

Discerning New Evangelicalism

Lesson Twelve

Billy Graham: The Poster Child of Soteriological Inclusivism

(Galatians 1:6-9)

Only Believism has spread forth mainly from Dallas Theological Seminary in the past 50 years. It removes such things as repentance of sin and “dead works,” receiving Christ and confessing Jesus as Lord and makes them all the same as believing. Although all of these words relate various aspects of believing, they do not all refer to the same act. They all can occur at the same moment in time, but they do not necessarily have to occur at the same time. Therefore they are not the same act although they all lead to the same results. Charles Ryrie says:

“Is repentance a condition for receiving eternal life? Yes, if it is repentance or changing one’s mind about Jesus Christ. No if it means to be sorry for sin or even resolve to turn from sin” (**So Great Salvation**, page 99).

Ryrie is right in that a person must change his thinking to conform to the teaching Word of God regarding the Person and purpose of Jesus Christ. However, he is wrong about the need to repent of sin. Repentance of sin is a complete change of mind and attitude about sin, self and the Saviour. Removing this requirement from the gospel message is obviously a direct contradiction to the clear teaching of Scripture, yet this position is adopted by many New Evangelicals. This is a critical distortion of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“¹ There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? ³ I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:1-5).

“¹⁶ Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. ¹⁷ Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? ¹⁸ When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:16-18).

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).

“⁸ For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though *it were* but for a season. ⁹ Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. ¹⁰ For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (II Corinthians 7:8-10).

The eradication of the need for repentance as part of a Biblical response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the outcome of the positivism of New Evangelicals. This *positive* approach to Christianity and the gospel message necessitates removing any mention of sin and its resulting condemnation, the eternal destiny of the lost in a place called Hell or the eventual and pending wrath of God upon all unbelievers and those preaching “another gospel, which is not another” (II Corinthians 11:3-4; Galatians 1:6-7). This is a serious distortion of the gospel.

This positivism of New Evangelicalism manifests itself in two other forms of unscriptural acceptance of those that preach “another gospel, which is not another;” being TOLERANT and NON-JUDGEMENTAL. The word of God condemns both of these two compromising vices of pseudo-spirituality.

“I am far more tolerant of other kinds of Christians than I once was. My contact with Catholic, Lutheran and other leaders, people far removed from my own Southern Baptist tradition; has helped me, hopefully, to move in the right direction” (Billy Graham, “I Can’t Play God Any More,” *McCall’s* magazine, Jan. 1978).

“I’m not a charismatic. However, I don’t feel it’s my calling to shoot great volleys of theological artillery at my charismatic brothers and sisters. . . More than ever we need grace-awakened ministers who free rather than bind: Life beyond the letter of Scripture. . . absence of dogmatic Bible-bashing” (Charles Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening*, pp. 188, 233).

“At Fuller we are characterized by balance in that we are an institution of ‘both-and’ rather than ‘either-or.’ We seek to be both Evangelical and ecumenical. . .” (David Allan Hubbard, President, Fuller Theological Seminary (*Christianity Today*, Feb. 3, 1989, p. 71).

This pseudo-spirituality is in fact in direct disobedience to Scripture. The New Evangelicals’ condemnation of those that are intolerant and forthright in exposing false teachers is completely contradictory of Scriptural commands.

“¹²⁶ *It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law.* ¹²⁷ Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. ¹²⁸ Therefore I esteem all *thy* precepts concerning all *things to be* right; and I hate every false way” (Psalm 119:126-128).

“¹ But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. ² And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. ³ And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. . . ¹⁵ Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam *the son of Bosor*, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; ¹⁶ But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man’s voice forbad the madness of the prophet. ¹⁷ These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. ¹⁸ For when they speak great swelling *words* of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, *through much* wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. ¹⁹ While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. ²⁰ For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. ²¹ For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. ²² But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (II Peter 2:1-3 and 15-22).

“¹⁸ This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; ¹⁹ Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: ²⁰ Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme” (I Timothy 1:18-20).

Harold Ockenga is reputed to be the man that coined the term New Evangelical. He defined it further in his forward to the book **The Battle for the Bible** by Dr. Harold Lindsell.

“Neo-evangelicalism was born in 1948 in connection with a convocation address which I gave in the Civic Auditorium in Pasadena. While reaffirming the theological view of fundamentalism, this address repudiated its ecclesiology and its social theory. The ringing call for a repudiation of separatism and the summons to social involvement received a hearty response from many Evangelicals. . . . It differed from fundamentalism in its repudiation of separatism and its determination to engage itself in the theological dialogue of the day. It had a new emphasis upon the application of the gospel to the sociological, political, and economic areas of life.”

