**FBC Summer Series: Theology Proper ~ The Communicable Attributes, Part 2**

1. **Goodness**
2. Definition
   1. God’s ontological goodness as God
   2. Louis Berkhof: “We speak of something as good, when it answers in all parts to the ideal. Hence in our ascription of goodness to God the fundamental idea is that He is in every way all that He as God should be, and therefore answers perfectly to the ideal expressed in the word ‘God.’ He is good in the metaphysical sense of the word, absolute perfection and perfect bliss *in Himself*.”[[1]](#footnote-1)
   3. God’s moral goodness has a two-pronged definition:

* It is His inherent infinite and perfect moral uprightness that distinguishes Him from any evil (cf. Gen 3:22 – “knowing good and evil”)
* But most often in the Bible, His goodness is His “beneficent attitude toward and dealings with His people.”[[2]](#footnote-2) (cf. first appearance of “being or doing good” in the Bible is Ex 1:20 – “God was good to the midwives”)
  + Because God is perfectly and infinitely good, His benevolence overflows to all creation (in a non-salvific sense).
  + God’s goodness is related to lovingkindness, kindness, love, grace, and mercy.

1. Details
   * + 1. Goodness is essential to God; it is part of God’s very essence.

* He is independently, eternally, infinitely, and unchangingly good.
  + Psa 100:5 ~For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations
* Thus, in the “original” sense, only God is good. He defines what is good by His own character.
  + Luke 18:19 ~And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.”
  1. That God is good “means that He is the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is *worthy of approval*.”[[3]](#footnote-3)
* Whatever is good is also acceptable to Him and vice versa.
  + 1 Tim 2:3 ~ This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior
* There is no independent condition or creature to which God ascribes “goodness” *after the fact*. In other words, something is good because God makes it so.
  + Gen 1:31 ~ God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.
  + 1 Tim 4:4 ~ For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude;
* His goodness extends down to every detail of the world and of our lives.
  + Rom 8:28 ~ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
  1. Out of His goodness, God does good to the entire world.
* Louis Berkhof: “…since God is good in Himself, He is also good for His creatures, and may therefore be called the *fons omnium bonorum*. He is the fountain of all good, and is so represented in a variety of ways throughout the Bible.”[[4]](#footnote-4)
* If there is any good in creation or in our lives, it is because the Lord has given it to us by His grace.
  + Psa 84:11 ~For the Lord God is a sun and shield; The Lord gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.
  + Matt 7:11 ~ “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! (cp. Lk 11:13 – the “good” is the Holy Spirit)
  + James 1:17 ~Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.
* God does physical good to all of creation (common grace).
  + Psa 145:9 ~ The Lord is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works.
  + Matt 5:44–45 ~ 44“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.
* God does spiritual good to His people (special grace).
  + Psa 86:5 ~ For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.
  + Rom 11:22 ~ Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. (cf. Rom 2:4)
  1. The good that believerss do *now* will be rewarded by God with good *later*.
* Eph 6:7–8 ~ 7With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.
  1. God’s goodness is particularly magnified in our salvation through Christ.
* Titus 3:4–5 ~ 4But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 5He saved us…
* Phil 1:6 ~ For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

1. Applications
   1. Delight in God as your highest good.

* Psa 16:2 ~ I said to the Lord, “You are my Lord; I have no good besides You.”
* Psa 16:11 ~ You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.
* Psa 34:8–10 ~ 8O taste and see that the Lord is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! 9O fear the Lord, you His saints; For to those who fear Him there is no want. 10The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; But they who seek the Lord shall not be in want of any good thing.
  + In 1 Pet 2:3, Peter quotes from Psa 34:8 in reference to tasting the kindness of God in the gospel.
  1. Praise Him for His goodness.
* Psa 135:3–4 ~ 3Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; Sing praises to His name, for it is lovely. 4For the Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His own possession.
* Psa 136:1 ~ Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
  1. Do good to others because you have experienced God’s goodness (1 Jn 3:11).
* We are created in Christ for good works (Eph 2:10).
* We are redeemed by Christ to have a passion for good works (Titus 2:14).
* Therefore, we ought not lose heart in doing good, first for the church and then for the world (Gal 6:9-10; cf. Rom 15:2; 1 Thess 5:15).

