

----- Excursus: Objections to God's Sovereign Grace Considered -----

The biblical doctrines of divine election and divine predestination have often met with strong objections by some who consider such doctrines contrary to their understanding of God's love and justice. These objections can be summed up under four general statements.

The Doctrines of Election & Predestination are Corporate and do Not Apply to Individuals.

It is true that God's choice of Israel to be His covenant people is election on a national scale. Similarly, God chose various tribes as well as families for particular duties and privileges. But to contend that such election on a national or corporate level is the sum of the doctrine in the Bible is clearly short-sighted. In Rom 8:28ff, the election of which Paul speaks is individual, not corporate. This is likewise affirmed in the following chapters of Romans in which Isaac is chosen, not Ishmael, and Jacob is chosen, not Esau (Rom 9:6-13), all of which are presented to substantiate Paul's claim that "they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel" (9:6). In 1Cor 1:26f, Paul writes that God has chosen the weak and foolish to confound the wise and strong, and He has done so in order that "no man may boast against God." Likewise, in Eph 1:3-5, the election and predestination spoken of is clearly not corporate but individual. In writing to the Thessalonian assembly, Paul speaks of God's choice of those who had believed the Gospel, which is an individual not corporate reality (1Thess1:4-5). And consider the same theme in Paul's second epistle to the Thessalonians:

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. (2Thess 2:13)

In 2Tim 2:10, Paul states that he endures all things for the sake of those who are chosen so that they might obtain eternal salvation. Such salvation is individual, not corporate, as Peter also writes:

Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; (2Pet 1:10)

The reality is that the corporate or national aspects of election brought

to fruition by the predetermined plan of God, and particularly the election of Israel as God's chosen nation, form a paradigm for individual election, much like the corporate redemption of Israel out of Egypt reveals a pattern for God's eternal redemption of individuals.

The Doctrines of Election & Predestination are at Odds with God's Desire that all be Saved.

In Ezek 33:11, God says that He has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Likewise, in 2Pet 3:9, we read that God is "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." How can these be true if God has chosen and predestined only some to salvation?

We should first note that the statement in Ezek 33:11 expresses the general benevolence of God toward His creation. In the same way that He gives the sunshine to the evil and the good and sends His rain upon the righteous and the unrighteous (Matt 5:45), so He takes no pleasure in the death of those He created in His image. If all human life is to be sacred to mankind, how much more is it highly regarded by the Creator.

At first reading, 2Pet 3:9 seems clearly to be at odds with the doctrine of God's having chosen and predestined some to salvation. For if it clearly states that He is not willing that anyone should perish, then it seems incongruous to believe that He chose only some to be saved. But if we look at this verse in its context, its meaning becomes clearer. In the opening verses of the chapter, Peter is describing those who, in the last days, will be mockers, saying that the coming of Yeshua is a myth since everything just continues on the same from era to era. He counters their mocking by noting that God, Who created the universe in the first place, also brought the waters of the flood upon those who likewise thought everything would continue as normal.

Then Peter addresses the believing community with a word of encouragement:

But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2Pet 3:8–9)

Here we see that Peter is specifically talking to the community of

believers, whom he addresses as “beloved.” And he reminds them that the Lord is not slow with regard to His “promise” but is “patient toward you.” To what promise is Peter referring? If we presume that Peter, as the Apostle to the “circumcision” (Gal 2:7), is writing to a predominantly Jewish community, then the “promise” may well be the general statement of blessing contained in the Abrahamic covenant. In general, then, Peter is encouraging the community with the fact that God’s patience toward them is based upon His covenant promise to bless them. In the same way that Paul envisioned a time when “all Israel will be saved” (Rom 11:26), so Peter considered the present time to display God’s patience toward this Jewish community in light of the promises made to the fathers. But regardless of how one interprets the verse itself, it is clear that in its larger context, the words of Peter here are directed to a believing community, not to unbelievers in general.

Another verse that is sometimes brought forward as an objection to God’s election and predestination of those He will save is 1Tim 2:4, which states that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Here again, at first reading this verse seems to contradict the idea that God chose some to be saved. If He desires all to be saved, then it makes no sense that He would choose just some and not all. But once again, it is necessary to see the wider context in which this verse is found if we are to understand its meaning. The section begins with this admonition:

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. (1Tim 2:1–2)

Now by this Paul cannot mean that he expects the assembly in Ephesus to actually make entreaties and prayers for every person alive at that time. In fact, v. 2 gives a further explanation of what Paul means by “all men” – “for kings and all in authority....” In other words, entreaties and prayers are not only to be given for those who are part of the believing assembly, but they are also to pray for government officials, including kings. It might seem strange to make entreaties for a king or for government officials who were, in many ways, enemies of the believing community. But this was to be done so that as believers in Yeshua, they might lead a “tranquil and quite life.” Thus, in admonishing the assembly to pray for “all men,” Paul doubtlessly meant “all kinds of people,” including kings and government officials. Then, when he

adds that God desires “all men” to be saved, he is likewise reminding the believers in Ephesus that God is able to save all kinds of people, even kings and governors who presently may be acting as enemies of the Gospel and thus of Yeshua and His people.

