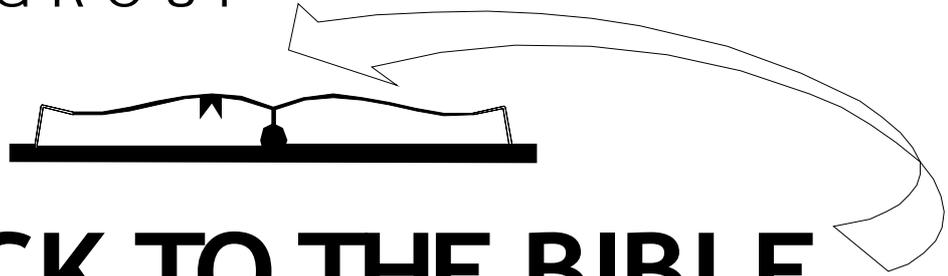


WORKGROUP



BACK TO THE BIBLE

Kampen, 20 May 2009, letter nr. 37

Dear brothers and sisters, elders and pastors,

Our last letter (nr.36 dd.15-11-08) contained an extensive study about the biblical concept Grace. We discussed two matters that caused quite a few reactions. We mean the aspects “once saved, always saved” and “are we elected or not?”. Our standpoint in both matters has not changed. We believe the Bible teaches us the Gospel is free for everybody and not restricted to a special group: the elect.

Also we keep to our meaning the Bible teaches us that after accepting the wonderful grace of God, we should not miss (lose) this grace of God. This is possible at all times. That is why the writer of Hebrews says in Hebr.12:14-15: *“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no-one will see the Lord. See to it that no-one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.”*

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1 DANGERS FOR THE CHRISTIANS IN AFRICA

In the meantime, in another part of the world in Africa the influence of the prosperity-preachers, is going on. In our letter, no.3 we wrote about it. Among others we quoted evangelist and bible teacher Ben Hanegraaff who regularly speaks on seminars in Africa. Ben Hanegraaff, a cousin of Henk Hanegraaff, director of the American Christian Research Institute, is not happy at all about the influence of the prosperity preachers amongst the Africans. Up till now he did not see much good come out of it. In his paper the Victory in 2001 he wrote the following:

“From experience I learned we have to be very careful with preachers, television programs, video cassettes, books and magazines, that instead of on dedication to Christ, focus the attention on acquiring money, wealth and prosperity. We have to take great care, because this so called “prosperity gospel” is a very dangerous and unbiblical message, that in our days is spreading super-fastly like an unholy oil stain over the world!”

In our letter no.23 dd.19-11-01 we wrote we have to be careful about the impression created in the Western world about massive conversions. We wrote the following:

“Those who know the African people agree that they are socially and culturally different from the Western world. If things are organised well and a lot of money is poured into advertising and a good location is obtained, then you can be assured of success. Often, because of unemployment there is time to travel long distances and stay a few days for the meetings. They also do not mind to be part of mass meetings. When a call is given from the pulpit, it is only normal that nearly everyone will respond. When therefore we hear reports of large numbers of converts we should keep this in mind.”

Since 2001 Ben Hanegraaff visits regularly certain countries in Africa, usually invited by befriended African church leaders. There he gives seminars to the inviting church members. Is that in these days still necessary?, some people ask him. He writes extensively about this in his paper the Victory of October 2008. He starts mentioning a few causes why revivals got bogged down in the past and then he writes the following.

“Now I want to mention a few things happening in Africa, matters that endanger greatly the spiritual life of the African churches! So on this moment there are for example in Tanzania “gospel preachers” active, who emphasise strongly the fact that they have received a special anointment of divine power. Because of that they are even able to change, before the eyes of the people, normal water into real...Coca Cola! But not only that, these “preachers” also show how they by “the power of God” are able to change a handful of dust into...sugar or salt. Also there is a “preacher” who shows the people how he, “by the power of God” can change stones into...pure gold!

Well, the result is, that many Africans, often by nature rather superstitious, firmly believe these “preachers” are indeed anointed servants of the living God! That is why their meetings are visited by many thousands of people. Their churches grow enormously and because most of their “pastors” believe in the so called “prosperity gospel” most of them are also very, very rich! And that is the reason why they have enough money to buy much time to broadcast on radio and television and so their name and fame is even more widespread right through Africa.

