

BEHOLD THE GOODNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD

The text from which our subject is taken is Romans the 11th chapter the 22nd verse. (Romans 11:22)

22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

In this text the Apostle Paul points out us two sides of God's character.

Two sides of God's Character

On the one side he paints a picture of God as the benevolent loving creator and nurturer and on the other, a stern disciplinarian who exacts justice without mercy.

As with many views we have of others, the conception we have is usually incomplete or distorted if we do not have the complete picture and understand the *motives* as well as the *works* of those we observe.

To understand and appreciate God is a formidable task to say the least. It excites fear, to the point that it seems to discourage investigation on the chance of finding something to dread because we dare to look for an explanation of His motives and His actions.

We do not delude ourselves by thinking that by merely making a determined effort that we can fully understand and appreciate our God, for the Scriptures are clear that it will take an eternity to know God.

But God invites our study of Himself when He says

. . . prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

We are to prove his promises thru a humble, obedient walk and then claiming those promises which apply to us.

He reminds us that He is unchangeable and because of that we can be sure that what we find out about his character by his actions of the past are true in the present and will be true for all eternity.

When we in a humble attitude of heart seek to learn more about the Ruler of the universe, we are stuck with awe and wonder at the glimpse we are able to see and comprehend even with our limited powers of mind and reason.

Three Ways to Know About God

We take a great deal of comfort from the fact that there are really only three ways to learn about God.

1. We can study his revelation to us and consider what he has chosen to reveal to us of himself.
2. We can observe what he has created and how it reflects his character.
3. We can observe His dealings with His creatures, both heavenly and earthly, and see how He deals with His friends and His enemies, in the past and present, and note how He promises to deal with them in the future.

God does not fully reveal himself to any of His earthly creatures and has said that which He does not reveal is His alone.

Deuteronomy 29:29

29 The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

The purpose of God in revealing himself to us is to encourage us to obedience to his will.

To Whom God Reveals Himself

He has promised to reveal himself to some more than others, but it has nothing to do with the mental ability of the individual and so we do not have to think that some of the world's most respected intellectuals will need to be consulted or relied upon to give us an insight into the character of God.

They may help us to appreciate His handiwork by a more detailed knowledge of the physical things of this universe, from the smallest particle of matter to the vastness of the heavens, but none know more of the character of God than he has revealed in His Word.

In Matthew 11:25 Jesus said,

Mt 11:25 . . . I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

Two Classes Compared

Paul invites a comparison when he says, . . . *on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness.* He is referring to the nation of Israel as them that fell and to the consecrated followers of Jesus as those to whom God had exercised goodness.

One might be inclined to think that Paul is indicating that God had decided, without reason, to all at once begin to deal harshly with Israel and leniently with the Gentiles. Nothing could be further from the truth.

It is this type of misunderstanding of Scripture that has led to thinking of the God of the Old Testament as one who was unapproachable, demanding obedience to laws that were impossible to keep, and enforcing strict justice upon his people.

Whereas many seem to view the God of the New Testament as benevolent, loving and caring, inviting the willing to approach Him and making provision for their weaknesses and failures, indicating a change in God's character and His concern for mankind.

Paul's point in inviting us to consider the goodness and the severity of God is to appreciate our magnificent Creator, and the different facets of his character.

God's Severity

The word translated severity comes from a Greek word which means to cut off abruptly, and that is just what Jehovah did in the case of Israel. But the word gives no indication that the cutting off was in any way unjust or without an adequate period of trial.

God had been dealing with the nation of Israel for over 1800 years, and it was only when they rejected the one that they had been prepared to receive, that they were rejected and replaced.

Was God unjust or unreasonable in his treatment of Israel in casting them off from His special favor? Absolutely not! We are amazed at the long suffering of God in waiting as long as He did.

The Apostle Paul could have used many other illustrations of God's severity contrasted by His goodness, but in this particular case he was trying to impress upon the Gentiles the particular blessing they had received by being invited to become part of that seed which would bless all the families of the earth, and to remind them of the need for faithfulness to their covenant lest they should experience the severity of God also.