John S. Feinberg: “One of the most familiar themes of Scripture is the goodness of the Lord. He is good in so many different ways to all creatures. He is a merciful, gracious, lovingkind, and longsuffering God. This doesn’t mean that each of these terms is identical, but only that a God who is fundamentally good expresses that goodness in so many different ways.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

1. **Love**
2. Definition
   * + 1. The difficulty of defining the attribute “love”

* John Feinberg: As for the verb *ḥābab* (Deut 33:3), it is translated “to love,” but it also has the connotation of “having in the bosom.” Thus it speaks of a tenderness and closeness of feeling toward the object of love. The verb *ḥāšaq* appears more frequently in relation to divine love than does *ḥābab*. This word emphasizes that which attaches to something or someone. When used in regard to emotions (and biblical usage is limited to this), it speaks of a love which is already bound to its object. Such inward attachment is true of God’s love for Israel (Deut 10:15), and yet that happened because of his own free will, not because Israel did anything to deserve it (Deut 7:7). This is the love that won’t let go of the object of love.[[6]](#footnote-6)
  + - 1. God’s love is His unconditioned and unprompted disposition of unbridled affection for others that always results in actions for their glory and good.
      2. Caution: We cannot make the *attribute* of love mean something like “sacrificial action for the good of another.”
* Certainly, self-sacrificial actions *can be* expressions of love. But we cannot import back into the definition of the noun “love,” the definition of the verb “to love.” Just as we wouldn’t import back into faith the obedience that springs from it (e.g., “the obedience of faith” in Rom 1:5; 16:26).
* So, we must not define the attribute of love by the activity of love.
* Consider 1 Cor 13:1-3, in which Paul tells us that we can do self-giving actions *without* love. Paul teaches us that there’s an activity that *looks like* an expression of love, and there’s the love itself. We want those two to go together, in the right order, with love on the inside compelling actions of love on the outside.
  + - 1. The pitfalls of defining love by its actions
* It divorces desires and motives from duties. You cut the heart out of God’s love and assign it a purely mental and/or external reality without any affection or tenderness.
* It paints emotions as inherently negative qualities.

1. Details
   * + 1. Love is essential to God.

* 1 Jn 4:8 ~ 8The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (cf. 4:16)
  + God is eternally, infinitely, perfectly, and immutably “love.”
  + It is not awakened by something outside of Himself.
    - 1. So, this love existed from eternity past in each Person of the Godhead and was mutually expressed within the intratrinitarian fellowship.
* Jn 17:24 ~Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.
  + - 1. The love of God is closely tied to His sovereign choice (election) of and mercy on sinners.
* Deut 7:7–8 ~ 7“The Lord did not set His love [*hasaq*] on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8but because the Lord loved [*ahab*] you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.
* Deut 10:15 ~ 15“Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection [*hasaq*] to love [*ahab*] them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day.
* Hos 11:1 ~ When Israel was a youth I loved [*ahab*] him, And out of Egypt I called My son.
* Rom 9:13-16 ~ 13Just as it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” 14What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! 15For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” 16So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy
  + Election is not a detached, clinical decision by God. It necessarily entails mercy and compassion.
    - “Compassion” is the word translated “mercies” (NASB) in Rom 12:1. And in Phil 2:1, it is linked with “affection.”
      1. It was God’s love for sinners that moved the entire salvation plan that brought Jesus Christ into the world to die for the sins of His people.
* John 3:16 ~ 16“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17“For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.
* Rom 5:8 ~ 8But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
* Eph 2:4 ~ 4But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
  + - 1. The love of God is not merely a *dutiful* love but a *delighting* love that occurs within and is expressed by His whole being.
* In fact, there is no such thing as a purely “dutiful” love devoid of “delighting” in the object of love.
* Zeph 3:17 ~The Lord your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy. (cf. Isa 62:5)
  + - 1. The love of God is also a discerning love that doesn’t just leave His people as *status quo*. God disciplines His children *because* He loves us.
* Prov 3:11–12 ~ 11My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord Or loathe His reproof, 12For whom the Lord loves He reproves, Even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.
* Rev 3:19 ~ Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.
  + - 1. The love of God is His perfect and infinite pleasure in, His satisfaction with, His longing for, and His tenderness toward us!
* That’s why it’s so vast (Eph 3:17-19; cf. Jer 31:3 – God has an “everlasting love” for Israel expressed in the New Covenant).
* That’s why we will never be separated from it (Rom 8:37-39).
* That’s why it’s so motivating for us in terms of loving Him and others (Matt 22:36-40).

