

IS IT POSSIBLE TO BE A TRAITOR TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST?

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If the involvement of the Woodmont Hills Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee, with the Billy Graham Crusade held at Adelphia Coliseum June 1-4, 2000, is not turning traitor to the cause of Christ, then it would be extremely difficult to identify what it would take to qualify as a traitor. The leader of this church which is sometimes known as the Family of God at Woodmont Hills is Rubel Shelly. In his church bulletin he wrote, "Woodmont Hills supports the decision of Dr. Graham and his ministry team to be in Nashville." He wrote further, "Several of our shepherds wrote letters of invitation to Dr. Graham to encourage him to come to our city" (*Love Lines*, Vol. 25, No. 39, September 29, 1999). It is necessary to establish the proof of the assertion that Woodmont Hills welcomed the Billy Graham Crusade to Nashville, and there it is from their own bulletin in the language they chose.

Also, it is necessary to establish the fact that not only did Woodmont Hills invite and welcome the Billy Graham Crusade to Nashville, but, additionally, they are like-minded with Billy Graham. As proof, read the following from the same edition of their bulletin: "Dr. Graham has a reputation of honesty, accountability, and moral uprightness" (*ibid.*). How can that be considered true when throughout his career he has been "handling the word of God deceitfully"? (II Cor. 4:2). Has the Billy Graham Crusade ever given the audience the idea that a person can be saved before and without the baptism the New Testament commands? Yes, in fact, in every single presentation beginning with the first large scale campaign in Los Angeles in 1949 to the Adelphia Coliseum campaign June 1-4, 2000, that error has been taught. To commend such a false teacher as being honest, accountable, and upright, as Shelly does in his bulletin, is to unfavorably reflect on himself.

Now that the proof has been established that Shelly and Woodmont Hills are like-minded with the Billy Graham Crusade, another statement of Shelly will be examined. He wrote, "The Graham Crusade will challenge the church in Nashville to reap a harvest of souls to God's glory" (*ibid.*). Billy Graham has never taught the truth of God about the church. He himself is a member of the Southern Baptist Church, not the church of Christ. Since he does not teach that Jesus died for the church shedding his precious blood to purchase it, Graham and his supporters at

Woodmont Hills cannot relate to nor identify with holy writ in Ephesians 3:21, which says, “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” A supposed “harvest of souls to God’s glory” cannot be reaped without teaching the truth about the one true church of the Bible because God is glorified “in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.”

What does Shelly believe Graham did during the Nashville Crusade which attracted a combined total of 200,000 people to Adelphia Coliseum at a cost of over two million dollars? He wrote, “Billy Graham preached the core message of the gospel for four nights. He spoke with passion and clarity about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus” (*Love Lines*, Vol. 26, No. 22, June 7, 2000). In the New Testament men inspired of God taught the faithful to “preach the word” and to “declare unto you all the counsel of God,” but never once may the phrase be found “preach the core message of the gospel” (II Tim. 4:2; Acts 20:27). In fact, the great commission includes the preaching of baptism, not huddling with some who state a church preference on a 3X5 card and singling them out from others who believe themselves to be equally saved who do not believe in baptism for the remission of sins (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:38).

In his instructions to the campaign follow-up workers Shelly said, “The purpose of my letter is not to proselytize them to our church but to encourage them to carry through with what started for them last week” (*ibid.*). Has Woodmont Hills grown so weary of reading the Bible that they have forgotten that Jesus said, “I will build my church”? (Matt. 16:18). It is not “our” church. It may be that Woodmont Hills belongs to the people in view of their doctrine, but the church of Christ belongs to the Lord. And, a person is not “proselytized . . . to our church,” but the Lord adds the saved to his church (Acts 2:47). No one is saved outside of Christ and his church (Rom. 12:5, Eph. 5:23). Shelly rightly may be ashamed to encourage someone to become a member of Woodmont Hills, but those who love Christ and his body, which is the church, know that in order to be saved the Lord must add those properly taught to it (Eph. 1:22-23).

Does Shelly please men or God? Read his statement about what Billy Graham wants: “Now he and the crusade team want all those thousands of people contacted and taught more about how to respond to the gospel in their daily lives” (*ibid.*). It is not “God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,” but Billy Graham and the crusade team “want all those thousands of people contacted and taught more about how to respond to the gospel in their daily lives” (I Tim. 2:3-4). The inspired Paul wrote, “For do I now

persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10).

The original design suggested in the September *Love Lines* was that those responding would state their church preference, and those desiring membership in the church of Christ would be baptized. The reason they were not is because Billy Graham did not teach them to be baptized as Jesus Christ did in passages like Mark 16:16, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” *Love Lines* in June admitted that those contacted during the big responses of the crusade have not yet been taught and baptized as originally planned. Shelly wrote, “Crusade response is a first step for many of those who came when the invitation was given. They may not know where to go next. They have a right to be encouraged and taught” (*ibid.*). So, it did not work out as initially thought and planned that respondents simply would be drawn aside and teachers would pick up where Graham left off, since he never has taught the truth on baptism and the church, and the penitent would be baptized. Instead, “they may not know where to go next.” Since they found the preaching of Baptist doctrine, the use of instrumental music of various sorts, the personal testimonies, the women speaking in the public assembly, the collection taken up at times other than the Scripturally designated first day of the week, and the emotional expression of rousing applause appealing, then it would be highly unlikely that they would find their way into a Scripturally organized New Testament church. And, unless they do, when this life is over, “they may not know where to go next” and find themselves in a lost condition.

Shelly, Woodmont Hills, and other congregations who participated with the Billy Graham Crusade in Nashville clearly are traitors to the cause of Christ. As Paul wrote to Titus, “This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith” (Titus 1:13).