

Workgroup, Back to the Bible
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Question: Can you tell something about the Grace church of Joseph Prince in Singapore?

Dear questioners,

It has cost a lot of trouble to disentangle if and where the dogma of Joseph Prince is not according to the Bible. This is because the pastor from Singapore uses theological terms, which for Dutch, born again Christians is a familiar territory. The way in which Prince talks about grace, justice, sin, debt and justification seems so biblical, that you hardly dare to raise your finger. This presses all the more by the way in which he addresses the listeners (about 11000 in his church) with great emphasis. One hardly dares to not agree, since he always asks to say amen on his message.

Information drawn from

I have listened to cd's of three different services in Singapore, some parts even two times to get no misunderstandings. This is easily possible because the English of Joseph Prince is Singaporean English and because the pastor is very quick of tongue. Besides listening to the cd's, I have visited his site: www.newcreation.org.sg and I have read a thing or two there. I also found references there to a site: www.victorking.ministryhome.org Beside these English sites I have visited the Dutch site of Willem de Vink: www.gracebase.nl. I have read his article; "Grace versus law, what every Christian should know..." This article is a translation of a sermon of Joseph Prince from Singapore. I have also gone through the article: "100% grace" of Willem de Vink himself. In the weblog of the site gracebase, I have read a number of short reflections of Joseph Prince, which are translated by Jaap de Schipper. I encountered this last person on the Internet site of Jong&Vrij gospel congregation in Hellevoetsluis: www.jongenvrij.nl He is mentioned there as an editorial member of the monthly magazine of Jong&enVrij. On this Internet site are a number of articles, which mainly concern grace. One article struck me, the article with the title: "Saved once, saved for ever."

Some information concerning pastor Joseph Prince.

He is a rather young pastor (an estimated 40 years), who initially comes from India. When he speaks to his congregation, he comes across rather compelling. He does this for example by always demanding from his listeners to agree with his message by calling the word amen. He also lets them repeat his sentences frequently, as an affirmation that they listen to him and that his message is true. As a speaker he is manipulative and works toward a certain climax. His attitude is not particularly arrogant but intentionally funny and popular. He exceeds in my opinion several times the limits of biblical decency. Especially when it concerns the intimate life of biblical characters, he starts to chuckle and tries to get 11000 people to laugh. Also he thereby preaches biblical falsities, or rather things that are not written. During his sermons he frequently imitates people, who have questions concerning his message. The way in which he does this, is humiliating for the persons concerned and certainly doesn't radiate pastoral compassion.

The New Creation Church as denomination

Prince does not pretend to be the only true church. He clearly intimates this during his message. The denomination which he prefers, is the Word of Faith church of Kenneth Hagin. He also says himself that his church is a Word of Faith church, although the name New Creation Church does not indicate that. During his preaching he mentions his church the Gracechurch, probably because of the emphasis on grace in his message. Since the workgroup "Back to the Bible" has studied the movement intensively in the past, we agree with Joseph Prince, that his church mostly resembles a Word of Faith church. The contents of the message is a little different, but the eventual aim of the message is exactly the same: "each Christian may and can expect, if not demand, all possible blessings from God in his life." Joseph Prince fits seamless in the row of well known prosperity preachers. Even his style of preaching corresponds to for example Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hinn, Rodney Howard-Browne. (see letters of the study group numb.3,5,6,8, etc.)

On the site: www.victorking.ministryhome.org messages of Prince are reflected, whereas a list of links to the following prosperity preachers indicates the connection in message between Joseph prince and these persons.

www.joelosteen.com (pastor Joel Osteen)

www.jdm.org (rev.Jesse Duplantis)

www.kcm.org (rev.Kenneth Copeland)

www.creflodollarministries.org (rev.Creflo A Dollar)

Contents message of Joseph Prince from Singapore

Briefly summarised all messages contain two main elements: grace and blessings. For those, who are interested in theology, immediately rises the question what kind of news Joseph Prince will bring if he preaches about grace. Unfortunately I must disappoint these people, he apparently doesn't bring anything new concerning the biblical term grace. As well as in the Netherlands, born again Christians in Singapore believe the following concerning grace: "Every human being is a sinner compared to God and nevertheless tries to right himself before God by living well. For God this is not acceptable and all people are lost, unless they convert themselves to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This converting means, that they recognise their sin and their sinful state and in faith accept Jesus Christ as their mediator. Therefore His crucifixion is the salvation, because there his substitute suffering took place. By raising Jesus Christ from the dead, God the Father indicated to accept this expiatory sacrifice and give his Son as "the lamb that was slaughtered" a place on his throne. The only thing a human being has to and must do is to accept this in faith. Very simply spoken we also call this: admit Jesus Christ as saviour in our lives and accept the grace that God offers us. The law herewith works as a type of mirror in which we can see our sin. Born again Christians live out of grace, out of the grace that God give us in Jesus Christ. Almost everyone finds it difficult to live by grace, because it implies that we recognise that we are sinners. Non- believers certainly are against this. They want to regulate it all themselves. Among the Christian believers the Roman- Catholic believers also don't agree with this. This church teaches that its members must and can deserve heaven themselves. Beside this church there are still a number of orthodox churches and groups, which cannot entirely believe, that God forgives and disposes of one's sin. They generally live up until their death in terror and fear about this. Most evangelical groups, ranging from Pentecostal churches, Full Gospel churches, Baptists churches and The Brethren also proclaim the theology described above of the term grace .