There exists a major contradiction in his statement; “While reaffirming the theological view of fundamentalism, this address repudiated its ecclesiology and its social theory.” The “theological view” of Fundamentalism CANNOT be separated from Biblical separation from apostasy or from Fundamentalism’s “social theory.” Fundamentalism did not invent these two commands. Yet, these two commands are part of what defines a Fundamentalist. To repudiate either of these Biblical commands is to reject both Biblical absolutism (dogmatism) and the “theological view of fundamentalism.” Notice the clear demarcation from Biblical commands in four areas.

- ❖ Repudiation of Biblical ecclesiology (local churches are exchanged for the Universal Church; “body of Christ”). This distortion demands unity within *Christendom*. It demands unity *among* various local churches and denominations, rather than *within* local churches (Ephesians 4:1-7).
- ❖ Repudiation of fundamentalism’s “social theory” (i.e., evangelism/discipleship is God’s intended methodology to change any society or culture)
- ❖ Repudiation of Biblical ecclesiastical separatism (from apostasy and apostates)
- ❖ Adaptation of the “social gospel” and political activism as means to impact cultures and societies

It is clear that New Evangelicalism is the bastard child of Ecumenicism conceived through the compromise of disobedience and spiritual adultery with those denying both the gospel of salvation **by** grace alone **through** faith alone **in** Christ alone and those propagating a Universal (“One World”) Church.

“¹⁷ Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. ¹⁸ For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:17-18).

“¹⁵ Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. ¹⁶ But shun profane *and* vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. ¹⁷ And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; ¹⁸ Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some” (II Timothy 2:15-18).

“¹⁰ A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; ¹¹ Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself” (Titus 3:10-11).

“⁷ For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. ⁸ Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. ⁹ Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰ If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: ¹¹ For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (II John 1:10).

New Evangelicalism is a Christianity that costs the individual nothing. It also comes under the accolade of *Cheap Grace*. This kind of Christianity requires no commitment from its converts and no sacrifices. Many New Evangelicals recognize that this is the kind of Christianity they are cultivating, but yet they continue to plow the same ground and sow the same seeds. It is little wonder they continue to reap the Laodicean church of Revelation chapter 3. Gary Collins in his book **Beyond Easy Believism** (Word) says:

“Cheap grace sounds a lot like easy believism. It is a Christianity without cost or commitment. It sees religion as a personal hobby or an ‘extra’ experience which does little more than add zest and interest to life. . . The heroes of Hebrews 11 would have buckled under if their faith had involved nothing more than a casual commitment to easy believism. The thousands of believers who suffer today in Iron-Curtain prison camps do not maintain their stability and convictions because they have only a cheap grace” (page 35).

Biblical Christianity demands the highest levels of commitment. Jesus Himself expressed that He expected His disciples to be willing to sacrifice their very lives to bring people to salvation or they could not even consider themselves His disciples.

“²³ And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. ²⁴ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it” (Luke 9:23-24).

Richard Lovelace in his book **Dynamics of Spiritual Renewal** (Inter Varsity Press, 1979, pages 151 and 205) details another reason why Easy Believism lacks the commitment necessary to propagate a genuine Biblical Christianity. The success syndrome is another characteristic of an apathetic Christianity.

“Church members who have been conditioned all their lives to devote themselves to building their own kingdoms and whose flesh naturally gravitates in that direction anyway find it hard to invest much energy in the kingdom of God. They go to church once or twice a week and punch the clock, so to speak, fulfilling their ‘church obligation’ by sitting passively and listening critically or approvingly to the pastor’s teaching. . . One cannot help but wonder what the result would be if this mass of lay people could be spiritually released from their servitude in the American success system and reoriented to channel their major energies toward building the kingdom of God.”

Lovelace may not know it, but he has described the average New Evangelical whether that individual occupies space in a solid, fundamental Baptist church or in some New Evangelical Church. A local church is often not New Evangelical because it has a faulty doctrinal statement. A local church is New Evangelical because a good portion of its members are New Evangelicals as described in Revelation 3:14-22.

“¹⁴ And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; ¹⁵ I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. ¹⁷ Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: ¹⁸ I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. ¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. ²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. ²¹ To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. ²² He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Revelation 3:14-22).

