

# Clarity Trumpet

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*For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.*

I Corinthians 14:8, 9

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## “Touch Not God’s Anointed!”

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There are three major principles to apply in studying the Bible. They are: *Context! Context! Context!* Without a careful study of the context you might get whatever meaning from a verse or passage you desire. Using verses apart from their surrounding contexts is how cults and sects usually arrive at their twisted interpretations of the Bible.

It is not uncommon for some Christian leaders to resort to isolating verses for the purpose of bolstering a view that would be difficult to support otherwise. This is particularly true when an awkward or wrong interpretation of Scripture provides desired comfort and/or protection to a leader. Such is the case when a pastor, evangelist, Bible teacher, missionary, author, or teacher of God’s Word uses the statement “touch not God’s anointed” to mean no one should question or force accountability upon them because they are specially *anointed* ones.

They see themselves as being above the kind of accountability that they demand from others. Instead, they want exclusive control with unlimited power. They habitually over-emphasize their own importance and their authority. Such men or organizations usually claim the *right* to insist upon total loyalty and agreement from their followers because their “authority” is often portrayed as of divine origin. They may promote themselves as *God’s Man*, or *God’s Church or Organization*.

## Should Believers Ever Question or Confront their Spiritual Leaders?

Let’s see what Scripture reveals.

Galatians 2:11-14: In this context Paul was the newcomer. His apostleship had not been fully accepted throughout the church body. Peter, on the other hand, was a major recognized leader in the early church. But at one point Peter’s behavior was so hypocritical that it brought the Gospel into question (v. 14). Paul, seeing this, “withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed” (v. 11). In the thinking of some, Peter would have been *the anointed* and Paul would have had no right to question him. Such, however, is not what Scripture records. Whenever *anyone* who presumes to speak for God twists, subverts, or misrepresents God’s Word -- either by words or by actions -- that one should be confronted, exposed, and corrected, always in love; at times in firm, *bold* love (cp. 1:6-10).

III John 9, 10: Notice what John, the Apostle of Love, recorded: *I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating (speaking nonsense) against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.*

Who was Diotrephes? Apparently he was the pastor of the local church. In this instance, as with Paul and Peter, it is a case of one leader (anointed one?) confronting another, and rightly so.

There is no reason for any Christian leader to behave in the way that it appears was typical of Diotrephes. Such a leader is obviously so insecure in his dealings with others that domination is the only safe means of maintaining a following. Such an approach to leadership, though, is strictly forbidden by the Lord. Jesus told His own apostles, “*You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many*” (Mark 10:42-

45).

II Samuel 12:1-15: The prophet Nathan confronted the anointed king, David, because of his sin. Here is part of Nathan's accusation against David: *"Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I anointed you king over Israel, . . . Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, . . . Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.'"*

Acts 7 records the message that Stephen preached to the high priest (v. 1) and other Jewish "brothers" and "fathers" or leaders (1, 2). Who was this Stephen? Only a *servant* in this new movement known as The Way. In the eyes of nearly everyone the Jewish leaders to whom he was speaking were God's anointed ones and Stephen was a radical. Yet Stephen, led by God's Spirit, confronted these undisputed leaders of Israel with these words: *You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you* (v. 51). Their reaction? *When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth* (v.54), and they killed him (vs, 58-60).

Then there are a number of passages urging *all* believers to judge, discern, confront, and contend with others over important truths and issues: I John 4:1: *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

Romans 16:17, 18: *Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them* [regardless of their position or title]. *For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly (appetites), and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.*

Ephesians 5:11: *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.*

I Timothy 5:19-21: *Do not receive an accusation against an elder (overseer) except from two or three witnesses. Those (elders) who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest (of the elders) may fear. I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus*

*Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality.*

In other words, do not show preferential treatment to one because he or she is in a position of Christian leadership. If we would hold the average believer accountable for his behavior or doctrine, we should do the same when facing a leader; even more so, in view of James 3:1: *My brethren, let not many of you become teachers [of Scripture], knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*

## The Meaning of "Touch not God's Anointed"

The most familiar passages dealing with this are found in I Samuel: 24:1-7 and 26:5-11ff. Both chapters record David having golden opportunities to kill King Saul yet refusing to do so even though he was urged to do it by his own men. In chapter 24 David told his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD" (v. 6). Then verse seven concludes with: *So David restrained his servants with these words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul.* David's servants were certain that finding Saul alone in the cave was God's timing for his destruction at their hands, but David would have no part of it.

