

“This far and no more” vs “This far and no less!”

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Many of you who are reading this Teaching Email have been added to our mailing list in recent years. Some of you are in faith communities with professional clergy teaching you, while others have fled the organized religious system to pursue the authentic fellowship which our Lord's first followers experienced – ***extended spiritual family overflowing with relational intimacy and spiritual power.*** Among our readers are different levels of spiritual maturity, as well as various degrees in which people have been putting into practice the truths the Holy Spirit has given us to share. It's an ongoing source of wonder to us that the Holy Spirit uses two “*cracked clay vessels*” like us to share truths that are so relevant to such a varied community of Christ's own. We praise our Lord Jesus for this privilege!

Prosecuting Truth To Produce Repentance And Righteousness

Pursuing God's will: nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else.

First, just a bit about where we are coming from as bondservants of our Lord Jesus. Our ministry has both a *specific* and a *broad* prophetic core to it. Specifically, when it comes to warning people about their unconfessed sin, we prosecute the truth which the Spirit of our Lord has given us to share. Call it “***prophetic prosecution.***” To accomplish this with the love and mind of Christ, those who are prophetic must be completely faithful to the One Who gave them the truth to prosecute: “*For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*” (Revelation 19:10). The prophetic must also have such love for our Lord Jesus that they understand their role to be one of tremendous mercy. That's because they are prosecuting a truth that's intended to bring a person to conviction which will result in their repentance (James 4:8-10) – *a life change that humbly conforms by grace to increasingly mirror Jesus.*

We hope you've been seeking the Holy Spirit as you've read our last three Teaching Emails: •“*Do you love Me more than these?*” •*One More Time, “Do you love Me more than these?”* •“*Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.*” In these we've been prosecuting what the Spirit of our Lord has been giving us during our daily prayer walks. As you may have recognized, the Holy Spirit is resolutely pressing you to scrupulously examine yourself for the essential priorities our Lord Jesus has the right to demand of His own. Two of these essential life priorities are ***your love for Him***; and ***you seeking, hearing,*** and ***obeying*** the inner voice of His Spirit through your spirit.

In these past emails we are also prosecuting truth revealed by the Spirit of our Lord which demands a personal verdict by you about your own life.

Which kind of Christian are you? *Man-conceived* spiritual priorities will always fall short of those of our Lord Jesus. Many “Christians” tolerate (or even wallow in) self-obsessed sin in their lives and rationalize that it's OK. By their very way of life they are saying to our Lord, “**This far and no more.**” They're willing to play along at Christianity as long as it

doesn't interfere with their own goals, values and activities. This self-imposed limitation is widespread among Christians. That's why we so often encourage you to ask the Spirit of our Lord to verify if what we are sharing is from Him and what He wants you to do about it. In prosecuting the truths which the Spirit of our Lord Jesus reveals to us, He is saying to you, **"This far and no less!"**

"This far and no less!" means:

- Increasingly growing in and enacting our Lord's love, forgiveness and compassion toward others.
- Resolutely committed to doing our Father's will no matter what it costs you, by seeking guidance and empowerment from the Holy Spirit through your spirit.
- Living repentantly and glorifying our heavenly Father through testimonies of His grace to you and answered prayers especially in things which only He could bring about.

Please take this to heart: Prosecuting our Lord's revealed truths isn't anything like the majority of clergy sermons today. Our Lord longs for fellowship to be restored which has been severed by unconfessed sin. The resolute pursuit of prosecuting truth by those who are prophetic is our Lord's merciful way to directly confront someone who claims to belong to Him but is living otherwise. Our Lord intends that these experience in their heart an awe-filled recognition of the One against Whom they are sinning. Our Lord's recruitment of Paul summarizes our own prosecutorial purpose:

[Jesus speaking] *"I am sending you to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me"* (Acts 26:18).

"...we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard"
(Acts 4:20).

Mike: Several factors are contributing to many within Christianity living with the attitude toward our Lord, **"This far and no more."** I spent a number of years as a counselor to clergy. Once during a sizable gathering of clergy, the entire group admitted that they watered-down their sermons in order to make people feel good and to ensure that they'd keep their job at that congregation. If you're now in a faith community that's being taught by clergy, here's a litmus test you can use to discern if he is speaking from the Holy Spirit, or from his own motives of financial security and/or popular acclaim.

