question, "What would you have me to do Lord?" to "receive him into your heart by faith." As you know, that is **NOT** what Jesus told Saul of Tarsus to do. Jesus said, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts 9:6; 22:10). In the city of Damascus Saul was told to "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Graham committed at least four

errors: (1) he misrepresented the statement of the Lord Jesus Christ, (2) he withheld the scriptural answer that included baptism, (3) he misled his audience into considering salvation by "faith only," and (4) he publicly wrested or twisted the scriptures (II Pet. 3:16).

The Explanation

Jesus invited the apostle Thomas to make physical examination of the evidence of the resurrection when he said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing" (Jn. 20:27). Earlier, during his personal ministry the Lord had encouraged this same scrutiny of the scriptures themselves when he said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (Jn. 5:39). Faith in Christ is not "blind faith" but emerges from the Bible which serves as substantial proof of heavenly realities or truths. Hebrews 11:6 says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." And, Paul affirmed, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

**Existentialism* (noun, 1930) is a "philosophical movement embracing diverse doctrines but centering on analysis of individual existence in an unfathomable universe and the plight of the individual who must assume ultimate responsibility for his acts of free will without any certain knowledge of what is right or wrong or good or bad" (*Webster's*, p. 435). The "without any certain knowledge" part of the definition is most troubling and has application in the foregoing discussion.