

The Goodness And Severity Of God

Introduction. Long ago, many Jews were “cut off” and many Gentiles were “grafted in”. The Jews had been cut off because of unbelief, but they could be grafted in again. Their dispensation had come to an end, and they were lost. The Gentiles had been grafted in, but because of the same sin of unbelief, they could be cut off.

This is the point Paul made in Romans 11. There is a lot to learn and take comfort in the goodness (kindness) and severity (sternness) of God in 11:22-23. We will study them in order to know the nature of the One whom we serve.

I. *The Goodness Of God*

- A. He has a beautiful, matchless nature.
 - 1. He is gracious (Psalm 86:15; 112:4; 116:5), which is displayed in His forgiving men of their sins.
 - 2. He is merciful (Exodus 34:6; Ephesians 2:4; Romans 9:15), which is displayed in His compassion with the suffering.
- B. He physically blesses us (Psalm 65:9; 68:19; Acts 14:17; 1 Timothy 6:17).
- C. He gave us His Son (John 3:34-35; 7:16; 11:41-42; 1 John 4:14; cp. Ephesians 1:3).
- D. He wants all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:9).
- E. He gave us the Bible.
 - 1. It is our lamp and light (Psalm 119:105). Its purpose is to help us “hate every false way” and “furnish us unto all good works” (Psalm 119:104; 2 Timothy 3:17).
 - 2. Even though God is gracious, we are under law to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2). God does not restrict us for the sake of restriction. God’s laws are for our good (Nehemiah 9:13; Romans 7:12-14; 1 Timothy 1:8-11).

II. *The Severity Of God*

- A. Because of God’s holy nature (1 Peter 1:16; cp. Leviticus 11:44), He must punish wickedness or else He would not be righteous.
 - 1. From the first sin, man and the serpent were cursed, but God set in motion a plan or scheme whereby man would be redeemed (Genesis 3:14-19; 12:1-3; Galatians 3:16).
 - 2. When God’s people committed idolatry, He sent them into captivity as a punishment (2 Kings 17:20-23; 24:10-11, 14; cp. Deuteronomy 28:47-50). However, because God was gracious, He warned the Israelites of their impending doom, trying to get them to repent

- (2 Kings 17:13; 2 Chronicles 24:19; Jeremiah 26:5; 44:4; Malachi 4:5).
3. A mistaken concept of God's severity is that He is cruel; i.e., He causes suffering. But the Bible shows that suffering is the work of Satan.
 - a) When the sons of God presented themselves before God, Satan was there to ask to tempt and afflict Job (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7).
 - b) Upon being questioned for having healed a woman who had been sick for 18 years on the Sabbath, Jesus said it was Satan's fault (Luke 13:16).
 - c) Paul attributed his thorn in the flesh to Satan (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). Satan takes pleasure in ruining God's creation and causing misery and suffering (1 John 5:19).
 - d) God's purpose in permitting Satan to test us is to save us through a perfected faith. Satan's purpose is to destroy us through a defeated faith.
 - e) This does not make God cruel, for He gives us tools to overcome temptation and the devil (1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Peter 5:8-11).
 - B. God was willing to destroy the world because of the wickedness of His own creation, not because of fickleness or unrighteousness (Genesis 6:5-7). God will destroy this present world one day (2 Peter 2:4-9; 3:9-10).
 1. This destruction will include the permanent removal of Satan and his angels (Matthew 25:41, 46; Revelation 20:10).
 2. This will not seem cruel or harsh to all the righteous people throughout history who have endured wickedness and look forward to a glorified, eternal state. They will correctly see it as God's perfect justice. He is a "habitation of justice" (Jeremiah 50:7)

Conclusion. God will eventually deal with everyone's disobedience and obedience (Acts 10:34-35). When men refuse to abide in Christ, they will be cut off. This is God's severity for He rejects those who reject Him. But, when men believe in God and manifest faith in sincere obedience, God receives them and they experience God's goodness (John 7:38; 12:44-50). The call of the gospel is for you today. Do not put off what you know is right. If you have obeyed but fallen because of unbelief, you can be "grafted" back to God today.