

The Goodness and Severity of God

Romans 11:22

Introduction

1. **Romans 11:22** – an urge to think on God’s goodness and severity comes in the context of warning.
 - a. Context:
 - i. Unbelieving Israelites rejected, and salvation came to the Gentiles **(v. 11)**.
 - ii. Speaking to Gentiles **(v. 13)**.
 - iii. Warning against pride when thinking on the fact of the unbelieving Jews’ rejection and the believing Gentiles’ acceptance **(vv. 16-18)**.
 - iv. Consideration of the reason the unbelieving Jews were rejected, and the believing Gentiles accepted **(vv. 19-23)** – If you do what they are doing you will be cut off too.
 - b. God is good – He has brought salvation to those who believe.
 - c. God is severe – i.e. to those who refuse His salvation and remain in their state of enmity against God, He will not save.
2. The fact of God’s goodness is emphatically discussed in all churches, but the fact of His severity is painstakingly avoided, and even denied.
3. God is not a general idea left to each individual, to each church, to shape to our liking. He is an eternal being, our Creator, who has revealed exactly who He is to us.
4. To add something to that revelation of Himself or take away from that revelation is to change His glory into something base which is not God at all – **cf. Romans 1:22-23** (like the Gentiles and idolatry).
5. Consider the goodness and severity of God:
 - I. False Views of God
 - A. The God of the New Covenant is not the God of the Old Covenant:
 - a. Most do not view God in light of what the Old Testament reveals about Him.
 - b. They think of the time under the Old Testament as a time when God was angry and unforgiving.
 - i. What was prepared for the time of the NC included all who walked by faith in times before – **Hebrews 11:39-40** – not that God was not good to them.
 - c. The God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New Testament – **Hebrews 12:25-29** – He is a consuming fire.
 - d. Countless OT examples of God destroying disobedient people are given in the NT to show the same principles apply even now!
 - e. Things written about God before were written for our learning now – **Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:15**
 - B. God’s grace means He is lenient toward sin:
 - a. Grace is not meant as a way to sin without consequence, but as an escape from sin entirely.

- i. **Romans 6:1-4, 11, 13** – Grace removes sin from us that we might live a new life in righteousness.
 - b. One cannot return to sin without consequence – **Romans 6:15-16**
 - c. God’s grace teaches against living in sin – **Titus 2:11-12**
 - C. God’s goodness and unwillingness that men perish means hardly any will perish:
 - a. If not stated overtly, logically implied in what is taught by many.
 - b. God does not want men to die spiritually – **1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9**
 - c. This does not mean many will be saved:
 - i. **Matthew 22:14** – many called few chosen.
 - ii. **Matthew 7:13-14** – many go in by the wide gate which leads to destruction.
 - d. The fact that most will perish does not indicate God is impotent, but that man is unwilling – **Romans 10:21**
 - D. The gospel stresses both God’s goodness and severity – **Romans 11:22** (**Mark 16:15-16** – be saved, be condemned)
- II. God’s Goodness and Severity Revealed in the Gospel
 - A. The Goodness of God is the Provision of Salvation
 - a. **Romans 1:16-17** – God’s power to salvation, the revelation of how men can stand just before God – by faith.
 - b. Goodness – *chrēstotēs* – usefulness (STRONG); the quality of being helpful or beneficial (BDAG); it is goodness in action, goodness expressing itself in deeds...in grace and tenderness and compassion. (VINE)
 - i. “Kindness” of God expressed in salvation provided for man – **Ephesians 2:4-8; Titus 3:4-7** (Note the emphasis on the lost state God brought us out of in both contexts.)
 - ii. “Goodness” leading to repentance (forbearance, longsuffering) – **Romans 2:4** (cf. **2 Peter 3:9, 15** – God wanting men to repent, and giving them time to do so)
 - B. The Severity of God is the Reason for the Gospel
 - a. The whole theme of the gospel rests on the presupposition of God’s severity.
 - b. God’s judicial wrath toward sinners is the reason for the gospel – **Romans 1:18**
 - i. God is holy, and cannot fellowship sin – **1 John 1:5; Habakkuk 1:13**
 - ii. Sin separates one from God – **Isaiah 59:1-2** (NOTE: despite His goodness)
 - 1. Separation is death – **Romans 6:23** – those wages must be paid.
 - 2. God cannot just overlook sin and remain in fellowship with the sinner – must cut off that relationship (sin does so).
 - a. “severity” (**Romans 11:22**) – *apotomia* – apo, “off,” temno, “to cut” (VINE)

- b. Severity of God is our being severed from Him due to sin.
 3. For that relationship to be restored the sin must be dealt with →
 - iii. The goodness of God was poured out in the darkness of His severity – **Romans 3:23-26**
 1. Propitiation – appeasement of God’s wrath (mercy seat, LXX; atoning blood of victim sprinkled – payment for sin)
 2. “Passed over...to demonstrate...His righteousness” – in what? – in the death of His Son, the propitiation by blood. (Not overlooked, and left unaddressed.)
 3. God’s severity is displayed at the cross – **Romans 8:3** (sin condemned); **Isaiah 53:4-6** (what sin deserves/calls for displayed in Jesus’ death)
 - C. The rejection of God’s immutable nature in His opposition to sin, and corresponding wrath/severity is incompatible with the very notion of His offer of salvation.
 - D. One cannot accept the reality of God’s goodness without first accepting the reality of His severity.
- III. Consider the Goodness and Severity of God
 - A. The Reality of Both is Cause for Serious Thought
 - a. Consider His goodness and severity – **Romans 11:22**
 - i. A warning to the Gentiles – **Romans 11:19-23** – you were not grafted in because you were special. You can fall the same way they did.
 - b. God is impartial in His administration of both – **Romans 2:6-11**
 - c. The conditions for both are universal (why He is impartial in His administration) – **Romans 1:16** (v. 5 – obedience to the faith)
 - i. **Romans 11:23** – unbelief, then, is the condition of His severity. (Disobedience – **Romans 10:16**)
 - d. Are you in “the faith” or not? – **2 Corinthians 13:5** – such is the determining factor of receiving God’s goodness or severity – **Romans 1:17** (Righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith – object of faith)
 - B. Both Will be Fully Revealed in the End
 - a. **2 Thessalonians 1:6-10** – taking vengeance, and being glorified in His saints, giving them rest)
 - b. Whether you will be a final recipient of His goodness or His severity is dependent on what you have sown – **Romans 11:22; Galatians 6:7-8**

Conclusion

1. It is foolish to deny the severity of God.
2. God has revealed that He is a giver of goodness, but also One who deals severely.
3. He has been very clear concerning how one comes to be the recipient of either His goodness or severity.