In I Samuel 26:5-11ff David and his servant Abishai went into the camp of Saul while he and his men were asleep. Abishai wanted to kill Saul saying, "God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day. Now therefore, please, let me strike him at once with the spear, right to the earth; and I will not have to strike him a second time" (v.8).

David's response was typical of the man. He told Abishai, "Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless" (v.9). David knew God would strike Saul dead, perhaps in battle (v. 10), which is how he died (recorded in chapter 31). David added, "The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against God's anointed. . . ." (v. 11).

The issue in both instances was whether to spare the life of God's king who was His anointed one, or to kill him (see vs.21-24). Neither context supports the notion that King Saul should not have been questioned nor have been held accountable for his actions.

Then there are two virtually identical passages which call every day people God's "anointed ones." First Chronicles 16:8-35 and Psalm 105 are the two passages. Verses 14 and 15 of the Psalm and verses 21 and 22 of the Chronicles passage both state: *He (God) permitted no man to do them (Israelites) wrong; Yes, He rebuked kings for their sakes, saying, "Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm."*

In this setting "the anointed ones" are not leaders (like a king), but common every-day people of Israel. The ones to whom God spoke were the rulers of the various Gentile kingdoms (vs. 18-20). They were forbidden to touch any Israelites; nor could they harm God's prophets.

### Who are The Anointed Ones Today?

Turning to the New Testament we find that all of God's children in this age are anointed of God.

II Corinthians 1:21: *Now he who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a deposit (cp. Ephesians 1:13).*

I John 2:20, 25-27: *(Little children) . . . you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know (understand) all things. . . . But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and . . . the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him."*

### The Warped Interpretation

When a Christian leader wants absolute control of a situation or people, he or she will sometimes resort to strange behavior or methods to gain or to keep such control. One ploy is to use Scripture -- sort of as a bully whip -- to keep others in line; and one such use is to quote the phrase "touch not God's anointed." The Warped Meaning: *I am God's anointed messenger. He speaks to me and through me. The rest of you have not been specially called or anointed as I have, so God forbids you to speak against me, God's anointed.* Of course, confronting an anointed leader was not the issue in any of the Bible passages; *doing them bodily harm* was the issue in each case.

Sadly, believers who are under such a

legalistic influence may become conditioned or brain washed into thinking that they have no right to question the doctrine, the attitude, the methods, or the behavior of God's uniquely anointed servant. And if they ever do -- and are found out -- the verbal attacks upon them and the vengeful treatment of them will either drive them out from under the influence of such a leader, or will silence them from ever again questioning the leadership. In either case, the leader has won and will continue his or her tyrannical reign.

### Only One Lord, One Master, One Head of the Church

God never intended His Church to be ruled over by men or women who insisted on having the preeminence, or who would insist on being above criticism or accountability. Instead, God tells us that *Christ* "is the head of the body, the church, . . . that in all things *He* may have the preeminence (Colossians 1:18). The leaders, as we have previously observed, are to be the greatest servants of all. They are to lead by example. They are plainly told to "shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock." (I Peter 5:2, 3).

Just as clearly, there is to be stricter accountability accompanying higher levels of responsibility. Jesus gave a beautiful parable on this very topic, concluding with, "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:42-48).

Set your eyes upon *Jesus*, looking to Him as your Shepherd (Hebrews 12:1, 2). He has placed His Word above all His name (Psalm 138:2) so *trust* in it as His sufficient Guide. (II Timothy 3:16, 17).<sup>∞</sup>

For further research into this growing problem: **Churches that Abuse** (Ronald Enroth), **Counterfeit Revival** (Hank Hanegraaff), **Faith that Hurts, Faith that Heals** (Arterburn & Felton), **The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse** (Johnson & VanVonderen)