The Doctrines of Sovereign Election & Predestination Make God Unjust

This objection is usually framed like this: if we are commanded to give the Gospel to everyone without distinction (e.g., Acts 17:30), then it is patently unfair and unjust if some have no honest chance to respond because they are not chosen. If God is sincere in giving the Gospel to all, salvation cannot be restricted to a pre-chosen few.

Usually those who foster this objection point to the verses of Scripture that speak of “whosoever will” being saved. For example:

Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.
(Acts 2:21; Rom 10:13, quoting Joel 2:32 [Hebrew 3:5])

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. (John 3:16)

Here, as often, we face a clear paradox for which we have few answers. The reality is that the Scriptures compel us to give the Gospel to all without distinction (e.g., Matt 28:19), yet they also teach that God has chosen some to salvation. In the mystery of God’s plan of salvation, the preaching of the Gospel is the means by which He intends to draw those He has chosen to Himself (Rom 1:16; 10:17). The Scriptures are also clear that fallen mankind, apart from the special work of God in making alive the dead heart, will never seek God nor respond to the call of the Gospel.

as it is written, “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.” (Rom 3:10–12, quoting Ps 14:1–3; 53:1–3)

There is another factor we should take into consideration as well, namely, that the “whoever” statements like those found in the verses above are entirely true. Everyone without exception who has called upon the name of the Lord *has* been saved. Just as Yeshua stated: “... the

one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out" (Jn 6:37). No one has ever desired to come to Yeshua for the salvation He offers and found the doctrine of election to be a barrier. Indeed, anyone who *wants* salvation as offered in the Gospel receives it. The issue, of course, is how a fallen individual comes to *want* salvation from the Lord.

A similar objection is that God is unjust to elect some to be saved and in passing over others, abandons them to eternal damnation. But in order for this objection to stand, it must be shown that mankind *deserves* salvation. Yet the Scriptures are clear that salvation is not something fallen mankind can require of God as though it is their right to have it. Instead, what each of us deserves is the penalty for sin, which is death (Rom 6:23). Moreover, this same verse makes it clear that eternal life is a gift of God's grace, and it is the prerogative of the Giver to distribute the gift as he will (cf. Rom 9:15). In fact, God would have remained entirely just had He decided to save none of mankind.

The Doctrines of Election & Predestination Make Evangelism Pointless

This objection to the doctrines of election and predestination is based upon what appears to be valid logic. If God chooses all who will be saved, and if His choosing secures their eventual acceptance of the Gospel message, then what need is there for evangelism? It would appear that there is none. Those who are chosen to salvation will be saved regardless of what anyone else might do. Partner to this argument is the one which reasons that God would not command people to do something of which they are incapable. Thus, since the Gospel message commands people to repent and believe, it appears illogical to give such a message to the non-elect because they will never be given divine assistance necessary to obey such demands.

In answering these objections, we should first be reminded that the Scriptures directly command us to proclaim the Gospel, the "Good news," to those who are lost in their sins. From the very beginning of God's revelation of His covenant with Israel, established first with Abraham and then renewed to Isaac and Jacob, God's plan to bless "all the families of the earth" is in view (Gen 12:3). By what means, however, is this universal dimension of the covenant to be realized? It is by Israel being a light to the nations (Is 42:6; 60:3). The "good news" that God intends to bless every family of the earth is the message of the Torah for which the remote islands of the world anxiously await (Is 42:4). And it is the duty of Israel to carry this message to all of the nations. What is more, the Messiah Himself, the Servant of the Lord, will engage in this

global effort (Is 49:6; cf. Matt 11:5; Lk 7:22) by preaching the good news Himself.

Thus, to be His witnesses is to assist Him in this work of bringing to pass the universal aspects of the covenant. The mission to which He sent His apostles, that is, to make disciples of all the nations (Matt 28:18f) obviously envisions more than what the Twelve could accomplish, and presumes that the disciples they would make would themselves carry forth the global mission of making disciples, which surely includes the giving of the Gospel.