A result of the performance of these charlatans, Christian magicians, or let us just say... FALSE PROPHETS (that is what they are called in the Bible, see for example Math. 24:24) is also that churches and meetings where the truth of the gospel still is preached loose very many members to these-by their clever magical tricks, but sometimes also pure occult powers-very fast growing groups and churches.”

As workgroup we rejoice that Ben Hanegraaff is still asked to speak and that he takes the difficulties and deprivations into the bargain. In his travel reports he tells us how exhausting and even dangerous it is sometimes to travel in Africa. Not always is there a comfortable hotel in the area where he holds his seminars. Very often he has to make do with what in our eyes is a simple house or hut, to spend the night and stay during the days of the seminar. His food usually is the same simple food the participants use and the sanitary facilities often are not optimal (more often minimal). Despite all that he never says no to an invitation and every year brother Ben is busy give Bible studies to African Christians.

One of these seminars took place in Lushoto, a small town high up in the mountains of Tanzania. (where the temperature did not get higher than 19 Celsius). Here they had a very blessed Bible seminar. Ben Hanegraaff writes the following:

“But also in this small town it had been very difficult for brother Roderick to organise a seminar. In the beginning the different churches there only wanted to cooperate with our seminar IF THEY WERE PAYED FOR IT! Yes, because of the strong rise of the so called “prosperity gospel” and the performance of the “preachers” as mentioned before everything in Africa turns around money, money and more money!. Friends, it is too crazy for words...

but in these days also in the church money is more important than the proclamation of the truth of the word of God!!!

But we are happy to tell you brother Roderick is a real man of God and in the end he succeeded to convince the people in Lushoto that THE PREACHING OF THE TRUTH OF THE WORD OF GOD is more important than money and all sorts of false teachings that tickle the ears. Well, in the beginning the people in our seminar still played a waiting game, because, after all, they were curious for what that “Mzungu” (white man) had to tell them. Then at a certain moment there was a real spiritual break through and they understood that that simple message of the gospel we preached, was indeed THE TRUTH OF THE LIVING GOD. By the mouth to mouth publicity that followed more and more people started to come to our seminar! And what a marvellous time did we have together. Sometimes it seemed we were literally in heaven, so strongly God’s presence and greatness were in our midst.”

After this special seminar in Lushoto, Ben Hanegraaff was also guest speaker on the annual conference of the different churches Roderick is responsible for in Tanzania. This conference was held in Dar-es-Salaam and was visited by different delegates and other participants. It was a blessed conference. A Dutch sister in the Lord, who works on the Dutch embassy, spent two days at the conference and wrote us the following:

“I hope you arrived safely at your home with wife and family. Of the two weeks of seminars in Tanzania I was able to take part for two days, Saturday and Sunday. I enjoyed the clear messages you gave to the African Christian community, who came together in Kigamboni (a part of Dar-es-Salaam). From far and away people came to the seminar. For everybody food and a place to sleep was prepared. It was not as we are used in the Netherlands, because most of the guests slept in empty buildings, next to one another on thin mattresses of plastic foam. I want to say thank you to all sponsors in this way because you made it possible for brother Ben to preach the gospel world wide in a spontaneous manner and guided by the Holy spirit. God bless you all...”

2 DANGERS FOR THE CHRISTIANS IN INDIA

Next to Africa Ben Hanegraaff also is a regular visitor of a number of Christian churches of the continent of Asia. In India he has build up good contacts with brother Johnson. A trip was planned in October, several seminars were on the programme. Just before departure, he received an e-mail from brother Johnson, advising him not to come this time. The situation in India was at that time very dangerous, serious persecutions had broken out. The readers will have heard about it via the media. In the state Orissa on the twenty third of August an important Hindu leader (Swami Laxmanada Saraswati) was murdered by Moaistic rebels. The Indian people, who are mostly are Hindu’s accused the Christians openly. That is because the last few years among the Hindu’s, hatred has been developed against the Christians. Amongst the Hindu’s an extremistic group has come into being. They work in the same way as the extremists of the Islam. They make many innocent victims and stop at nothing. Their motto is: India for the Hindu’s. The police does not take very firm action and so in some area’s many people are murdered. The media speak about: committing arsons of houses and churches of Christians, live burnings of victims, people being raped, detentions in refugee camps that are actually prison camps. Eyewitness stories of local Indians confirm these horrible facts. Of course brother Johnson was acquainted with all this and decided to warn us and advise us not to come.