C. Applications

1. We must love God with our entire being (Deut 6:5; Matt 22:36-40; cf. Rom 8:28 – “…to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose”).
2. Experiencing His love in the gospel is the key that unlocks love for others in our hearts (Eph 5:1-2; 1 John 4:7-12).

* Eph 5:1–2 ~ 1Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.
* 1 Jn 4:10–12 ~ 10In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

1. **Mercy (Grace, Patience)**
2. Definitions:
   * + 1. God’s *mercy* is God’s goodness toward those in misery and distress.[[7]](#footnote-7)

* “Pity” and “compassion” are synonyms.
* Often has the idea of not judging or punishing for a wrongdoing; it does not consider the merit or lack of merit in the individual.[[8]](#footnote-8)
  + - 1. God’s *grace* is God’s goodness toward those who deserve only punishment.[[9]](#footnote-9)
* A synonym is “favor.” It also does not consider the merit or lack of merit in the individual.
* Scripture consistently frames grace within the absolute sovereign freedom of God’s will. Grace is never earned but freely given by God to whomever He wills.
  + Rom 9:15 ~ 15For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”
  + Eph 2:8–9 ~ 8For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; 9not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.
    - 1. God’s *patience* is God’s goodness in withholding of punishment toward those who sin over a period of time.[[10]](#footnote-10)
* “Slow to anger” (Exod 34:6) and “forbearance” (Rom 2:4; 3:25) are synonyms.
* Exod 34:6 ~ 6Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; (cf. Psa 103:8)
  + - 1. Note: “Lovingkindness” (*hesed*) in the OT is intimately connected to and even basically synonymous with all of these terms and with the attributes of goodness and love. The LXX often translates *hesed* often with the Greek word for “mercy.”
* The word means “loyal or steadfast love.”

1. Details
2. God’s mercy is tied to His grace, patience, love, and faithfulness.

* Psa 86:15 ~ But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth
* Isa 55:3 ~ Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, According to the faithful mercies shown to David.
* Isa 63:9 ~ In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the angel of His presence saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old.

1. God’s mercy is deeply intimate and emotional.

* Jer 31:20 ~ 20“Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a delightful child? Indeed, as often as I have spoken against him, I certainly still remember him; Therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him,” declares the Lord.
* In 2 Cor 1:3, Paul calls God “the Father of all mercies and the God of all comfort.”

1. God’s mercies are great and unfailing.

* Lam 3:22-23 ~ 22The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. 23They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.
* Jas 5:11 ~ We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

1. God’s mercy extends to all of His creation.

* Psa 145:9 ~ The Lord is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works.
* In Phil 2:27, Paul says God had mercy on Ephaphroditus in healing him.

1. God’s mercy is perfectly embodied in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

* In Luke 1:54, 58, 72, and 78, the birth of Christ is considered a sign of God’s mercy in remembrance of His (new) covenant with Israel.
* Rom 12:1 tells us that the gospel encompasses “the mercies of God.”
* In Eph 2:4, Paul says God is rich in mercy and that His mercy is tied to His love.
* In 1 Tim 1:13, 16, Paul says he “was shown mercy” and found mercy” in Christ.
* In Titus 3:5, regeneration and justification are according to God’s mercy.