Examples of God's Goodness and Severity

From the creation of the man **Adam**, until the close of Revelation we can find instances of the Goodness and Severity of God.

God created Adam perfect, placed him in a garden specially prepared for him where he enjoyed all the benefits that God had provided in the way of beauty of

creation, and when he realized that something was missing in the way of human companionship, God even provided him a mate. Together they had the opportunity of bring forth a race of perfect human beings, but Adam failed in the one test of obedience that God had given him, which was well within his ability to perform.

And so God imposed the sentence, that he had warned would be the result of disobedience, dying thou shalt Die And so they were driven out of their perfect garden into the unfinished surrounding earth to experience for over 900 years the severity of God.

God allowed **the Angels** of heaven the opportunity to attempt the uplift of mankind during the first dispensation and when their efforts turned to disobedience and contamination of the human race with the angelic, God destroyed all but 8 individuals in the flood, and sentenced the angels that had fallen to restraint in chains of darkness until their judgment, in the day of the Lord.

Even in the individual lives of those who lived in old testament times do we see the pattern of the goodness and severity of God.

In the life of **Abraham**, we find God directing him to leave his homeland and increasing his wealth in every

way, even in his old age giving him an heir when he had despaired of having a child with his beloved Sarah.

What more could he ask beyond what God had promised to be the one whose heirs would bless all the families of earth.

And yet God would test his obedience, by testing him severely, by asking him to sacrifice his son.

Don't you think that Abraham experienced both the goodness and the severity of God.

David too, experienced the goodness and severity of God. From his days as a shepherd until his becoming King of Israel he was blessed by God, and referred to as a man after God's own heart.

It was not until **David** took Uriah's wife and then arranged for the death of Uriah in battle, that the Lord becomes displeased with his servant David.

God sent his decree to David by the prophet Nathan who began by giving an allegory to David to let him see the justice of the sentence that God would execute against him.

You remember Nathan told David about two men in a city, one of whom was very rich having flocks and

herds and the other being poor having only one little lamb which had become a family pet.

When the rich man receives a visit from a traveler, instead of preparing a meal from one of his own animals, he takes the poor man's lamb and slays him for the visitor's meal.

David sees the injustice and proclaims that the rich man is worthy of death and that in addition he ought to restore the lamb four fold.

When Nathan tells David that he is the man, he suddenly realizes the way in which God looked upon his actions.

Then Nathan tells David what will be the punishment for his actions.

It is recorded in 2 Samuel 12, beginning with Verse 10

(2 Samuel 2:10-20) 10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

Peace was to depart from the house of David and as a result David would be found unworthy of building the Temple for God.

11 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I

will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, (better translated another — an obvious reference to Absalom) in the sight of this sun.

12 For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

The Lord accepted the repentance of David and did not take his life.

14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

Because of the reproach which came upon the name of the Lord, because of what the King which Jehovah had set upon his throne had done, David could not escape punishment entirely.

15 And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.

16 David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.

17 And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them.

18 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?

19 But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead.

20 Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped:

David felt the severity of God in a very personal way. How could a father with such a loving caring nature, who could express such heartfelt praise as we find in the Psalms, be less than willing to give his life for the life of the firstborn son of his beloved Bathsheba. For seven days he lay upon the ground thinking of what he had done and no doubt wishing that God had taken his life and let his son live. But when it was over David

worshipped God knowing that the Lord was just and merciful in all His dealing with him.

The Underlying Principle of Justice

Many others examples are given in Scripture of those who have received of the goodness of God in serving him who have also experienced the severity of God in a very personal way. It is important for us to appreciate the underlying principle of justice that motivates our God. In these examples of scriptures we see an application of Paul's statement that whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

Do we fail to see the application of this principle to those whom God has invited to become a part of the bride for His son? We who have felt the Goodness of God, who have been enlightened, who have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted of the good word of God and the powers the world to come.

