

God's Kindness and Severity

by Erlo Stegen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's character, specifically his kindness and severity, and living a life of obedience and righteousness.

Duration: 1:09:54

Scripture: Isaiah 40:4, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:21, Luke 13:3, Acts 5:1-11, Romans 11:22, Revelation 2:5

Topics: "God's Kindness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of the kindness and severity of God. He shares a personal story about an American preacher who asked whether people emphasize the love of God or His wrath. The preacher explains that both aspects exist and cites a biblical reference in Matthew 24 about an evil servant. He then reveals that the American preacher died a terrible death after it was discovered that he had been involved in immoral activities and had criticized other servants of God. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the importance of understanding the compassion and severity of God.

Transcript

We ask you, Lord, that this hour would be unlike any other. We ask you that you yourself would come down, be in our midst and work. Lord, we do not wish to be just a congregation, just practicing church, but rather that you yourself would be in our midst, that you would be at work.

Work, Lord, in the way that you deem fit now. Reveal yourself to us and to the whole world. And glorify yourself.

Amen. I'd like to speak today from a portion, a letter to the Romans. Chapter 11, 22.

Therefore, consider the goodness and the severity of God. Lord, on those who fell, severity, but toward you, goodness. If you continue in his goodness, otherwise you also will be cut off.

We've heard that pastor from Russia speaking about how today you find only the preaching of the love and grace of God. But ironically, sin and wickedness grows rapidly among people, among believers. So what do we say about that? It's related to Romans 11, verse 22.

Our text starts in verse 22 by saying, behold, there is something that God wants to hold before our eyes and to make it clear to us. Two things, the kindness and the severity of God. Severity regarding those who fell and kindness regarding those who continue in his goodness.

I remember a certain American preacher coming here to Kwasi Zabantu. And he asked with which theological persuasion do you stand? Those who stress the love of God or those who stress God's wrath? The truth is that in my life I don't identify with either. Because both things do exist, but they are inseparable.

The love of God is never held in contradiction or in separation from his anger, his righteousness. His compassion can never be separated from his sharpness, his severity. If you have a love that is godless, without God's love in it, then it is a washout, it is useless.

Without God's righteousness. And should you have righteousness without love, the same is true. Our text says, behold therefore the compassion and the severity of God.

And as we speak about these things, I urge you to pray earnestly in your heart, Lord speak to me personally. Regarding compassion and that God is compassionate towards people. If they remain within his compassion and the severity.

And the severity of God is shown towards those who God says he will cut off. If I think of the beginning of God's working there at Mapumulu, both of these aspects were strongly evident. We beheld the compassion and the severity of God.

Going together in harmony. If the Holy Spirit works, you will take note of both of these aspects. Both of these attributes we could say are two sides of the same coin.

And in the scriptures, this is compared to the very foundation of God. You remember in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 19. Nevertheless, the solid foundation of God stands having the seal.

The Lord knows those who are his and let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. Firstly, we are comforted by the words that the Lord knows those who are his. We don't know, we might presume that somebody is the Lord's.

But the Lord might say no, not him. On the day of judgment or when you get to heaven, it will be a shock to notice that those that we expected to be there are not. And those that we presumed would not be there are.

But you shouldn't get into those complications, you should rather make sure that your name is there. Making sure and being confident that you are there. So on God's foundation is the inscription that the Lord knows those who belong to him.

But also the inscription that let him who names the name of the Lord depart from all unrighteousness. Therefore, search yourself whether you have departed from all iniquity. We have heard of that Ukrainian minister who said there is so much preaching just about the love and compassion of God.

But the people of God, the churches just continue, persist in their sin. Now I must discern and make it clear that that love spoken of is not the love of God. And that grace spoken of is not the grace of God.

That has got absolutely nothing to do with the real love of God and his grace. It is as far as the east is from the west. The love of God loves what is good and hates what is unrighteous.

But the love that Heinsohn, that is the love of God, is not the love of God. The love that covers iniquity is the type of love which we hear of in the Bible where it says a person, anybody in this world has a love

towards other people. Those who like him, he likes them back.

Sinners like sinners, homosexuals like homosexuals, and thieves like thieves. That is not the love of God. That is not the righteous love of God.

You need to search yourself whether you have the true genuine love of God or whether it is a corrupted, defiled love. In Romans 6, let's read about this grace that is spoken of. Therefore, what shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not.

If it refers to grace. And we adore the abundance of grace. And then we presume that because grace is so abundant we can continue in sin.

It says no, never. Inherent in this grace is the severity, the sharpness of God. Do you know the difference between sharpness and bluntness? Last night I was cutting a piece of biltong but the knife was just too blunt to cut properly.

Maybe you need to check whether your Christianity is a sharp one or you have a blunt God. This text asks us, what shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound? No, never. So what shall we then say? Shall a person stay here at Guasisabantu and continue in their sin for living here for a week or for a month or a year? No, grace shows itself in that the person parts from sin.