1. Applications
   * + 1. Be merciful because you’ve received the mercies of salvation.

* Luke 6:36 ~ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. (cf. Matt 5:7)
* Jas 2:13 tells us to be merciful to others in the context of not showing partiality.
* Wisdom from above shows itself in mercy, among other qualities (Jas 3:17).
* We are called to show mercy by helping shepherd other believers out of their sins (Jude 21-23).
  + - 1. Pray expectantly for mercy in your trials.
* Through the “merciful and faithful High Priest” Jesus Christ (Heb 2:17), we can go boldly to the throne of grace “to receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16).

1. **Righteousness (or Justice)**
2. Definition
   * + 1. God’s perfect and infinite moral rectitude
       2. God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right.[[11]](#footnote-11)

* John Feinberg: “The root word basically speaks of conformity to an ethical or moral standard. In the OT that standard is the character and nature of God. Hence God is called just and righteous in himself, and in a forensic sense, his judgments and dealings with mankind are just.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

1. Details
   * + 1. God is perfectly righteous in Himself and in all His dealings.

* Deut 32:4 ~The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.
* Psa 89:14 ~ Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne;

Lovingkindness and truth go before You. (cf. Psa 97:2)

* + - 1. God has created and ordered a morally righteous universe.
* John Feinberg: “There is a biblical theme that theologians refer to as the *rectoral justice* of God. This refers to God’s instituting moral governance in our universe. As a result, there are rules that define good and evil acts and stipulate rewards and punishment for those who obey or disobey, and God enforces those rules as judge over all.”[[13]](#footnote-13)
* Job 37:23 ~ The Almighty—we cannot find Him; He is exalted in power And He will not do violence to justice and abundant righteousness.
* Psa 18:20 ~ The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness; According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me. (cf. v. 24)
  + - 1. God hates the unrighteous.
* Psa 7:11 ~ God is a righteous judge, And a God who has indignation every day.
* Psa 11:5 ~ The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked, And the one who loves violence His soul hates.
  + - 1. God loves the righteous.
* Psa 1:6 says God knows the way of the righteous; Psa 5:12 says God blesses the righteous man
* Psa 11:7 ~ For the Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness; The upright will behold His face.
  + - 1. God is the righteous Judge who has judged, is judging, and will judge the world in perfect righteousness and justice.
* Past and Present judgments
  + Psa 9:4 ~ For You have maintained my just cause; You have sat on the throne judging righteously.
* Future judgment
  + Psa 96:12–13 ~ 12Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy 13Before the Lord, for He is coming, For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness And the peoples in His faithfulness.
  + Acts 17:31 ~ because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”
  + Rev 16:7; 19:2, 11 speak of the righteousness of future divine judgment
  + John Feinberg: “Regardless of whether the passage is in the OT or the NT, it is clear that when Christ establishes his kingdom on earth he will be ruler over all, and he will rule in righteousness. Fair laws will be implemented and enforced, sin will be punished, and obedience to the King will be rewarded (Isa 11:4–5; Jer 33:15; Heb 1:8).”
    - 1. God’s righteousness is preeminently revealed in the gospel and is freely granted to us in Christ by faith alone.
* Isa 53:11 ~ As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.
* Rom 1:17 ~ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “But the righteous man shall live by faith.” (cf. 3:21)
* Rom 3:25-26 tells us that God demonstrates His righteousness in making Christ the propitiation for our sins and in declaring us righteous in by faith alone.
* 2 Cor 5:21 ~ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (cf. 1 Pet 3:18)
  + The righteousness we now have is God’s, is Christ’s. Our righteousness is nothing in God’s sight (Rom 9:30; 10:3-4; 1 Cor 1: 30; Phil 3:9).

