God’s Tape Measure

I sometimes wonder how God measures us. Do all our deeds add up to a trip to heaven? Or is it grace which saves us and nothing we do ourselves?

This age-old question has daunted even the best thinkers of the ages. We discuss works and grace ad nauseum, and somehow can’t come up with the right answer.

The fact is, God has measured us all, and we all come up short. The only thing which makes us of worth, the only way we can find eternal life, is by grace through Jesus Christ.

Then come the things we do. God speaks of plumb lines and measuring lines in the scriptures. It is worthy to consider how we might measure up under his standards.

Are you familiar with the movie “Mary Poppins”? There were a few measuring moments when this magical nanny decided to appraise her two charges, and then herself. The kids thought she was measuring height. The result was a measure of stature.

Michael’s measurement, clearly displayed on the measuring tape for millions of moviegoers to see, was, “extremely stubborn and suspicious.” Not particularly impressive, by any standard.

So how about you? If Mary measured you, would your stubborn and suspicious nature be the first thing which came up?

Maybe it would clarify that we condemn what we do not understand. Maybe it would say that we are lazy or close-minded in our faith. You can fill in the blanks for yourself on that imaginary tape line.

But God doesn’t mess around with the heavenly tape measure. None of us measure up. We are all found wanting.

He takes us just as we are and redeems us with his son who makes us right. This changes all our measurements from what is found wanting to what is given in immeasurable quantities.

Jane is up next. The tape says clearly that she is “rather inclined to giggle. Doesn’t put things away.”

Perhaps we do not take our faith seriously enough. We show up for church every now and then; we keep things on a surface level, not wanting to get overcommitted.

God has immeasurable blessings he wants to bring us. If we do not take him seriously, we place ourselves perilously close to the common atheist who tries to say there is no God. Not to mention we deny ourselves the wonders and depths of faith which are available to the believer whose only worth is his relationship to Jesus.

If we are bad enough, God’s judgment will prevail, and it will be too late to go back to the place we once were. “I will stretch out over Jerusalem,” God says, “the measuring line used against Samaria and the plumb line used against the house of Ahab. I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.” ~ 2 Kings 21:13

Our country and world are dangerously close to God’s judgment. We major on the minors, excuse sin as choice, and bad morality is becoming the norm. As individuals and as a country, we must choose God above all else once again.

Then Mary is measured. And most of us know what comes up. We can shout it from memory. “Practically perfect in every way!”

Of course the only perfect person in the world was Jesus. But the fictional Mary Poppins comes close.

She helps people see beyond the moment. She does not accept half-hearted efforts. She brings healing and perspective everywhere she goes.
Perhaps we are like the third man in the story below. We spend so much time fixing what does not need fixing that we may end up losing our head and our eternity.

*Three men are sentenced to die by guillotine. The first man steps up, places his head in the hole. The executioner releases the knife, and miraculously it stops inches above the man's neck. The king says, "Under the laws of our country, if the guillotine fails to do its job, you are declared free." So the first man gets up, relieved, and the second man takes his place. Again, the guillotine knife stops inches away from the man's neck. The king says again, "Under the laws of our country, if the guillotine fails to do its job, you are declared free." So the second man gets up, free. The third man puts his head in the guillotine hole, looks up, and says, "I think I see what the problem is ...”*

What this story does is place stupidity and death very close together. In our quest to prove others wrong, we yield to our simplistic nature and don’t see the very thing which must be seen.

God simply wants us to place ourselves under his kingship, and let him take us where we need to go. Trusting him implicitly, we don’t have to worry about our future because it is in his hands.

Far from Archie Bunker’s archetypal efforts to “stifle” our creativity, God unlocks our minds to see what we could never have been able to see on our own.

When God’s tape measure measures our measure, what will be the result?