You could put a cat and a rat here and then they become friends. Take the grace of God and bring sin close to it and they become pals. The Bible says clearly, no, never.

In other words, if you are continuing with these two, it shows that you are trampling underfoot the grace of God. It says, for the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. The grace of God brings salvation, salvation from sin.

And verse 12 teaches us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in the present age. In this present age of perversion, of depravity, God says that His grace has appeared, bringing salvation. And that grace, when it has entered a person, instructs that person, it instructs him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.

And to walk soberly and righteously and godly. It would be a dreadful mistake if the grace that we speak about is actually not the grace that is spoken of here. Because then you are as deceived as Eve was when she believed the serpent who was speaking about this nice grace.

But he was taking her something that was far apart from this grace. So grace is a teacher, it instructs the person to deny all ungodliness. It teaches us to deny sinful things.

Now how can you persist in sin in this grace? If you have your lover, in an unrighteous way, maybe you are not married, but you are in love with that person. You are obsessed with that passion. You are willing to deny your Lord Jesus because of this infatuation.

And yet you claim that you are in the grace of God. No, you are not in grace. Because grace would be teaching you and instructing you, this is unrighteous, part from it, turn away from it.

Grace teaches us to part from worldly lusts, to part from sin. You see that which is holy, so utterly holy, the grace of God has been pulled down into the dirt. And the indescribable love of God has been taken and trampled underfoot.

And God shows us that this is not His way. Now that person had said that the general standard among Christians is dropping, lowering. It cannot be that you have the love of God, the grace of God in your life, and the standard is dropping in you.

I wish all of you here could understand German. That you would be able to have an appreciation for the way Martin Luther translated Titus 1 verse 14. Verse 13, where it says this testimony is true, therefore rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith.

What kind of? New King James. The New King James. Rebuke them sharply.

Sharply. Luther says chastise them sharply. Can you punish a Christian sharply today? You are loveless.

That does not exist. In this generation, is one ever permitted to rebuke and punish or chastise sharply? No, it would be considered to be unloving and unchristian. We prefer to speak that which will keep the peace and which will tickle the ears.

And then it continues to say so that they may be sound in the faith. Sound, healthy, sound in the faith. So it means health, to be sound of health spiritually.

And I was glad when I read this and I realized the meaning of it because I've been looking for a long time the meaning of this Zulu idiom that we use which says things are received by life which means health. And that is the word that I've been looking for. You receive authority, you receive position and going forward because of health and vitality.

Because we are healthy in the faith and healthy in our faith life. To be sound in the faith, to be healthy in the faith, it is something that is more understandable among whites regarding living by faith. Somehow in Africa this is not understood.

There was a Scandinavian lady who came as a missionary here to Africa who said I'm going there and I'm going to live by faith. I'm using this as an example just to show you that not all whites are like that. I say the whites are better than the blacks in this.

Because the white person understands or should understand what it means to live by faith. It's been my life from the very day I got saved to live by faith. You say I've got rich brothers, I've got businesses.

When did they start? How long have I been preaching? It's a lie. I know what it is not to get a salary and to travel thousands of kilometers and to preach to the blacks, not to rich whites. And then there are some whites that are just like the blacks.

They can't imagine to live by faith. One white preacher, well known, he says oh no I can't live by faith. That means I'd be like a person on a boat on the sea.

I'd rather stand with my feet on solid ground. If you can't live by faith, I don't say you've got to, but ask yourself whether you are spiritually healthy. If you can't live by faith, ask yourself whether you are spiritually healthy.

Jesus sent his disciples out and he commissioned them and they went out in faith. Even though there are other examples like Paul who also did tent making to survive financially for himself and his colleagues. Let me get back to that Scandinavian lady who came here to Africa to preach here among the Zulus.

She almost died of starvation. And then she jumped to the conclusion you can't live by faith if you work and preach to the blacks. But I lived preaching to the blacks.

And then this lady had to go back to Scandinavia because she had a fortune there and she left that fortune and came here to live by faith. And then she was forced to go back to use her fortune to live. Well if I would have been God in heaven I would have done the same to that dear lady.

I would have made her starve. She should have used her inheritance and continued to live by faith. Now the Bible says don't be like the heathen who are anxious about what they'll eat or what they'll dress or what shelter they'll have.

Don't be like them. The Bible says seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all things will be added unto you. Maybe you are seeking God but you don't have his righteousness and you find that these things are not being added unto you.

After all you're acting in a criminal way. You're holding on to unrighteousness. And then you expect God to support you and to keep you alive.

Why are you serving the devil and being faithful to him? Don't play the fool with God. He'll play the fool with you. I remember a person here at Kosisabantu.

Well it was a person who seemed to be genuinely Christian. But there were suspicions about this person. And I asked the person did you actually go to that woman's room and sit there in that room? He said no preacher definitely not.

I said to him again did you not go to that room? He said I did not go to her room. I went to the lady. And I asked her regarding him how things went? She said no everything's fine except that he did come to my room and sit down here in my room.

