



Introduction

- God's benevolent love is his gracious and merciful love for people apart from what they deserve.
- God's love of beneficence is shown in his generous acts of good for people, or his good actions in behalf of the creature. The difference between the benevolence of God and the beneficence of God is the benevolent love of God is God's attitude towards people and beneficence is God's actions for people.
- God's love of complacency is his pleasure and delight in those whom he loves. The Latin root of the word complacent originally meant "to please greatly," so, in particular, this refers to God being pleased with his children.

Love of Benevolence

One of the main reasons for the incarnation was for God to show his good will towards man through his Son, and this good will is ultimately specific to those chosen in Christ.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16–17 ESV)

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:9–10 ESV)

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (2 Peter 3:9 ESV)

God's Will

- Theologians distinguish between three aspects of God's will, his will of decree (decretive or hidden will), his will of precept (preceptive or revealed will), and his will of disposition.

The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. (Deuteronomy 29:29 ESV)

- God's will is distinguished between the "secret things" (decretive will) and "the things that are revealed" (preceptive will).



I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. (Job 42:2 ESV)

Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, “My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,” calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it. (Isaiah 46:8-11 ESV)

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will. (Ephesians 1:11 ESV)

- God’s decreative will is never thwarted.
- God’s preceptive will is constantly violated.

And the LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.’” (Exodus 4:21-23 ESV)

But for this purpose I have raised you (Pharaoh) up, to show you my power, so that my name (the Lord) may be proclaimed in all the earth. (Exodus 9:16 ESV)

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. (Acts 2:22-23 ESV)

- God’s will of disposition relates to his pleasure and displeasure.

Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? (Ezekiel 18:23 ESV)

But let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 9:24 ESV)

- God often is pleased to decree what he finds unpleasant.



God's Will and God's Benevolence

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (2 Peter 3:9 ESV)

Preceptive Will and Will of Disposition

- If *any* and *all* refer to every single person then clearly the aspect of God's will referred to by *wishing* cannot be God's decretive will.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37 ESV)

- God takes pleasure in repentance and does not take pleasure in seeing an unrepentant person die.

Decretive Will

- If *any* and *all* are restricted by the context of the verse then *wishing* would refer to God's decretive will.

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. (2 Peter 3:8-10 ESV)

- The Lord is patient *toward you*.

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:1 ESV)

- The sense is "not wishing that any (of you) should perish, but that all (of you) should reach repentance."

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. (John 6:37 ESV)

I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. (John 17:6 ESV)

- The Father wills the Son die for his people.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (John 10:11 ESV)



I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. (John 10:14-15 ESV)

- The Father wills the Son not lose a single one of his people and ultimately raise them from the dead.

For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. (John 6:38-39 ESV)

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. (John 6:44 ESV)

And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. (John 10:16 ESV)

- In 2 Peter 3:9, the Lord is patient because it is his (decretive) will that every single one of his elect will not perish but come to repentance.
- God's goodwill and benevolent love are shown in that he saves some, not in that he must offer salvation to everybody.

Love of Beneficence

You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-48 ESV)

But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your



enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. (Luke 6:27–36 ESV)

- When Jesus tells us to love our enemies he is not calling for feelings of affection, but action.
- This is not saving love but sustaining love.
- God’s beneficent love is seen in his common grace towards all humanity.

Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. (Romans 2:4–5 ESV)

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matthew 6:25–34 ESV)

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! (Matthew 7:7–11 ESV)

We experience God’s love of beneficence in every provision of life.

Love of Complacency

- God delights in those whom he loves.



Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:21–22 ESV)

His delight is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his pleasure in the legs of a man,
but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him,
in those who hope in his steadfast love. (Psalm 147:10–11 ESV)

Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” (John 14:21–23 ESV)

- This love is the Father rejoicing in those whom he has saved in Christ.
- The Father is rejoicing in the fruit they produce through their union with Christ.

The LORD your God is in your midst,
a mighty one who will save;
he will rejoice over you with gladness;
he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing. (Zephaniah 3:17 ESV)

Conclusion

- Making distinctions in God’s love does not mean God’s love is divided.
- The distinction between God’s benevolence and his beneficence is extremely fine.
- Complacent love not grounded in benevolent love results in justification by works.
- Benevolent love without complacent love can lead to antinomianism because benevolent love without complacent love makes God indifferent to sin or obedience.
- God’s benevolent love guards salvation by grace alone, and God’s love of complacency leads to holy living.