For brother Ben and of course also for his wife, this was a difficult decision to make.

Everything was regulated and arranged, the tickets for the plane could not be exchanged.

They decided, in spite of the negative advise of the Indian brother to go to the seminars anyway. With brother Johnson he made the appointment to drop the most dangerous meetings and hold shortened seminars. This meant also they would not make use of advertisements in the media. The result of that would be less participants at the seminars, also it would prevent unwanted people to come to the meetings. In his journey report Ben Hanegraaff writes the following

“But despite all these problems I can tell you that the meetings we held, WERE REALLY BLESSED MEETINGS! Meetings where people’s lives were changed and richly blessed by God. Also meetings where people testified they were healed and set free by God!”

Also we find in his paper a photo of brothers and sisters who stand and hold one another’s hands. He writes: *“What you see on this photograph happened more often in our meetings.... Brothers and sisters gripping each other’s hands and praying together for the great need existing nowadays among the Christians of India!”*

2.1 Help for Christians in India via the workgroup Back to the Bible

Because our website is bilingual it happens that English speaking people give their reaction. This is what we hoped for and that is why we (mostly Mrs Dikkie van de Kraats) translate the letter. So in the autumn of 2008 we were contacted by an American, a South African, a Tanzanian, a person from Myan Mar and a person from India. Why do we write this? Because just during this time of big problems in parts of India, as told about above, we had contact with the Indian Brother Jonathan. He introduced himself as the President of the Rural Care Ministries and shortly told us about the situation in the rural parts of his district. He is busy with an orphanage, a programme for children and for expecting mothers. The sanitary situation is very bad, because there is no sewer system. Drink water comes from a pond. People use the fields and the roads as toilets.

Because as workgroup we could not be of much help here, we proposed to deliver a few Bibles. We were very happy to receive an answer straight away. Yes! Please send us 100 Bibles and I will distribute them in the two churches I am pasturing.

And so it happened. Via a Christian bookshop Operation Mobilisation in India the Bibles were delivered to brother Jonathan. On Sunday 8 February 2009 100 Bibles were distributed in the churches. Brother Jonathan made a photo coverage and sent them to us as an e-mail. The Bibles are written in the Telugu language, so Christians of this language group can read the word of God in their own language. We are thankful we could do this. We paid for it partly with the gifts you sent to us abundantly last year. The amount of money necessary was not high as seen through our Western eyes.

Also we could help the person from Myam Mar. He was in training to be a pastor and was in need amongst other things of a special study Bible. But he could not pay for such an expensive Bible (Thomson Chain Reference Bible). Now one of the members of the workgroup had such a Bible (hardly used) in his bookcase. Again we wrote to the brother in Myam Mar, who told us he would be very thankful for it. And so this Bible has a place in his bookcase (?) and is used for Bible studies in the small church he is a pastor of.

We are very grateful for all these blessings and ask you to pray for everything written in this letter.

3 HOW A DELIVERANCE THEOLOGIAN CHANGED INTO A BIBLICAL THEOLOGIAN

In the divers deliverance ministries we have in Holland, many people, often volunteers, are active. Reading their experiences, we often find “success stories”. From our experiences, as members of the workgroup, we know that in reality this is not true. Many so called delivered

people, are not really free. Many of them are still wandering about struggling with their problems. They often go from one deliverance conference to another, asking for help and taking hold of the “delivering” brother or sister. Also there are many people getting disappointed and embittered.

In the following story an ex deliverance-theologian tells us what happened when he was a full time co-worker in a deliverance ministry. His name is Bob the Waay and he is now active as senior-pastor in the general evangelical church, the Twin City Fellowship in St. Louis Park in America. Because his account is very clear and may help some readers getting lose from the bondage they are in, we decided to translate a shortened story into Dutch. On the Dutch part of this letter it is to be found.

For you as English speaking readers we recommend to read the complete story on the website of Bob the Waay: <http://cicministry.org/commentary/issue78.htm>

The following bible text was very helpful to Bob the Waay. It was his means of escape from his entanglement in the spiritual warfare movement.

“And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.” 2Tim.2:24-26

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