

“CONSIDER THE GOODNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD”

By Keith Greer

“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.” {Romans 11:22} Many people in the religious world speak only in the positive when they talk about God. They freely and profusely declare His love, mercy, grace, kindness, longsuffering, and compassion—all true attributes of His character. Yet, the above verse shows there is more. We note that:

God Has Manifold Attributes. *“So Aaron said, do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil.” {Exodus 32:22}* Moses was asking Aaron to account for his part in making the golden calf. On this occasion, God declared to Moses: *“Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation.” {Exodus 32:10}* This is the same God who loved Israel and brought her out of Egyptian bondage; yet, He was now prepared to consume the entire nation! Moses interceded, pleading for mercy on the people’s behalf, and God relented. Remember, we are discussing the same God. Those who have a one-sided view of God, seeing only His love, have not read or studied Bible history. From the beginning, disobedience has always been accompanied by consequences!

God’s Attributes Are Impartial. *“Then Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.’” {Acts 10:34,35}* Think about the above incident. God loved Israel, and they were His people, but did He cut them some slack? We would do well to read Paul’s words to the church in Rome. {Romans 2:6-11} God demands the same thing—strict obedience to His commands—from every person. Otherwise, no matter who we are, we face whatever consequences accompany our disobedience.

God Is Good. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” {John 3:16}*

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” {Romans 5:8}

We can confidently affirm what the Scriptures powerfully teach us concerning God’s love. He shows His goodness in many ways—through mercy, longsuffering, and especially through His saving grace. God has promised us eternal life, and we know that He cannot lie. {Titus 1:2} Unfortunately, we sometimes dwell on and believe in only this side of God. But, kindness is not the end of the story of God’s character and attributes.

God is Severe. *“Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.” {Leviticus 10:1,2}* Do you remember these two men? They were Aaron’s sons and priests who officiated in the tabernacle. Yet, when they failed to honor God by following His instructions concerning worship, He sent fire from heaven and consumed them!

God's Wrath. *"For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." {Hebrews 10:30,31}* One would do well to carefully study the whole story concerning God's attributes and character. Far too many religious people of our day, even sadly some of our brethren, seem to want to emphasize the love, mercy, grace, longsuffering, and love of God by diminishing the other side of the coin—His wrath. God will do exactly what He says. Israel found that out the hard way! Thankfully, we can—by being obedient—avoid His severity and realize His goodness. ***