If we be lax in carrying out our vows of consecration, should we expect anything less than an experience with the severity of God?

Paul told the Corinthians that he was turning one over to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit might be saved.

We think that those who allow their zeal for the Lord to wain will experience the severity of God and learn not to trifle with their God.

In Genesis 1:26 we are told that God said,

Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

In the Image of God

It is clearly evident that in the image and after our likeness meant something other than an exact copy. Even the perfect man Adam was far from the condition that Jesus has obtained of being the express image of the father's person or as the NIV translates it, the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.

We usually interpret this to mean that man was created to have mental faculties of memory, reason, judgment and will and moral qualities of justice, benevolence and love.

It is clear, if we look at the best of mankind, that there still is evidence of those qualities though to a much lesser extent than in our progenitor, Adam.

But we think that the image of God includes more than this. In examining the character of man in a very generic way we find there is at least one other aspect of his makeup beyond those we have mentioned. There is an emotional side to mankind.

If we recognize in all mankind this aspect of emotion, and understand that perfect man was created in the image of God, the question then is, does God experience emotion? Emotion is something that we do not usually associate with God, because we think of emotion as being a sign of immaturity or weakness.

Emotions

The encyclopedia says that the term emotion is frequently used as synonymous with feeling. In psychology it signifies a reaction involving certain physiological changes such as accelerated or retarded pulse rate, the diminished or increased activities of certain glands or change in body temperature which stimulate the individual, or some component part of their body, to further activity.

The three primary reactions of this type are anger, love, and fear, which occur either as an immediate response to external stimuli or are the result of an indirect subjective process such as memory, association, or introspection. Momentary physiological change accompany all emotional reactions, such as the accelerated heart action during a fit of anger.

Maturity Diminishes Emotional Reaction

The external stimuli diminish in importance, as a direct cause of the individual's emotional reaction, in proportion to the individual's maturity.

What does all of this mean? It means that when we have an unusual experience that we have a response to it that is not entirely under our control. If we are involved in an automobile accident, our body most likely will react with an accelerated heart rate, increased perspiration, or shaking of our limbs. These same reactions may repeat themselves later if we think about it or recreate the event in our mind.

When a new parent experiences the first instance of a tantrum by their child (I know that this does not apply to anyone here) but hypothetically, if this were to happen the parent might be inclined to react with punishment for the child, or fear thinking the child was

suffering from some physical disorder, or with self recrimination as if they were themselves to blame.

But after having matured by the process of time and learning the parents would probably have a much more controlled response.

God's Emotions

It is this control over emotion that distinguishes God and Man.

We do not believe God is without all emotion, but that He is able to control His response to any external stimuli. But God does not experience all the emotions humans do.

God never says that he has an emotional response that creates fear and as far as I could find, He only twice indicates that sorrow or grief were His reaction.

But God does tell us that some acts of His creatures cause Him to become angry, and some things that they do give him joy or pleasure. He also tells us that there are things He loves and things He hates, and in this sense experiences emotion.

God's Grief

In Genesis 6:6 we have one of the places where God attributes to himself the condition of being grieved. It is at the time before the flood when the Angels had taken wives of the human race and created a hybrid race that God had not authorized. He allowed the exercise of the free will of the angels to do evil, even though the original intent of the angelic host was to lift man up from sin.

Genesis 6:5 & 6

5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

We should not think that God repented in the sense of being sorry or regretted having created man, The word repent here has the meaning of changing his method of dealing with the human race.

But he does say that he was grieved at his heart by the evil that was rampant thruout the earth. Showing that he cared for his creatures. Was he surprised by this turn of events? Absolutely not. He had lessons to teach the angels as well as mankind that could not have been done in any other way. And yet it cause him grief to see

the results of yielding to evil principles which came upon the human race.

God tells us he was grieved by one other situation in Psalm 95:10. David speaking for Israel says

Psa. 95:7-10

7 For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice,

God answers and says:

8 Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work.