1. Applications
   * + 1. Pursue personal and relational righteousness.

* Matt 5:6 ~ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied (cf. 5:10, 20).
* In Matt 23:23, Christ calls out the Pharisees for not dealing justly with their neighbors.
* In 1 Tim 6:11 and 2 Tim 2:22, we are called to pursue righteousness; in 2 Tim 3:16, we learn that the Scriptures train us in righteousness.
* Titus 2:12 says the grace of God in Christ instruct us to live righteously.
  + - 1. Remember that righteousness is the path to true joy and satisfaction.
* Joy doesn’t come through sin, which brings misery and destruction. Joy comes through walking in the way of the Lord by faith in Christ.
  + Psa 19:8 ~The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart…
  + Rom 14:17 says that the kingdom of God is “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”
* Psa 97:11-12 ~ 11Light is sown like seed for the righteous And gladness for the upright in heart. 12Be glad in the Lord, you righteous ones, And give thanks to His holy name.
* In Matt 6:33, Jesus promises that as we seek righteousness, we’ll be freed from anxiety about life.

1. **Wrath (Anger)**
2. Definition
   * + 1. PDTT: “The free, subjective and holy response of God to sin and to the evil and wickedness exhibited by creatures in opposition to God.”[[14]](#footnote-14)
       2. God’s wrath means that he intensely hates all sin.[[15]](#footnote-15)

* It is a vehement displeasure and fury against sin. It cannot be reduced to a merely intellectual disdain or rejection.
  + - 1. In Greek, there are two words for God’ wrath: *orge* and *thumos*.
* In Rom 2:8, the *orge* is translated as “wrath” and *thumos* as “indignation.”
* There is some debate as to the precise nuances of these terms, with *orge* being a more settled disposition of anger and *thumos* being akin to rage or an angry outburst.
  + TDNT: “ὀργή [*orge*] and θυμός [*thumos*] are often found together, and we also find θυμὸς τῆς ὀργῆς [*thumos tes orges*] at Rev. 16:19; 19:15. There is no material difference between them.”[[16]](#footnote-16)
* Regardless, both terms are emotive, just as love and mercy are.
  + TDNT: “…so in the NT ὀργή [*orge*] is both God’s displeasure at evil, His passionate resistance to every will which is set against Him, and also His judicial attack thereon.”[[17]](#footnote-17)
    - 1. God’s wrath and righteousness must be considered simultaneously with God’s goodness, love, and mercy.

1. Details
   * + 1. God’s wrath is presently upon everyone who rejects Him and His Son.

* John 3:36 ~ 36“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”
* Rom 1:18 ~For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,
* Prior to salvation, we were all “by nature children of wrath” (Eph 2:3).
  + - 1. God’s wrath will be poured out in immeasurable and cosmic ways in the future.
* Rom 2:5 tells us that a future day of wrath is coming, and unbelievers are tragically storing up wrath for themselves.
* Rom 2:8–9 ~ 8but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. 9There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,
* Consider all of Rev 6-19 for its depiction God’s wrath on a rebellious world.
  + - 1. The wrath of God is what makes the cross so wonderful and amazing. God spared us His just wrath at the expense of His Son’s life.
* Rom 5:9 says that because we are justified by Christ’s blood, we will be saved from God’s future wrath against sinners.
* 1 Thess 1:10 ~ 10and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.
  + - 1. God’s wrath and love harmonize perfectly in His character.
* It is a good thing that God is wrathful against sin. If He weren’t, then it would imply that He is either unaffected by sin or He approves of it.
* If either of those two were true, then we could not trust His character and would live in constant terror.
* God, being infinitely perfect in all His attributes, is the only One who perfectly has wrath against sinners *and* love for sinners. And if that means some are saved while some are not, His righteousness is yet vindicated, and His love remains untainted.

1. Applications:
2. Leave room for God’s wrath (Rom 12:19).
3. Be kind and forgiving as you experience God’s forgiveness.