Evangelist Billy Graham is certainly the New Evangelical *poster child* for Easy Believism. Although he does preach a commitment to Christ soteriology, he lacks a definitive presentation of the gospel which allows for his very broad acceptance of Reformed soteriological positions (sacramental conference of grace through water baptism, transubstantiation, consubstantiation and confirmation). This broad soteriological position of Graham is more evident in his writings than in his preaching. The following quotes from Billy Graham as recorded in the book **Breaking Down the Walls. . . And the Gospel** by Raymond Teachout (I highly recommend reading this book. You can obtain a copy of this book through Disciple Maker Ministries for \$6.00 plus postage).

“The infallibility of the pope is something Protestants can never accept, but I have a great deal of admiration for the pope, even though I don’t accept all of his theology. I don’t think the differences are important as far as personal salvation is concerned.” (Graham as quoted by William Martin in his book **A Prophet with Honor**, page 460-461).

“The idea of conversion is often a difficult problem to those who hold a high view of sacramental grace. Many of the theologians and clergy cannot accept the idea of personal conversion on the part of those who were baptized in infancy. However, I have been agreeably surprised at the number of theologians and clergy who have successfully bridged this gap and successfully overcome this problem. Many Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Orthodox and even Roman Catholic clergy have agreed that those within the Church need ‘converting’ even after baptism and confirmation. The question I want to raise is this: is the theology of adult conversion fundamentally different from that child who is cradled in the faith and nurtured in the arms of the Church? It is my opinion that we ought not to contrast the ‘nurture of grace’ and the ‘grace of conversion’ as many have tried to do. I am convinced that there are both, and happy is the man who by the nurture of grace is brought to the grace of conversion. Conversion can be an ultimate and proper fulfillment of all that baptism meant to the child, and perhaps later even in confirmation. Conversion must express itself in life as a change of mind, a radical break in the past, and a total commitment to Christ for the future. Whether conversion happens suddenly in adulthood or gradually through childhood is beside the point. The thing that counts is that it happens . . .”(as quoted from “Conversion – A Personal Revolution,” *The Ecumenical Review*, July, 1967: page 277-278).

Graham’s inclusivistic position is evident in the above statements. For him, conversion can be either a process or happen instantly. The critical point is that he believes that baptism and confirmation can be *stepping stones* to conversion and initial ways for a child to enter into a faith relationship with Christ. Since the child has no real knowledge of what is being done to him or on his behalf, Graham is stating he believes in the possibility of conference of sacramental grace through rituals. This fact is further supported by a statement made by Graham in 1961.

“I do believe that something happens at the baptism of an infant. . . We cannot fully understand the mysteries of God, but I believe that a miracle can happen in these children so that they are regenerated, that is, made Christian, through infant baptism.” (Quoted from the **Lutheran Standard**, Oct. 27, 1961 by David W. Cloud, dcloud@whidbey.net; **Billy Graham’s Disobedience To The Word of God**)

Notice there is no mention of believing the gospel or any attempt to define what Christ has done in the propitiation of God and the justification of man. Conversion is defined as only believing in Jesus (not the gospel) and accepting Him as Lord (commitment).

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1. Thoroughly discuss what is meant by the term *Soteriological Inclusivism*. _____

2. When it comes to discerning the theological errors of New Evangelicalism, why is it important to understand what *Soteriological Inclusivism* is? _____
3. Thoroughly define the following two soteriological aberrations and discuss what impact you think each has had on Christianity in general. Discuss what you think needs to be done to correct these aberrations of the gospel.
 - A. **Only Believism:** _____

 - B. **Easy Believism:** _____

4. Use the following verses of Scripture to discern a critical aspect of the gospel that is removed by Only Believism: Luke 13:1-5, Acts 11:16-18, Acts 3:19 and 2 Corinthians 7:8-10. _____
5. Read Revelation 3:14-22. Discuss how Easy Believism coincides with the teaching of cheap grace and why the First Church of the Lukewarmites (New Evangelicalism) is the fastest growing denomination in Christianity. _____

6. The following are a number of quotes from Billy Graham. Read them and underline those statements that are totally out of synch with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“The infallibility of the pope is something Protestants can never accept, but I have a great deal of admiration for the pope, even though I don’t accept all of his theology. I don’t think the differences are important as far as personal salvation is concerned.” (Graham as quoted by William Martin in his book **A Prophet with Honor**, page 460-461).

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