You see? Among the Christians today lies are told. You see? You see?

You see? be glad that I don't do as Peter who when faced with a lying Christian Ananias he condemned that sin and he treated it with the sharpness and chastise that sin with sharpness of words so that the man died but today lies are told and you just continue like that well if it is like that with you stop today calling yourself a Christian I'm thankful I'm thankful to God that that person is no longer with us though they're still alive they're not here with us and after all how could that person continue here if God is alive for God is a righteous God there is no unrighteousness that he can live with but Christianity but Christendom has sunk to those depths they are brethren who will lie without shame and they continue with it but you can rest assured that that is unrighteous God will

not allow that to continue in his righteousness he will not associate with that and I assure you it will never be it says seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness his holiness are they unrighteous things in your life Christian wicked things think of Ananias and Sapphira as this married couple and their conspiracy behind locked doors and just think of it ponder upon it I think it was just before the beginning of the revival in 1966 I had a friend with whom I preached and we were in a service and in the service he was soundly rebuked he didn't see his sin he saw himself as being on the right way because if you persist in sin you will begin to believe your own life you lie eventually that lie becomes your truth and that night then I thought let me go to that Christian person who

It was there in that place, those who were there will remember, that old cow shed where we had been praying. He wanted to address us. And as he came up to the pulpit, he didn't stand behind the pulpit.

We saw him suddenly lying on the floor. We carried on with the service and he lay on the floor. God just struck him down.

He was the man who in one prayer meeting said it was as if I was cut from the head down to the feet into two pieces. Exactly those words you find in Matthew 24, isn't it, about that evil servant. After not many days he died a terrible death which I would never wish upon anybody.

And then it came to the light that he had actually been having affairs with women and girls. And he had been critical of other servants of the Lord. That's why he had that vision where it's written in the scripture of that evil servant who messed around while he said, well, my master has not yet come.

And he whipped and mistreated his fellow servants. That is the God of whom we read in Romans 11, 22. He is both compassionate and severe.

Behold then the kindness and the severity of God. Severity towards those who fell, but kindness towards you. You who remain in his kindness, otherwise you are cut off.

This is the word of God. So search your own life regarding your past and your present. Anything that has not been put right with God.

Any wickedness that has not been dealt with. Reverend Voldemar Engelbrecht phoned me yesterday. He asked me, if a person has sinned and he sinned with his tongue in front of other people, should he not go back to those same people where he had gossiped or spoken poisonous words? How would you respond? What should I have said to him? What should I say to him? He should make right.

He should make right. If you have sinned against a person, you need to make that right with that person. I'm just asking a question, first of all, just to see whether you've still got a mind in your head.

Some brains or not. Maybe they've fallen into another part of your body. And you've just got pumpkin pips appear.

I'm asking you if you have sinned with your tongue. You've spoken to somebody else. At this time, it didn't remain there.

That person spoke as well. Or a letter was written. That letter was read.

Must you not put that right? Or not? Must you? Or not? I'm asking you. You'll never be a blessing amongst God's people. You'll be a curse.

The God I know and the God I serve demands that you put that right. And the spirit that's in me, the spirit I call the Holy Spirit, can't stand anything that's wrong. And these are the things that are binding you that God can't use you.

And that the rivers of living water don't flow out of your life. God is a God of love. That's why you still are alive.

Otherwise, you'd be dead now. At the same time, he's a holy God. Deal with that.

Otherwise, the rest of your life will be cursed. Under that curse and under that spell, till you die and you'll have to face it squarely before God. So make right that which is wrong.

Which is crooked. Remember John the Baptist? Make it straight. Those slag gates, those ditches, fill them that it will be a highway for God.

Are you prepared? If not, I suggest, pack your things and go. Take your hat and go. For we don't need you.

For you will put on the brakes and the Holy Spirit who wants to work will be limited. And you will be the obstacle. And we will be guilty continuing with you in your state.

And we'll be called by that what you are. That's why I'm challenging you now. Is your life right? Have you made things right? The lies you've spoken, have you put them right? Your lips, are they clean? No gossip? No speaking about other people behind their backs? Those are things that got to be dealt with.

That's the price you've got to pay. That's what we had to pay when we got revival. And you wonder why you don't have revival.

You'll never get it. You'll have to leave. And where you go, you won't get it.

Unless you come back, remember where you have fallen, and repent as you did in the beginning. By God's grace, He visited us, we experienced revival, He ran the heavens, He came down, but you're just jumping onto the boat without having repented, paid the spiritual price you should have paid. That you listen to God's grace, and that God's love does something to you.

Oh God. Oh God. Oh God.

We ask you because of Jesus who died for us, that you'd send the Holy Spirit to convict and speak to our hearts. Speak, oh Lord, that that which is not right would be put right. That that which is crooked would be made straight.

That the valleys would be filled. That which is high and lofty would be brought down. Making a way for you, that highway, where you can come and work among the children of men.

Amen.

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