10 Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways:

God had delivered the nation of Israel from the land of Egypt by a series of miracles we call the ten plagues, and they could have been in the promised land in less than two years.

But they no sooner got out of bondage and they began complaining about the provisions that God had made for them, they built a Golden Calf, and after God had preserved them in the wilderness by giving them the

cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, they refused to believe the two spies that brought back a true report, and instead rejected the thought that their God who had the power to deliver them from the most powerful nation in the world, at that time, could and would have defeated their enemies in the land of Canaan.

No wonder God was grieved with them. Should we therefore think of God as being overcome with grief over the failure of His people to properly respond to his goodness, as we sometimes see among men?

Nothing in scripture indicates this as being the case. What is portrayed to us is a creator who loves and cares about his creatures, who is touched when they fail to acknowledge His providence on their behalf. Although He was grieved, He fitted his response to their actions by having them wander in the wilderness until all the adults that left Egypt were dead, save Joshua and Caleb.

God's Anger

God reacts with anger in response to the actions of those whom he favors, who do contrary to his will, and also to his enemies who persecute or harm those that are His.

Let us look at a few scriptures to see how God states his reaction .

In Deuteronomy 32:35 God says regarding himself,

35 To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence;

God reserves to himself the right of vengeance and recompense because only he has the ability to measure them out with justice controlled by love and mercy.

The apostle Paul echoes the same thought in Romans 12:19

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

In Exodus the 3rd chapter we have the account of God inviting Moses to be His instrument in delivering the children of Israel from bondage with the assurance of His presence, and then in the fourth chapter God performs miracles which He tells Moses to repeat to convince the people that God had commissioned him for that work.

When Moses declines a second time on the grounds that he is slow of speech, we read of God's response in Exodus 14:4

14 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well.

*And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee:
and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his
heart.*

God's reaction to Moses' reluctance to do as God had instructed is stated as anger. God had a right to expect a willing, enthusiastic reply from Moses in considering how God had preserved him in the past, and so God with just cause becomes angry with Moses, but does not use that anger to retaliate against Moses, but controls the anger and instead provides for Aaron to be the mouthpiece for Moses.

A Temporary Anger

How true are the words of David in Psalms 30:5

*5 For his anger endureth but a moment; in his
favour is life: weeping may endure for a night,
but joy cometh in the morning.*

True the moment may not be the same length in every case, but in relation to the joy that follows it is truly but a moment.

In Zephaniah 3:10 we are told the Lord's anger is to be directed against the nations of earth for the evil that once again has grown to encompass the whole earth.

*8 Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD,
until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my
determination is to gather the nations, that I may
assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine*

indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.

God, contrary to man, is able to keep his anger in control, to accomplish his overall purpose of one day having an earth full of willingly obedient human beings.

God's Pleasure

Not all of God's responses to man's actions result in anger, or hatred, in fact we find there are many things that invoke in God, a pleasant response.

In 1 Chronicles 29:17, David declares that God has pleasure in uprightness.

In Psalm 35:27 we read

27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.

And in Psalms 147:11, we are told

11 The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear (or reverence) him, in those that hope in his mercy.

Have you ever thought of giving pleasure to our Father in Heaven? Think of your children when they were very young, how they would do something that would please

you and how happy if made them to know that you approved of their actions, and that it brought you Joy. This then is the just the picture that is put before us The opportunity to give joy or pleasure to our Heavenly father by being obedient to his will and our vows of consecration.

Note how this ties in with Paul s admonition to us in Hebrews 13:13-16

13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

16 But to do good and to communicate (the word would be better translated fellowship or joint participation) forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Do you notice the familiar ring to these last words, *God is well pleased* ? It is the same phrase that God used in describing his approval of Jesus when he arose out of the River Jordan, and here the apostle tells us that God would be well pleased for our continual praise

of his name, our uttered thanksgiving and our regular fellowship and communing with brethren.