•If the person teaching you is prosecuting a truth which the Holy Spirit wants presented, then it always leads to changed lives through producing the deep and godly sorrow of repentance (2Corinthians 7:10,11). The humility of responding to Christ by asking Him, "What would You have me do?" and then following through in love-driven, resolute obedience changes *something* in your life to become more like Him.

•But, *if* during or following a sermon you don't hear people crying in repentance or falling on their knees or calling upon Jesus in their spirit to be changed, but rather smiling in smug self-satisfaction and flippant humor, *then* that clergy person is serving his own interests and not that of our Lord Jesus.

And, *if* the preaching you hear week after week is nothing more than a “feel good sermon” which makes you “feel good” about yourself and the world around you, *then* you are in grave error both here on earth and possibly for eternity. *If* you pursue a **comfortable, complacent, self-pleasing “Christian” life**, *then* you will not be able to *please* our heavenly Father — a goal which is made abundantly clear in John 8:29; 2Corinthians 5:9; Ephesians 5:10; Colossians 1:10.

So, which are you? “**This far and no more**” or “**This far and no less**”?

We are pursuing this because **apostasy is now rampant in Christianity**. False teachers do whatever they want with the Word of God, and they reach a vast audience who love to have their ears tickled by distortions and deception. A very popular Bible translation appeared a while back and many well-liked teachers quote from it. But its “loose” paraphrases abound with error and lead many astray from the truth which has been preserved by the Spirit over the centuries. An example of this “uninspired” work erases Jesus’s pattern of dealing with unrepentant sinners, a pattern which *prosecutes the steps that lead to repentance or to excommunication*. Please look at Matthew 18:15-20 from a reliable text before you read the following excerpt from the paraphrased translation we cite:

“If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him, work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you’ve made a friend. If he won’t listen, take one or two others along so that the presence of witnesses will keep things honest, and try again. If he still won’t listen, tell the church. **If he won’t listen to the church, you will have to start over from scratch**, confront him with the need for repentance, and offer God’s forgiving love.”

Repentance should have been addressed from the first encounter, since the person who “hurt you” in fact *sinned* (the literal word) against God! Your “fellow believer” needed to not only confess that his behavior had violated a standard of God, but also to turn away from continuing with that same sin. The call to repent is present at each encounter, for “hearing” implies repenting and changing.

The people-pleasing translation quoted above is not even close to what our Lord commanded. (Over 20 million copies have been sold, so a lot of people are trusting a watered-down volume of Bible “stories”). We believe that many misled religious teachers today have the audacity to alter God’s Word. And many apostate clergy have defined God according to their own image of what they want Him to be. They have told Him what He *should* have written in His Word. Their “better plan” for Christianity is this: **people-centered with no repentance required**.

“God testified concerning him: ‘I have found David to be a man after My own heart, who will do all My will’ (Acts 13:22).

God’s commendation of King David should be no less an aspiration for us today who claim to belong to our Lord Jesus: to be someone *after His own heart* and obedient to *do everything He tells us to do*. Remember, we who are genuinely born again have the fulness of our Lord’s Spirit within us. This one reality alone should be more crucial to us than our next breath. Some of you reading this already have that spark of discerning our Lord’s voice in your spirit. Yet many others, especially men, have been beguiled into self-rule and spiritual laxity because so few are men *after our Lord’s own heart, doing everything He wants him to do*. This obedience includes speaking the truth no matter what the cost, and speaking with respect because you’re addressing someone else who is made in the image of God.

Keep in mind that the Kingdom of our Lord is process-based: ongoing repentance, asking the Spirit of our Lord for help, guidance, empowerment, and ongoing transformation in becoming conformed to our Lord as we daily love and serve Him as His beloved bondservants.

If you are intimately connected with the Vine, our Lord Jesus, His indwelling Spirit through your spirit enables you to grow in Christ’s likeness in your character. Core identifying character qualities evidence that you are attached to the Vine: *His love, forgiveness* and *compassion* undergird everything in your faith walk. Other people are able to see His presence through your words, attitudes and actions. The Spirit’s very presence within you not only verifies that you belong to our Lord Jesus (Romans 8:9). His presence also flows through you onto others (Hebrews 13:20,21). And, the outworking of His presence is the nucleus of a life that proclaims,

“THIS FAR AND NO LESS!”

With the deepest sense of responsibility and privilege in prosecuting our Lord’s truths for your spiritual development and loving service to Him,
Mike & Sue