

Transcripts Disturb Billy Graham

New York

Evangelist Billy Graham said yesterday he could "not but deplore the moral tone implied" in the transcripts of President Nixon's conversations concerning Watergate.

Graham, a long-time friend of the President, said in a statement that reading the material had been "a profoundly disturbing and disappointing experience."

"What comes through in these tapes is not the man I have known for many years," he said. "Other mutual friends have made the same observation."

He said the conversations indicate that "a nation confused for years by the teaching of situational ethics now finds itself dismayed by those in government who apparently practiced it."

"We have lost our moral compass. We must get it



BILLY GRAHAM
'Disappointing experience'

back."

However, he said Mr. Nixon remains "my friend, and I have no intention of forsaking him now."

"Nor will I judge him as a man in totality on the

basis of these relatively few hours of conversation under such severe pressure. But I would be neither his friend nor God's servant if I did not point out what the righteousness of God demands at such a time as this."

Graham said he has spent several days reading the transcripts and was deeply disturbed by them.

"Our repudiation of wrongdoing and our condemnation of evil, however, must be tempered by compassion for the wrongdoers," he said.

"Many a stone is being cast by persons whose own lives could not bear like scrutiny. Therefore we dare not be self-righteous."

He said that "one cannot but deplore the moral tone implied in these papers, and though we know that other presidents have used equally objectionable language — it does not make it right."

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" is a commandment that has not been suspended, regardless of any need to release tensions."

Saying the material indicated confused "situational ethics" in the White House—a view that principles should be modified to suit the situation—Graham urged renewal of a firm moral standard.

"Nowhere is it more clearly or concisely stated than in the Ten Commandments," he said. "If this nation is destroyed, it will be the result of moral decadence within. Therefore, this should be a time to come to our senses, to return to God and his law."

"It would be nothing less than hypocrisy to call for a moral housecleaning at the White House unless we are willing to do the same at your house and my house."

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