

TEXT SERMON

SERIES: *THE GOD WHO IS*

Message #3

**"THE SEVERITY OF GOD"**

Text:

**Romans 11:22**

***"... consider therefore the goodness and severity of God."***

Does God have a split personality? Is God a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde type of character? What is God really like? There are two characteristics of God's nature revealed in this statement which Paul calls upon us to consider. They are God's goodness and God's severity. He does not have a split personality for ultimate goodness requires the antithesis of severity.

We will have an improper and thus incomplete view of God if we only consider the one and not the other. It is my intention in this message to focus upon the stern side of God's nature and in the next message in this series to concentrate upon the goodness of God. I trust that you will give equal time to the consideration of the goodness of God by perusing the next message titled: "Finding Comfort InThe Goodness Of God."

The severity of God is a characteristic rejected many. They prefer to think of God as "the Old Man upstairs who always says, "Well done!" C.S. Lewis wrote, "We want, in fact, not so much a Father in heaven as a grandfather in heaven – a senile benevolence who, as they say, "likes to see young people enjoying themselves" and whose plan for the universe was simply that it might be truly said at the end of the day, 'a good time was had by all.'"

J. B. Phillips wrote a book "Your God Is Too Small" and in it he describes God as the "Resident Policeman" and the "Kind Grandfather" among other descriptors. He was saying that God is both severe and good.

A great many people comprehend God as being a loving Father and recoil at the suggestion that He is also stern or severe. Likewise, there are those who view Him only as a stern judge. However, any balanced doctrine of God must include both these elements.

How do we reconcile the following seemingly contradictory statements?

"Jacob have I loved but..."

"Esau have I hated"? (Romans 9:13)

"He took up children in his arms to bless them." (Mark 10:16) And

"He took a scourge of cords and drove out the money changers." (John 2:15)

"Your King comes unto you, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." (Matt.21:5) And

"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns." (Rev.19:11-12)

"Come unto me all you who are heavily laden." (Matt.11:28) And

"Depart from me you workers of iniquity, I never knew you." (Luke 13:27)

One time He called one group of people "sheep" and "friends." (John 10) And He called another group "snakes" and "vipers". (Matt.23:33)

He is pictured in scripture as a Lamb. (John 1:29,36) And He is also portrayed as a Lion. (Rev. 5:5)

In the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus we see both attributes: "goodness" and "severity" displayed. Both are characteristics of the one true and living God. Let us explore the Bible's teaching on the subject further by: (1) Examining what scripture says about God's sternness, severity, wrath, judgment; (2) Noting some instances where God exercised His sternness; (3) And consider some positive results of the severe side of God's nature.

### **I. GOD'S SEVERITY EXAMINED.**

"Consider therefore the goodness and severity of God." (Or, "the kindness and sternness of God." niv).

We need some context to this statement. The Greek word translated "severity" or "sternness" is "apotomos" and means "to cut abruptly; to sever." The context of Paul's statement is the use of the agricultural metaphor of cutting off and grafting in. He uses this metaphor to express that act of God's justice and mercy by which the Jews were rejected, and the Gentiles elected.

To get a "feel" for what Paul is talking about read Romans 11:22,23 which says, "Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again."

This was the goodness of the heavenly gardener toward Gentiles; but it was seen as severity to the Jews. Nevertheless the principle holds. The holy nature of God leads Him to sever whatever is corrupt. The word English word "severe" comes from the same root word from which the word "sever" comes. God severs, God is severe.

Those who cannot accept the truth about God's severity do not base their view of God upon scripture. I have heard many say, "God is too good to send anyone to Hell". That is a revelation of one's ignorance of Who God actually is as revealed in His Word.

There are numerous references to God's severity, sternness, wrath, judgment in the Bible. For starters:

**Ps. 7:11** "God is angry with the wicked every day."

**Ps. 9:16-17** "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executes ... the wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God."

