

July 10, 2022

Changing the Standard

As the orchestra was about to begin their rehearsal, the conductor summoned their attention:

“Please get out your pencils. We have some marking to do on this particular piece. The first two measures are in a 3-4 time signature, not 4-4 as written. Next, in the 5th measure, change it to a 7-8 time signature, and this remains in effect until the end. Now, in measure number 7 we will lower the pitch 1/2 step. In measure number 13, lower the pitch one whole step, and this will remain to the end. Okay? Now, let’s begin.”

The soprano soloist spoke up, “Excuse me, Maestro. What would you like for me to change?”

“Nothing, madam,” the conductor replied with the slightest hint of sarcasm. “Just sing it exactly as you did yesterday.”

When a musician varies from the written music, there are two options that allow the performer and the music to be reconciled. Either the musician must alter his or her performance to accurately reflect the musical composition, or (as in the above story) the music must be rewritten to accommodate the performance (i.e. errors) of the musician.

Essentially the same is true in every other area of life. When one deviates from a standard, either he or she can alter their conduct to comply with the given

standard or the standard can be manipulated to justify the otherwise unjustifiable conduct.

Certainly we can see the spiritual application. The Word of God is our standard. When we find ourselves or someone else thinking, speaking, or acting in a way that is contrary to the standard, what should we do? Should we correct the error and be reconciled to the standard, or should we attempt to change the standard so that the conduct is no longer condemned? What if someone is teaching that which is not in harmony with the standard, God's Word? Do we hold firmly to the standard and require them to comply, or do we attempt to change or allow them to change the standard?

Here's the real question — are we going to trust human beings to set the standard or are we going to rely on the Word of the Lord?

“All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever” (1 Peter 1.24-25)

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3.23)

Human beings are frail mortals with the distinct capacity for failure. God is eternally infallible, and His Word is complete and perfect (2 Timothy 3.16-17; 2 Peter 1.3). It does not need altering, updating, or modification (Deuteronomy 4.2; 12.32; Proverbs 30.6; 2 John 9-11; Revelation 22.18-19). It will stand as it is — the perfect standard to judge all of mankind (John 12.48).

There is really no choice at all — the standard cannot be changed! Any feeble effort to do so will meet with the wrath of the standard's Author, Almighty God. Altering the scales won't fix our weight problems, breaking the mirror won't change the way we look, and changing (or ignoring) God's Word won't make our sinful behavior acceptable. Our only option is to comply and to insist that those who teach us do the same!