



Links Players

Standards

For truly I tell you until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. (Matthew 5:18, NIV)

As I often do, I walked nine holes in the evening the other day. Here in North Carolina, the climate is such that you can enjoy this almost year-round. Forty-nine degrees is my temperature cutoff, and we're above that most days. Our course - a 1922 Donald Ross track - is just perfect for walking.

It's geographically compact, with tolerable distances between greens and tee boxes and enough elevation changes to nudge the heart rate up a few ticks but nothing too severe. Not to mention, eight minutes from the house - sometimes less if the stop lights are cooperative.

A neighbor of mine who had the same idea that evening caught up with me on number three, and we finished the nine together. He "plays to scratch." It's always fun to play with a better golfer. Happens to me frequently. Playing with better golfers, you learn things.

He was playing with those yellow Callaway balls with the soccer ball pattern. This led to a discussion of why we use the golf ball we do. As he presented his thoughts, it quickly became clear that his understanding of golf ball construction and aerodynamics was on a seriously higher plane than mine.

The features of his preferred golf ball included such metrics as spin rate, dimple pattern, and compression. Mine, in contrast, is based on whether or not the ball has a scuff mark. I also shy away from neon pink balls that look like they might have served some time at miniature golf in a previous life.

It is important to have some standards.

Today's declaration from Jesus would indicate that his standards are quite high with regard to the Law - understood narrowly as the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) or, more broadly, as the five books of Moses - the Pentateuch.

Whether viewed as the ceremonial and civil laws that the Israelites were expected to observe or as the Ten Commandments, which set the standard of behavior for all of Mankind, Jesus was in favor of every single "jot and tittle" of the Law. A very high standard, to be sure. Certainly too high for us sinners who are unable to meet the Law's requirements. The Law always condemns us.

But it never condemns Jesus. He not only met the requirements of the Law for perfect righteousness, but he also was the fulfillment of the types and shadows in the Law that pointed specifically to him - the Old Testament sacrificial system, for instance.

And, graciously and remarkably, he shares all that Law fulfillment with us. Jesus endorsed and eventually met the standards set in the Law. Not for himself. For us! The old hymn says it well: "...He, to rescue me from danger, interposed his precious blood."

It's as if the world's best golfer was able (and willing) to impart all his skill to you. (Or, more precisely, impart his score to you.) At a very high price, I might add.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, that in the righteousness of your Son, we satisfy the high standard of your Law.

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Peter Muller

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