In Luke 12:32 Jesus reminds us that it is our father s good pleasure to give us the kingdom. It is not something he does from any other motive than love, and to reward the love that is expressed in the lives of Jesus followers by their striving to be faithful unto death, and more than that it gives our Father pleasure to do it.

The scriptures in many places use a similar expression to show us the things that were pleasing to God, and some things that were not.

God and Solomon

In 1 Kings the 3rd chapter, we have the account of the Lord appearing to Solomon in a dream to ask him what He (the Lord) might give to him.

Let us read the reply of Solomon and God s response.
1 Kings 3:6-10

6 And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great

kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

7 And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in.

8 And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

9 Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

10 And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.

God continues His response in verses 11-13

11 And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment;

12 Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

13 And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

We think this exchange between Solomon and God is particularly significant when we consider the fact that as David and his life and reign picture the life of the church on this side the veil, one of warfare to win the battle against the foes from without and even within himself, so the life of Solomon and the early years of his reign seem to picture the Christ and the peaceable kingdom to come.

He asked for an understanding heart to deal with the people that the Lord had given to his charge, that he might judge them in justice, discerning between good and bad.

We think that this is the proper attitude for those who are seeking to a part of the Mediator, not to seek for wealth, or the things that might bring fame to oneself, nor for victory over their enemies, but to earnestly desire the understanding heart that will make us fit for the future work of assisting mankind back to perfection.

And God gave him more than he asked — riches and honor and the promise that there had been none like him in the past and would not be any in the future.

And so it will be with the Christ there has never been this offer of glory, honor or immortality before and the prize will be never be offered again.

If the speech that reflected the attitude of Solomon pleased God, we believe the words of our Lord, which will be echoed by all of his faithful followers, that he delighted to do his Father s will, will bring joy unspeakable to our Heavenly Father.

It helps us to appreciate the Paul s statement that *God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him.*

God's Displeasure

In Ezekial the 18th chapter God proposes a question for Himself in verse 23 which he answers in verse 32.

Ezekiel 18:23 & 32

23 Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?

32 For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.

Here the Lord shows us that while there are things that bring him pleasure the course of the wicked that leads

unto death is just the opposite. How far this is from the God held up to us by the creeds of man that would show God to be the one who created the place where the disobedient of His creatures would be tormented forever.

On the contrary Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 2:3-4

3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

When we observe the severity of our God and consider the details of each instance I believe we will find that God was responding to the intentional disobedience of men, the evil that man had let overtake him, influenced by evil desires or that the severity was exercised by our God to chasten and correct those of His human children that are striving to serve him and are beset with the weaknesses of the fallen flesh. All of this being done within the strict limits of His justice.

Unmerited Favor

On the other hand the Goodness of God is the unmerited favor of God extended in a general way to all his human creatures and in a special way to those with whom He is dealing at any particular time.

God described Himself to Moses when he came up into the Mount to receive the tables of the law the second time in Exodus 34:6 & 7

6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

Here God sums up the elements of his character in a few words which we can see all function within the bounds of his basic attributes of justice, wisdom, love and power.

Mercy and Grace

He states that He is merciful and gracious and emphasizes the thought by saying keeping mercy for thousands

If we keep in mind, the basic thought of Mercy, that of treating one better than they deserve, we will appreciate the reason for stating this as an underlying principle of God in dealing with His human creation.

We are assured of God's continued exercise of mercy by the fact that the expression His mercy endureth forever is repeated 41 times in Scripture.

And yet we should note how he modifies the expression of forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin by adding that the guilty are not cleared, indicating that the forgiveness of sin is dependent upon the payment of a price to remove the just sentence that has passed upon all men.

A Portrait of God

The psalmist in Psalms. 33:4-8 gives us a most beautiful picture of our God who is worthy of constant praise.

4 For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth.

5 He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.

8 Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

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This will surely be the scene when mankind is restored to life and then to perfection to reverence and stand in awe of the Great emperor of the universe who has thru his wisdom brought to fruition His plan of salvation for all mankind.

And so we join in the sentiments of Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians when he says;

11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:

