

# Two Sides of God

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In Romans 11:22, Paul invites us to take notice of both the “goodness and severity of God.” While we like to think of God in terms of His goodness for the most part, we dare not ignore the frequent teaching that there is a severe sided of His nature. In our super tolerant, wishy-washy culture some not only ignore, but outright deny that God is ever severe. He is pictured somewhat like an ever-smiling, doting grandfather-type who exists only to spoil His unworthy children. To such people, God never gets upset with or becomes inclined to punish anyone, no matter how rebellious they become. Perhaps this is part of the reason why so many modern parents are overly permissive with their own children. However, such a concept of God is as foolish as it is erroneous. It must give the Devil joy that so many have swallowed it. God’s severity is illustrated in our natural world. One who abuses his body with drugs, alcohol, nicotine, or other poisons, can expect to suffer the appropriate consequences of breaking a natural law. Likewise, one invites a severe penalty when he defies God’s law of gravity for our physical world. The laws of our physical universe are for our blessing, however, and if we live within them, they protect us and provide a sphere of consistency for our lives.

God’s severity is seen in spiritual matters, also. The wrath of God is against the ungodly acts of men as a very part of His nature (Rom. 1:18). The severity of God is seen in the final judgment when we shall give an account of both the good and the evil we have done (2 Cor. 5:10). Those who argue that judgment and eternal hell are incompatible with the goodness and mercy of God make the fatal mistake of believing what they want to believe instead of what the Bible teaches. Such people create God in their own image and likeness.

The goodness of God is not at all incongruous with His severity. In fact, God’s goodness lies partly in His severity. We can see His goodness in nature when we plant a seed which He alone can make grow to produce food and fiber. We live in a free and fruitful land that possesses every sort of beautiful terrain. But especially in spiritual matters do we see His goodness demonstrated. The apex of His spiritual blessings is salvation in Christ. He sent Christ (John 3:16) to seek and to save us (Luke 10:10). He provides eternal life through Christ (Rom. 6:23) for those who will believe and be baptized (Mark 16:16). While it is a delight to dwell on the goodness of God, we dare not either forget or ignore the severity of God that will call to account all unforgiven sin. May we all let the goodness of God lead us to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

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