

KNOWING GOD

J. I. Packer

Goodness & Severity of God - Chapter 16

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God. - Romans 11:22

The Christians in Rome were given a warning as they were Gentiles to not dwell only on the goodness of God but the severity also, in other words don't be like the Israelites.

Just like today most love the fact that God takes their breath away and all joyous encounters but taking that view of Him alone will leave me like the Israelites in Romans who left the Lord. Here is what it looks like:

1. People have gotten into the practice of following private religious hunches.
2. Modern people have drawn ideas about God from outside even pagan sources.
3. People have ceased to recognize their own sinfulness.(Holiness)
4. People dissociate the severity of God with the thought of His goodness.(Passive)

Next rises the critical fact that those same people cannot cope with the fact of evil. This has only been a problem recently, it wasn't a problem for the early church. The goodness of God is threatened by the problems of life, death, cruelty and broken vows.

The Goodness of God

The Bible's view of goodness is particularly the generosity of God. His truthfulness, trustworthiness, unflinching justice and wisdom, His tenderness, forbearance and kindness are ways His goodness is expressed. (Ex. 34:6-7). His free favor or grace covers the long list of God's goodness. Common grace is experienced by all humans, special grace is experienced by believers. (Psalm 107)

The Severity of God

It means "cutting off". The decisive withdrawal of His goodness from those who have spurned it away. He will not leave the guilty unpunished. Those who decline to respond to God's goodness by repentance, faith, trust and submission of will, can expect goodness to be withdrawn. He is slow to anger but that doesn't mean it won't arrive. He is long suffering and wishes none to perish but eventually, they will. God waited in the days of Noah. In Revelation ch. 2 the chance to repent is given because of God's patience.

Our Response

1. Appreciate the goodness of God. Count your blessings.
2. Appreciate the patience of God. He still bears with us.
3. Appreciate the discipline of God. Thorns are given to keep us from complacency.