

God's Goodness

Romans 2:4 is part of Paul's argument in the book of Romans where he addresses both Jews and Gentiles about their sinful nature and the need for repentance. In the preceding verses, Paul speaks against those who judge others while doing the same things themselves, highlighting the hypocrisy of self-righteousness.

In Romans 2:4, Paul emphasizes the "riches of His kindness, restraint, and patience," pointing out that it is God's gracious character that leads sinners to repentance. This underscores the doctrine of total depravity, where humanity is utterly sinful and incapable of seeking God on their own. God's kindness and patience reveal His sovereign grace, drawing people to repentance not because of their merit but because of His mercy. This reflects the unmerited favor God shows to sinners, which ultimately leads them to turn away from sin and towards Him.

2 Peter 3:9

In this chapter, Peter addresses the doubts of scoffers who question the promise of Christ's return. He explains that God's timeline is different from human understanding and that God's seeming delay is actually an expression of His patience.

2 Peter 3:9 highlights God's desire for all to come to repentance, underscoring His patience. This verse is often understood in light of God's sovereign election. While God desires repentance and salvation, it is ultimately His sovereign will that determines who will be saved. The delay in Christ's return serves the purpose of allowing the elect to come to faith. This demonstrates God's long-suffering nature, providing ample opportunity for repentance while ensuring that His redemptive plan is fulfilled.

Titus 3:4-5

Paul writes to Titus, instructing him on how believers should live and emphasizing the transformation brought by God's grace. These verses highlight the appearance of God's kindness and love through Christ.

In Titus 3:4-5, Paul contrasts human works with God's mercy. Salvation is not by works but by God's grace alone. The "washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit" points to the doctrine of regeneration, where

the Holy Spirit transforms a person's heart, enabling them to respond to God's call. This aligns with the concept of monergism, where God alone initiates and completes the work of salvation, highlighting His kindness and love as the basis for saving sinners.

Ezekiel 18:23

Ezekiel 18 deals with the theme of individual responsibility for sin. God, through Ezekiel, addresses the Israelites' misconceptions about collective guilt and emphasizes that each person is accountable for their own actions.

Ezekiel 18:23 reveals God's desire for the wicked to turn from their ways and live. This verse reflects God's justice and mercy. While God is just in His judgment of sin, His desire for repentance shows His merciful character. This aligns with the understanding of God's general call to repentance, where He genuinely desires all to turn from sin, yet His effectual call ensures that those whom He has elected will indeed repent and be saved.

Ezekiel 33:11

Similar to Ezekiel 18, this chapter reiterates the theme of individual responsibility and the urgency of repentance. God speaks through Ezekiel, calling the house of Israel to turn from their wicked ways.

Ezekiel 33:11 underscores God's reluctance to see the wicked perish and His preference for repentance. This verse illustrates God's compassion and justice. While God decrees who will be saved, His heartfelt plea for repentance shows His compassionate nature. The call to "Repent, repent of your evil ways!" emphasizes the necessity of turning away from sin, even as it acknowledges that true repentance is enabled by God's grace. This dual emphasis on God's justice and mercy highlights the depth of His character and the seriousness of His call to repentance.

I understand that there can be differing views on what it means for God's kindness to lead us to repentance. I'd like to share a more comprehensive understanding of this verse and how it fits into the broader context of God's character.

The Fullness of God's Character

Romans 2:4 says, "Or do you despise the riches of His kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?" This verse indeed highlights God's kindness. However, to fully grasp its meaning, it's crucial to consider the entire scope of God's character, which includes His justice, holiness, and righteous judgment.

Goodness in Judgment

All of God's attributes are inherently good, including His judgments. God's judgments are expressions of His holiness and justice, serving as a deterrent to sin and a call to repentance. His discipline and correction are acts of love, intended to lead sinners away from destruction and towards a relationship with Him. As Hebrews 12:6 states, "For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." Therefore, God's judgment is an extension of His goodness, aiming to purify and restore.

The Role of God's Kindness

God's kindness, patience, and forbearance are crucial in giving people the opportunity to repent. This kindness is not merely about the good things God has done but also about His patience in withholding immediate judgment, allowing people time to turn from their sins. It's about understanding the depth of our sinfulness and recognizing our need for His mercy and grace. When people grasp the seriousness of sin and the reality of God's righteous judgment, they are more likely to appreciate His kindness and be drawn to repentance.

Introducing the Fullness of God

To truly lead someone to repentance, it is essential to present the fullness of God's character. Limiting the message to only the positive aspects of God's kindness without acknowledging His holiness and justice can result in a superficial understanding of God. It is the recognition of both God's goodness and His righteousness that brings a person to a genuine, transformative repentance.

Holistic Understanding

A complete understanding of God includes His kindness and His righteous judgment. Both aspects are integral to His character and work together to lead people to repentance. God's judgment is a form of loving discipline meant to correct and guide us back to Him. It is out of His love that He does not allow sin to go unpunished, as unchecked sin leads to destruction.

True Repentance

True repentance comes from understanding the gravity of sin and the reality of God's judgment, combined with the overwhelming kindness and mercy He offers through Christ. This comprehensive understanding fosters a deeper, more sincere repentance. The call to "Repent, repent of your evil ways!" (Ezekiel 33:11) emphasizes the necessity of turning away from sin, even as it acknowledges that true repentance is enabled by God's grace.

Biblical Consistency

The Bible consistently shows that God's goodness includes His judgment. Psalm 119:75 says, "I know, O Lord, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me." Here, the psalmist acknowledges that God's judgments are good and faithful. Understanding this helps us see that God's kindness in Romans 2:4 is part of a broader divine strategy to lead us to repentance through both His patience and His righteous judgment.

In summary, presenting a balanced view of God's character—His kindness and His righteous judgment—provides a more profound and genuine path to repentance. This approach aligns and underscores the transformative power of encountering the full character of God.

I hope this explanation clarifies how God's goodness, including His judgment, leads to true repentance. I'm looking forward to continuing our discussions on this important topic.