

WORKGROUP



BACK TO THE BIBLE

Biblestudy by pastor Ing. M.v.d.Kraats January 2012

Subject: **Is critique on a preacher allowed?**

"Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm"

This is a much-quoted text from the Bible. This has been applied to many a person over the last few years. Sometimes this is said personally to you but other Christians do it in a kinder way and send you a well-meant letter. There are also church members who write this in a letter with no stamp and post it late in the evening in our letterbox. Not good for your nights rest! It's not possible to misunderstand such a clear text.

Sometimes you sit in the meeting and you hear the voice of the speaker: "*Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm*". He explains that everyone who criticises his words and his ministry should take care. It is very dangerous to do this for God punishes those who do so. An uneasy feeling takes hold of you, because you have been criticising. Several things the speaker says, you feel, are not true and you are also not happy with his ministry. You return home with a guilty feeling.

Thankfully you have a Bible and a concordance. Calmly you look up the applicable text, setting the different feelings and opinions aside. You find it in the Old Testament. It is a passage in Psalm 105. Isn't it strange to find such a modern text there? Surely, you would expect that more in the New Testament. That would just be something for Paul to have written. But no, it's a text from a psalm of praise about God's acts of salvation, according to the heading. Curiosity being roused you continue to read on and you discover that in 45 verses the psalmist rejoices over God's protection and redemption of the children of Israel. He describes in the verses 12-15 how God protected Abraham's small nomadic group, when they come into contact with Abimelek, king of Gerar. This king had taken a fancy to Sara. However, God warned him

in a dream not to touch Sara and in doing so used these words: "*Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm*".

What a surprise! So this is the context in which this verse was written. It has got nothing at all to do with the criticising of someone. You then read the original story in Genesis 20. No, it's very clear here; God offers protection to Abraham and Sara against the heathen king Abimelek. And this is what the psalmist is rejoicing about in Psalm 105.

As a poet he expresses it differently to how it is written in Genesis 20. He calls Abraham and Sara God's anointed ones and prophets whom He will protect from other kings and oppressors.

Continuing to leaf through the concordance you discover that in 1 Chron. 16:22 the same text. It is part of a psalm of praise, which David directed to be sung when they transported the ark of God. In reading the context you discover that it is the same as in psalm 105. The first 15 verses are even identical. They must be copied from each other: something, which happens more often in the bible. With an almost easy mind you go to sleep with the conviction that having criticism about someone's doctrine and the quoted verse don't fit together.

Waking up in the middle of the night, the text: "Do not touch my anointed ones" immediately flashes through the mind. Could the speaker have meant a different passage? The bible and concordance are nervously picked up again: "*Who can lay a hand on the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?*" is found in 1 Sam. 26:9. Maybe, did the speaker mean this text? David is speaking here to his men, who have King Saul in their power and want to kill him. David still saw Saul as the man whom God had anointed to be king even though he was constantly pursuing him. He respected this during the whole of his life. Never the less, in the end he had to fight against Saul and so Saul lost his life. In spite of his respect for the anointed one of the Lord he had to act in order to bring an end to the civil war in Israel. God did not punish him for this. No, the speaker can't have meant this text from the first book of Samuel. Could it be that the speaker, this evening, didn't know the context of these two verses and just used them indiscriminately?

You're awake anyway now, so you continue to reflect. Am I the only one who becomes so upset by such a text? Are there more people who feel guilty through this? What would Jesus have done? He was very critical about the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. In Matt. 22:18 and 23:27 He even calls them hypocrites and whitewashed tombs. Why did the scribes then, not answer Him with the same text as the speaker this evening did?

The scribes knew the scriptures nearly by heart, so they also knew Psalm 105:15 too.

Why did the Pharisee Gamaliel not use this text against Peter when he came before the Sanhedrin? This authoritative man didn't mention anything at all about this text [Acts 5:26-41]. Paul, then Saul, was about this same time one of

his students. Gamaliel's teaching was in so far critical of Jesus that Paul approved of the stoning of Stephen and even went on to persecute the whole church.

After his conversion Paul was never one to mince his words. When there was danger that the teaching of the apostles was being mixed with Judaism, he openly criticised Peter. He even talks about the hypocrisy of Peter [Gal. 2:13]. Paul writes in the beginning of the letter to the Galatians: *"But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned"*. We would never dare say this to a fellow Christian, let alone a preacher. Yet we never read that Peter or James quoted Psalm 105:15 to warn Paul about God's punishment because of his critical attitude. Nowhere in the New Testament do we find Psalm 105:15 mentioned or used.

Tired from all the reading and worrying, you close the Bible and concordance. Closing your eyes you very quickly fall into a peaceful sleep. It looks like this at least. But your place in your spirit, where dreams are made, is still active. In your dream you are standing beside a couple of Jewish rabbis who are having a serious discussion. You don't understand their Hebrew language. More rabbis join them. They join in the conversation too. It becomes a heated debate. Some even grab the others beard to make their point clear. There's going to be a fight, you think. Fearfully, you turn to the rabbi who is standing watching. He assures you that everything is okay and tells you that the rabbis are discussing some conclusions from the Torah. "We often do this. They don't like to be criticised, for they all want to be right. We can't do without these discussions, however, because they sharpen our thoughts. The Talmud was in this way compiled".

Look, now things are changing. A younger Jew joins the group. He has got a concertina and begins to play and sing. The rabbis slowly stop speaking and begin to join in with singing. Before you know it they are clapping their hands to the rhythm of the music and dancing in a circle around him. All the disagreements are suddenly forgotten and they now are one group of singing and dancing rabbis. The rabbi who spoke to you gives you a friendly nod and then joins the happy fellowship.

The next morning you wake up with the music still in your ears and life couldn't be better.

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