In the message of Joseph Prince the same sound rings through. He only adds something. He adds the prosperity message. He uses the good, biblical term of grace to lead up to his eventual aim: that is material blessings for those who live by grace. This principle occurs in all his messages. From his statements concerning grace he always comes back to prosperity, which should be conferred upon every Christian who lives by grace. He always "finds" prosperity in the Old Testament in the stories about Abraham. Prince starts, however, in the New Testament and rather with those texts which have a connection with the Old Testament. We just mention an example from Gal.4:21- 27: *"Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way: but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from the mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: this is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for the mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother."*

In this part Paul speaks explicitly to the converted Jews in Galatia, who were threatened to be seduced by certain false teachers to live under the law again. This text has no link whatsoever with the blessings of Abraham. Nevertheless Prince always finds a way in his message to twist this around, so that he ends up on this.

Joseph Prince criticises some biblical characters (= bible criticism?)

If he tells the story of God's visit to Abraham under the trees of Mamre and also talks about God's planned punishment of Sodom and Gomorra, Prince does not consider Abraham clever enough. If Abraham urges God (decreasing the number of righteous people in the cities again and again) not to fulfil the punishment, he should not have stopped at number ten. According to him, Abraham should have continued till one, then he could have saved the cities and his cousin. *"When the Lord had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home."* Gen.18:33 But Joseph Prince knows better and adds to the bible.

Job calls out the well known verses in the Old Testament: *"At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised."* Job.1:20,21 Joseph Prince clearly criticises this. He even speaks with a very scornful voice, if he makes Job say this text. We find this matter serious and dishonourable to God. Because even when these texts do not suit his prosperity dogma, he may still behave respectfully.

Joseph Prince and his line of thought concerning the blessings of Abraham and Isaac

"So Abraham went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. Abraham had become very wealthy in livestock and silver and gold."

Gen.13:2 In Gen.24:35 the following is written: *"The Lord has blessed my master abundantly, and he has become wealthy. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, menservants and maidservants, and camels and donkeys."* About Isaac, the heir of Abraham, a couple of chapters further is written. *"Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the Lord blessed him. The man became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy. He had so many flocks and herds and servants that the Philistines envied him."* Gen.26:12-14 Why did the Lord bless Abraham with so much wealth? According to Joseph Prince the answer lies in Gen.15:1-6. This part describes God's promise to Abraham concerning a son, he would get, this in spite of his old

age and that of his wife. Because Abraham believed God about this matter, it was credited to him as righteousness as in verse six: “*Abraham believed the Lord, and it was credited to him as righteousness.*” And because Abraham was credited by this faith, he received great wealth from God. Therefore, Joseph Prince notices, most of the above mentioned descriptions of that wealth are written after that verse in Gen.15:6. And because born again Christians are also justified by their faith, they must and can also share this wealth. They do not have to work for this, because they live by grace. They cut themselves short if they do not catch these chances and are still busy, as it were, to work for it. Here is the resemblance with the dogma of the prosperity preachers. According to Prince this possibility concerns all areas of living: complete healing of the body, complete solution of financial problems, complete solutions of relational problems and marriage and family, complete blessing at making career, etc. It is a very desirable gospel he preaches and it is no wonder that he gets many followers. Even in our own rich country one still rather likes the idea and some congregations join in with his dogma.

But it is a false gospel, because Prince tears Old testamental situations from their context and mixes them with New testamental statements. As Paul quotes the faith of Abraham in Rom. 4:1-25, he does that to show, that the circumcision of the Jews does not profit them. Because of this they remain under the strain of the law. Whereas through Jesus Christ grace has come. In absolutely no text in the New Testament is even the slightest reference to receiving wealth as a response to faith.

The spiritual blessings, however, are often indicated. One experiences these if one no longer lives from works of the law, but by the grace of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

We do not think it is advisable to get the dogma of Joseph Prince in the congregation. We do not need prosperity preaching, but an in-depth preaching from the Word of God. This presses all the more because there are signs seen, where the false dogma of “saved once, saved for ever” emerges in the Netherlands by means of the message of Joseph Prince. (see article on : website: www.jongenvrij.nl) In the near future we, as a study group, will go further into the matter, especially about the matter of grace. Hopefully above statement contributes to a healthier congregation life. There is still much to be said, but the Bible says the most about it. We must not let ourselves be distracted by false teachers. Warm greetings from Rien van de Kraats