However, one extended passage in which the stern side of God's nature is revealed in

some detail is Romans 2:3-11. Here we learn nine facts about the stern side of God's nature as seen in His judgments:

**A. God's judgment is according to truth.**

"But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth." (Rom. 2:2)

**B. God's judgment is inescapable.**

"And do you think .... that you will escape the judgment of God? (Rom. 2:3)

**C. God's judgment is preceded by His goodness.**

"Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? (Rom.2:4) God's love always precedes His wrath, His goodness always precedes His severity. The order in Romans 11:22 is purposeful. His severity follows rejected goodness. If His goodness in Jesus Christ is rejected we have only ourselves to blame.

God judges because He is too good to allow sin to go unpunished. What sort of God would He be if He promised to judge evil but then did not keep His word? Continuing we see that,

**D. God's judgment is righteous.**

"the righteous judgment of God...." (Rom. 2:5)

**E. God's judgment is all-inclusive.**

"who will render to each one according to his deeds": (Rom. 2:6)

**F. God's judgment follows rejected truth.**

"but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness —indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish...." (Rom.2:8)

**G. God's judgment is meted out in equity. 2:9**

"on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek."

**H. God's judgment is administered by Jesus Christ.**

"in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ ..." (Rom.2:16)

**I. God's judgment is according to the gospel.**

"according to my gospel." (Rom. 2:16)

In examining only a few scriptures we see that there is the severe side to God's nature. Let us now look at some of the many examples we could cite when God exercised His severity:

**II. GOD'S SEVERITY EXERCISED.**

Some of the scriptures that record God's judgments are:

**A. II Peter 2:4**

“God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment.”

**B. II Peter 2:5**

God “did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly.”

**C. II Peter 2:6 & 9**

God turned “the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly.”  
And v. 9 “the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,”

**D. Jude v. 5**

“Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.”

**E. Jude Vs. 6**

“And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home - these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day”.

**F. Jude Vs. 7**

“In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire”

**G. Romans 8:32**

“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.....”

The question that should come to each mind is asked in Hebrews 2:3, “how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?” (niv)

We have examined generally the subject of God’s severity; we have read about God exercising His severity and now let us conclude by looking at some of the positive outcomes of God’s severity for His children.

**III. GOD’S SEVERITY EDIFIES.**

Proverbs 3:11-12 gives us guidance at this point. Solomon the wise wrote, “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor detest His correction; For whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.”

Additional perspective is given us in Hebrews 12:6-9 – “And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God

deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?"

God is a good Father. His sternness, and/or severity and chastening have as their end the building up of His children. To mention just a few of the positive results of His corrective action we see that:

**A. It Produces Holiness.**

God chastens us "for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness." (Heb. 12:10)

**B. It Produces Righteousness.**

"Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness...." (Hebrews 12:11)

**C. It Produces Obedience.**

We know well the story of the disobedient Jonah who, when told by God to go to Nineveh, "ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish." (Jonah 1:3) However, after his submersion excursion "Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh." (Jonah 3:3)

**D. It Produces Witnesses.**

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." (II Cor. 5:11)

## CONCLUSION

Paul admonishes us to "consider the .....severity of God." We have done that. We have briefly reviewed this very solemn subject. Although none of us can say that we fully understand God we are compelled by the revelation that we have of Him in the Word of Truth to exclaim, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!" (Romans 11:33)

Having seen something of the severe nature of God we must bow in humble submission to Him or rise up in prideful rebellion against Him to our own eternal detriment.. Whether we believe the witness of His Word about Him the truth is that Jesus Christ is:

- The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.  
He is also the Lion who judges the sinners of this world.
- He is our Savior.  
He is also our Judge.
- He is the good God who prepares Heaven and  
He is the severe God who prepares Hell.

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The greatest proof that God is both good and severe is seen at the cross of Calvary. At the cross God demonstrated both His love – “He so loved the world that He gave His son” – and His severity, for it was on the cross that God judged sin when Jesus “bore our sins in His own body” on that cross. Receive Jesus Christ, God’s severe mercy gift!

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