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HEAVENLY FATHER'S FIXED Standards

God's standards are fixed, and no one can change them. Individuals who think they can will be greatly surprised in the Final Judgment.

My first job out of college was working for a major airplane manufacturer. While there, I learned that to make airplanes that were safe, the company had specifications for every part. The parts had to be certified as meeting all standards, including shape, size, material, and tolerances.

If a part met the standards, it would be placed in inventory for building an airplane. If it didn't meet the standards, the part would be rejected and returned to the supplier. Suppliers of parts were careful to understand and meet all of the requirements, including the tolerances.

Would you willingly ride in an airplane made with substandard parts? Of course not! You would want the parts to exceed the standard. Some people, however, appear to be willing to embrace substandard behavior in their lives. But only by knowing, understanding, and living the doctrine of Christ can you adopt the behavior needed to qualify for exaltation.

Tolerance is a word that is heard frequently in society today, usually in the context of tolerating or accepting other people's cultures or behavior. Sometimes it is used by people wanting acceptance to do something without consideration of its impact on society or others. My purpose is not to talk about that definition but to focus on the *engineering* definition of the word and its application for us.

Tolerance is used to define acceptable variations from a defined standard. In a manufactured part, the tolerance might be specified to be five inches long (13 cm), plus or minus a thousandth of an inch (0.0025 cm). Another part might be defined to be made of a certain material that is 99.9 percent pure, like gold bars. The Lord has set tolerances to help us qualify for exaltation.

Standards and Judgment

Standards for salvation are called commandments, which are given by our Father in Heaven. These standards apply to all parts of our lives and at all times. They are not selectively applied at a certain time or in a certain situation. The commandments define the tolerances required to qualify for exaltation.

There is a judgment that, in a sense, is like the certification process for a plane part. Just as there are qualifying tests for aircraft parts, our Father in Heaven has a judgment to determine if we will be certified. It is to our advantage to know and meet the standards within the tolerance the Lord has set.

You will remember that the ten virgins in the Savior's parable were invited to the wedding feast. When the bridegroom arrived, five had oil and were able to enter. The other five came late and could not enter. (See Matthew 25:1–13.)

Regarding this parable, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “The arithmetic of this parable is chilling. The ten virgins obviously represent members of Christ’s Church, for all were invited to the wedding feast and all knew what was required to be admitted when the bridegroom came. But only half were ready when he came.”¹

The first five virgins met the standards, and so must we.

God created us in His own image. The plan for us on this earth is to obtain a body, have experience, receive ordinances, and endure to the end. Standards have been established and tolerances set that we need to live to qualify for exaltation. God has promised that we can be exalted, but He has also said, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10).

Standards and Agency

In God’s plan of salvation, we are being molded, shaped, and polished to become like Him. It is something each of us has to experience individually.

“For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

God has established what we must do and the standards we must meet. Something quite remarkable is that He gives us the moral agency to decide whether to accept and meet those standards. However, there are consequences to our decisions. He gave us agency, but He does not give us the authority to change the standards or the consequences of our decisions.

Because there are standards and because we have agency to choose, there is a Final Judgment, at which time each of us will be reviewed to see if we meet the standards—in other words, to see if we have lived within the standards and tolerances God has defined. His judgment will be final.

The doctrine of repentance allows us to correct or fix defects, but it is better to focus on meeting God’s standards than to plan on invoking the principle of repentance before the Judgment. I learned this lesson when I was young.

As a teenager I spent my summers working on my grandfather’s ranch in Wyoming, USA. It was a sheep and cattle ranch of more than 2,000 acres (810 ha), plus additional rangeland. The ranch operation required a lot of equipment. Because the closest repair center was far away, my grandfather taught us to carefully maintain the equipment and to inspect everything before we left the ranch house. If we had a breakdown, it was usually miles from the ranch house, and that meant a long walk.

It didn’t take long for me to learn the law of consequences. It was always better to avoid problems than to take a long walk. The same is true with the commandments of our Heavenly Father. He can tell the difference between someone who truly is striving to become like Him and an individual who is pushing the edges but trying to stay just inside the acceptable limits.

Standards and Opposition

There are those in the world today who are striving to dismiss or change the standards established by God. This is not a new phenomenon.

“Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (2 Nephi 15:20).

We must not be deceived or give heed to those who would attempt to convince us that God’s standards have changed. They have no authority to change the standards. Only the designer, Heavenly Father, can change the specifications.

All of us easily recognize how ridiculous it would be for a supplier of airplane parts to listen to some uninformed individual who promotes making changes to the specifications or tolerances of a part. None of us would want to fly in an airplane manufactured with such a part.

Likewise, no one would accuse an airplane manufacturer of being unthoughtful or intolerant when it rejects such parts. The manufacturer would not allow itself to be intimidated or bullied into accepting parts that could not be certified. To do so would jeopardize its business and the lives of the passengers who might fly in its airplanes.



We wouldn't willingly fly in an airplane made with substandard parts. Nor should we accept or practice substandard behavior. Only by knowing, understanding, and living the doctrine of Christ can we qualify for exaltation.

The same is true with God's laws and commandments. His standards are fixed, and no one can change them. Individuals who think they can will be greatly surprised in the Final Judgment.

Meeting the Standards

Our Heavenly Father is the designer of the plan of salvation. He has put in place all that is needed for us to qualify to return to His presence. The standards are set, known, and easily available to each of us.

The Savior has said that all of us are capable of meeting the standards. The Word of Wisdom is evidence of this, indicating that it is "given for a principle with promise, adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of *all* saints, who are or can be called saints" (D&C 89:3; emphasis added).

The Savior also teaches that we will "not be tempted above that which [we are] able to bear" (D&C 64:20), but we must "watch and pray continually" (Alma 13:28).

You have the power, "for the power is in [you], wherein [you] are agents unto [yourselves]. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward" (D&C 58:28).

You can meet the standards and tolerances. You have the capacity to qualify for exaltation.

Guidance from the Holy Ghost

We learn the standards by attending church and by studying and acting on the doctrines found in the scriptures and in the words of modern prophets.

The greatest source of guidance is the promptings that come from the Holy Ghost, who will teach us all things we must do (see 2 Nephi 32:2–3). With the aid of the Holy Ghost and the Light of Christ (see Moroni 7:16–18), we can know right and wrong. We can be guided throughout our lives. We can feel in our hearts and have thoughts come into our minds that can give comfort and guidance. This is true even for children.

God has promised that He will help us as we strive to meet His standards. Just as we wouldn't willingly fly in an airplane made with substandard parts, we shouldn't accept or practice substandard behavior. Only by knowing, understanding, and living the doctrine of Christ can we qualify for exaltation. ■

From a devotional address, "Standards and Tolerance," delivered at Brigham Young University–Idaho on November 13, 2012. For the full text in English, go to byui.edu.

NOTE

1. Dallin H. Oaks, "Preparation for the Second Coming," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2004, 8.