

*By their own standards I will judge them...*

*Ezekiel 7:27b*

Have you ever had the tables turned on you? The idea reminds me of those spoof spy movies where one agent is trying to poison the other. He (or she) puts the lethal substance into a cup and places it on the table in front of the victim. The victim, however, is on to the scheme, and points over the shoulder of the other and says, "Look over there!" while he switches cups. Usually, the cups are switched several times before someone finally drinks. And it is always the hero who outsmarts his rival.

It always seems to come as a great shock when we are tripped up by our own strategies, by our own way of seeing things. There is a certain level of honesty that is involved in using the same standards of measurement for others that we have for ourselves. It is something that we must work very diligently on. Unfortunately, many people do not see it that way.

We want to conduct business in such a manner that we measure out a little short of the five pounds of flour that is being purchased, but we demand that what is measured out to us is exact! Our thumb tends to put a little pressure on the scale when it is to our advantage. God warns against this many times in the Bible, e.g., "*Do not have two differing weights in your bag--one heavy, one light* (Deuteronomy 25:13)." We should understand the hypocrisy of this as well.

Many times we have to deal with persons that have this variable standard. I have met with people that always assume the absolutely worst possible motive for what you do. "You just do church things so that you can parade around and get attention." Or, "You were late today, so you must be seeing someone else." It is interesting to think how they would react if you gave them a dose of their own medicine.

This is essentially what God is promising in Ezekiel 7:27b. Later in the same book Ezekiel deals with people that think that they have been treated unfairly by God: "*Yet your countrymen say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' But it is their way that is not just. If a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, he will die for it. And if a wicked man turns away from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he will live by doing so. Yet, O house of Israel, you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' But I will judge each of you according to his own ways* (Ezekiel 33:17-20)." How ironic that some would call into question God's laws. Who really knows what is really fair, God (who made mankind and knows how we operate) or us?

Imagine what would happen if God said, "OK; we'll try your standards on for size." There would be a tremendous initial excitement as we saw that we could choose for ourselves. Then there would be recurring failure and disappointment as we finally realized that we cannot live perfectly by our own standards, either. True judgment requires true knowledge, which we simply cannot possess. But we keep demanding to lead the way ourselves. God tries to direct us, but in the end He lets us go our own way. I can also see God saying, "Let him get lost if he thinks he knows so much!" Jeremiah knew that "*a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps* (Jeremiah 10:23).

Everyone acts so surprised when they are confronted with breaking their own rules. Remember David's outrage when Nathan told him of a rich man who stole a poor man's only sheep? Then Nathan said, "You are the man! (2 Samuel 12:7)" The tables were turned very dramatically on David. In a similar way, another prophet of God let King Ahab pronounce sentence on someone, and then suddenly revealed the king's own sin. David responded in humility, but Ahab went home in anger. (1 Kings 20:32-43)

Jesus also dealt with dual standards, as he spoke of the beam in the eye of the person who pointed out the speck in the eye of another. The parable of the unmerciful servant, Matthew 18:22-35, also firmly established this point. Jesus condemned the man who was forgiven a huge debt (for which he begged mercy but surely thought he deserved) but shattered the life of someone who owed him only a little. His own standard was very harsh, and that was how he was judged in the end. "*With the measure you use, it will be measured to you.* (Luke 6:37)."

We must consider all of this in our relationships with others. But it is even worse to try a double standard with God. If we choose earthly things over spiritual things, if we choose activities over relationships, if we use a more favorable standards for ourselves, then He may turn it around on us so that we choose our own fate. Believe me, it is better to change to God's standards.

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