* Eph 4:31 ~ 31Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
* Jas 1:19 ~ 19This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; 20for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

1. **Will**
2. Definition
   * + 1. “That attribute of God whereby he approves and determines to bring about every action necessary for the existence and activity of himself and all creation.”[[18]](#footnote-18)
       2. “…his perfect determination and sovereign ordination of all things, pertaining both to himself (including his decrees and actions) and to his creation (including the events of history and the thoughts and actions of people), all unto the magnification of his utmost glory.”[[19]](#footnote-19)
3. Details
4. God’s will in general

* Scripture affirms that the ultimate cause behind everything that occurs or exists in the universe is God’s will.
  + Eph 1:10–11 ~ 10with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him 11also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,
  + Rev 4:11 ~Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.
* The death of Christ – the greatest injustice in the universe – was also planned by God’s will.
  + Acts 2:22–23 ~ 22”Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— 23this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. (Cf. Acts 4:27-28)

1. The suffering of God’s people is according to His will.

* 1 Pet 4:19 ~ 19Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

1. God’s will is “sovereignly independent of everything outside of himself.”[[20]](#footnote-20)

* He always acts according to his own pleasure (Psa 115:3; Prov 21:1; Dan 4:35).
* No one can thwart His plans (Job 9:2-13; 11:10; Isa 10:15; Dan 4:35).
* God’s will is “free” in that He chose to do certain acts that He did not *need* to do, such as the creation of the universe or the salvation of mankind.
* Rom 12:2 tells us that God’s will is “good and necessary and perfect.”

1. Theologians have discerned two wills of God from Scripture: His secret (sovereign/ decretive) will and His revealed (moral/ preceptive) will.

* God’s secret will is His hidden intention or plan that He sovereignly chooses to leave unknown to us until He executes it in space and time.
  + There are decisions God has made that are not revealed to us. These are His decrees that govern everything that happens in the universe. Because they relate to His decrees, God’s secret will is often referred to as His decretive will or His sovereign will.
  + God’s secret or decretive will cannot be thwarted.
    - Deut 29:29 ~The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.
    - Dan 4:35 ~ 35”All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And *among* the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’
    - Rom 9:18 ~ 18So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.
    - James 4:15 ~ 15Instead, *you ought* to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.”
* God’s revealed will is found direclty in Scripture and often seen in His commands or precepts.
  + Thus, God’s revealed will is also referred to as His preceptive or moral will.
  + It is God’s declared will concerning what we should do or what God commands us to do.[[21]](#footnote-21)
    - Matt 7:21 ~Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.
    - Eph 5:17 ~So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.
  + Although God commands His precepts to be obeyed, His laws are disobeyed for the most part. Therefore, God’s revealed will may or may not happen.

1. Though whatever God wills *will* happen, the Scripture also speaks of God’s desires (1 Tim 2:4 – for all men to be saved, for example), which are not all met.

* In such cases, God is revealing Himself to us in a way that we, in our finiteness, can relate to Him.
* These texts remind us that God does have emotions. But He is not *driven* by them as we are; they do not alter His sovereign will in any way.
* They remind us that God is a Person, not a force or power. Our emotions and desires reflect the reality that we are made in His image.

1. Harmonizing God’s secret and hidden wills, especially in regard to sin and suffering.

* God is not the cause of sin (Jas 1:13) but ordains it by decree in order to accomplish the most wise and holy end of bringing ultimate glory to himself (cf. Rom 5:20-21; 9:17-24)
* The Bible makes clear that human free choices are not beyond God’s sovereign control ([Gen. 50:20](https://www.esv.org/Gen.%2050%3A20/); [Ezra 1:1](https://www.esv.org/Ezra%201%3A1/); [Prov. 21:1](https://www.esv.org/Prov.%2021%3A1/); [Acts 4:27–28](https://www.esv.org/Acts%204%3A27%E2%80%9328/); [Eph. 1:11](https://www.esv.org/Eph.%201%3A11/)).
  + But those “free” choices are always made according to our nature – whether unregenerate or regenerate (Rom 8:5-13).
* It was within God’s power to ensure that Adam freely obeyed rather than disobeyed; that is, God could have ensured that Adam did not fall. But God did allow Adam to fall.[[22]](#footnote-22)
  + Eph 1:6 (“to the praise of the glory of His grace”), 1:12 (“to the praise of His glory”), and 1:14 (“to the praise of His glory”).
  + Rom 9:22-24 ~ 22What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? 23And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, 24even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.
  + James N. Anderson: “God’s overarching purpose in all he does, then, is the manifestation of his glory and the delight of his creatures in his divine splendor.”[[23]](#footnote-23)

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