

What's your standard?

Rev. John Belden

What would you say if I told you that I measured myself this morning and discovered I was 7 foot 4 inches tall? One look would tell you that I am under a huge delusion about my height. But most people would probably think my delusion is harmless enough.

Then what if I told you I was thinking about trying out for the NBA? Now it's not so harmless. If you cared about me, you might ask, "What did you measure yourself with?" If I informed you that I used my homemade tape measure, you would surely advise me not to try out. You would want to spare me the embarrassment. You would no doubt try to help me understand that the NBA will not use my personal (and inaccurate) tape measure to determine my height. If I had the sense to listen, my NBA career would end right there, for my own good.

This is the problem with fallen mankind. We think we have a shot at heaven because of our moral stature. Yet most of us aren't measuring ourselves with the same standard that God will use. We make our own. As Paul said, "But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (II Cor. 10:12).

Here's how it works. We think to ourselves, "I haven't murdered anyone like Ted Bundy did. And I'm not as bad as my friend who does drugs (of course the friend who does drugs knows someone else worse than himself). Therefore, my chances are pretty good."

But from God's perspective no one is good, "for in Thy sight no man living is righteous" (Psalm 143:2). At the judgement, God will not measure you by your homemade standard. He will measure you by His perfect standard. And no one who trusts in their own goodness will measure up. All have fallen short (Rom. 3:23). Your homemade tape measure will do nothing to change your status on that day. You will not be able to plead, "but so-and-so was worse than I."

It's like getting pulled over for speeding. You will be judged by the law, the posted speed limit. And it will do no good to tell a fair judge that he should let you off because everyone else was speeding too. Regardless of what every one

else has done, you have broken God's law. You have lied. You have lusted. You have taken God's name in vain. You have stolen things that are not yours. Like the speeding ticket, your crime is personal.

I would be under a huge delusion to think that I was 7 foot 4. But consider how infinitely greater the delusion is among those who suppose themselves to measure up to God's holy standard.

People who are saved are those who realize they have been wrong about their own goodness. Salvation begins with confessing to God that you don't measure up. It involves forsaking your homemade standard. It happens when the Holy Spirit makes you honest about your sin (John 16:8). It happened to the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14. It happened to a proud Pharisee named Paul who was cut to the heart when he realized the spiritual nature of the law (Rom. 7:7).

God has posted His standard in the Bible. If you are hoping to make it to heaven by your goodness, let me assure you that you won't. God will not use your standard to measure you. I tell you this because I care about you. And I'm not merely trying to save you from a little embarrassment. I'm trying to spare you the infinite shame of final judgment. This is not a harmless delusion. Take my advice and let your career as a savior end right now. You won't make the first cut.

There is a Savior who did measure up. Jesus alone had the moral stature to gain access to God. And He was a one-man team. Trusting in Him for salvation is the only way to avoid the certain shame of judgment. As Paul said, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame" (Rom. 10:11).

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