

The May/June CFAMC Devotional Page

But for the grace of God, we would all be like Richard Strauss... many of you have read the posting Bill has just put out about the talented but wicked composer who continues to confirm many, through his use of his talent, in the idea that man can achieve “moral purification by means of one's own strength, liberation through work, and worship of glorious, eternal nature.” Those were Richard Strauss' words, his explanation of the meaning of his “Alpine” Symphony, which he proudly called an “Anti-Christian” work. He was right: no finer exposition of the tenets of Satan's early lie as moved forward in pagan religion could be made. For man must worship something. He likes to have some external object ...

[Gaisbergferner Glacier in the Alps, courtesy of BPARiedl and Wikimedia Commons \(Public Domain\)](#)



... and this will do in a pinch.

But if man can justify himself morally through his own strength, and achieve his own salvation – if man is the justifier, the mighty, and the savior, then that makes him equal with God! Wasn't that the same ol' lie back in Genesis 3? The fruit may be gone, but the devil is still peddling the same idea that by our knowledge, talents, and abilities, we are with equal with and therefore don't need God; thus, all

worship that is not of God, no matter the external object, is a form of self-worship (for imagine the arrogance of thinking not only can we choose our own gods – ha! – but also decide how we want to worship those gods – double ha!). And indeed, the reading Bill posted says that Richard Strauss is remembered for “music that celebrates the human character” – that same character that God describes this way:

Isaiah 64:6 – But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Romans 3:12 (quoted from Psalm 14:3 and 53:3!) – They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Romans 3:23 – For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

We often forget the verses around Romans 3:23, but it they are God's direct repudiation to Richard Strauss, and our fallen human desire to believe that we are righteous enough and can work hard enough to be saved without Him:

Romans 3:21-28

21. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22. Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

23. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

24. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

25. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

26. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

27. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

28. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

In Christ we have righteousness! In Christ we have salvation! In Christ we have a right standing before God – all by grace, not by our own efforts, no matter how talented we think we are! And in that same saving grace, God has called us to a higher mission, foreshadowed in the Old Testament...

Isaiah 8:16-18

16. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

17. And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

18. Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

... and made explicit in the New Testament.

Colossians 3:17 – And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

In the latter part of May, I was blessed by the Lord to see the students that He has given me just busting out all over-- playing and singing and ministering in their own right, and achieving on behalf of their academic and budding professional lives as well (that's Stephanie, for whose fundraiser God granted complete success on May 18). Emotionally this was completely overwhelming; it has taken me several weeks to be able to digest it all. But when I saw a DVD of one event it all began to click – the only appearance I have is with one arm, moving a music stand out of the way. And that is fine with me... I must decrease even at 32, as God takes a younger generation and begins to move them to the fore in my field, so that He might increase. I and the students God has given me are His, to do with as He will. As they grow and take over my present positions, He has other things for me to do anyway...

In a sense, our musical works are our “children” as well, into which we pour our talent, passion, and energy... they are chips off our block in an emotional and spiritual sense. But are they chips off the OLD block, that block that, a la Richard Strauss and every human being since the Fall, seeks to exalt self at the expense of God? Or are they chips off the NEW block, from a spirit made alive by the saving power of Christ and seeking to serve and glorify Him? I challenge us, at such a time as this, to be even more diligent about what we are putting forward in the world – let us, through the gift of music that He has given us and by the leading of His Holy Spirit, create a legacy of excellence and faithfulness to God that now and into eternity will continue to give Him glory!