Therefore, the first answer to the objection that the doctrine of election makes evangelism pointless is that evangelism is a command in the Scriptures. Our inability to understand the manner in which God's sovereign election works together with the command to evangelize the lost does not negate either of these realities. If we, like Paul, have come to understand that the Gospel is itself the means by which God saves the lost, both Jew and Greek (Rom 1:16), then we need not question whether we are to proclaim the Gospel to those who are perishing. God has ordained the means by which He intends to save the elect, and that means is the giving of the good news. Indeed, it is the very impossibility of depraved man to receive the Gospel that makes salvation the miracle it is. It is, to use an analogy, like the water poured out on Elijah's altar (1Ki 18:34f). As Paul notes (1Cor 1:21), it is through the "foolishness of the message preached" that God accomplishes His salvation of sinners. From a human standpoint, the Gospel demands of sinners what they are entirely incapable of doing, i.e., to repent and to believe. Therefore to proclaim the Gospel appears to be an exercise in futility, like pouring water over something to be burnt. But what is impossible from man's point of view is not impossible for God. The Gospel requires "the power of God," that is, the miraculous work of the Almighty, to accomplish its purpose, and we know that the Gospel message is "the power of God resulting in salvation" (Rom 1:16).

The second answer to the objection that God's sovereign grace in election and predestination make evangelism pointless is that, in fact, just the opposite is true. Rather than being a hindrance to evangelism, the doctrine of election provides the basis to persevere in sharing the good news to all people everywhere, for it is the means by which God intends to accomplish His covenant promise to bless all the families/nations of the earth. We should not miss the fact that the Great Commission given to the Twelve just prior to Yeshua's ascension begins with these words: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt 28:18). This statement of His power and authority to ac-

comply with the will of the Father is connected by the word “therefore” to the commission given to the talmidim (v. 19): “Go therefore and make disciples...” Their success in making disciples is not dependent upon their acumen in giving the Gospel in just this way or that, nor in their ability through well-crafted polemic to persuade people to accept the message. The success in making disciples depends upon the authority of Yeshua Who commands heaven and earth to bring about the will of the Father. Thus, the disciples and all who would become disciples through their message, may give the Gospel in its purity, recognizing that it is the power of God Himself that effects the acceptance of the good news to those who would be saved.

The story of Lazarus (John 11) may serve as a fitting illustration on this matter. Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, had fallen sick. Yeshua was “beyond the Jordan” at the time (Jn 10:40f), so word was sent to Him that His close friend was sick. His response to the news is interesting: (v. 4): “This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.” Then the text states that He remained for two more days where He was. Why? So that the “glory of God” might be made manifest when He performed the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead.

When Yeshua does arrive in Judea and goes to Bethany where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived, He is confronted by the fact that not only Mary and Martha, but also the others who had gathered to console them, were put out at Him for not having come earlier. Had He been there, they reasoned, Lazarus would not have died. Yeshua Himself was moved with compassion as He witnessed the mourners, and even wept Himself. There is always something wrong with death in a world that is governed by the Giver of Life. But He asks to be taken to the place where the body has been laid. Then, having arrived at the tomb, He asked for the stone to be removed from the mouth of the tomb. This was entirely out of the ordinary! The body of Lazarus had been in the tomb four days and thus the decomposition of the body had already begun. Opening the tomb would, among other things, give way to the foul odor of a dead body. In other words, there was no doubt about the death of Lazarus. Any who may have held out hope that he was simply in a coma were now completely convinced that he had, in fact, died.

Once the stone is removed from the tomb, Yeshua does a most remarkable thing—something that must have appeared as utter foolishness to some: He gave a command to a corpse. He called out “Lazarus, come forth!” We know the end of the story: Lazarus did, indeed, come forth from that tomb of death, still bound in the traditional

spice-wrappings used in Jewish burial of that time.

Using the same metaphors which describe an unbeliever as being “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1), the story of Lazarus offers a fitting illustration of God’s sovereign grace in saving sinners. The dead Lazarus may represent the sinner who is dead in sin. His decomposing body pictures the utter helplessness of the sinner to effect his or her own salvation. Indeed, can a dead person hear and respond to a verbal command? Yet Yeshua commands Lazarus to “come forth,” he obeys and comes out of the tomb. The words of Yeshua bring life where there was death, a life which issues in obedience. It is a picture of the message of the Gospel, given to a dead man which, through the sovereign work of the Spirit in regeneration, demonstrates the power of God to bring to life the one who was dead and enable him or her to live in obedience to God’s commands. Thus the resurrected Lazarus is a fitting picture of the sinner brought forth from the dead through the miraculous and sovereign grace of God as proclaimed by the Gospel.

----- *End of Excursus* -----

He predestined us to adoption as sons – The sovereign grace of God in divine election and predestination of those whom He saves issues in this inevitability: all come into a new relationship with God and thus obtain a new identity as His children. Paul speaks of this new relationship as being the very purpose of God’s predestination, i.e., being adopted as sons (εἰς υἰοθεσίαν), where the preposition εἰς (*eis*) functions to identify the result of the previous verb “predestined.”

The word “adoption” (υἰοθεσία, *wiothesia*) is used only by Paul in the Apostolic Scriptures¹ and is not found in the Lxx. While there is a clear sense of “adoption” portrayed in the Tanach, there are no specific legal procedures for adoption given in the Torah itself, nor is there evidence of legal adoption in rabbinic *halachah*.² That God, in the context of the Davidic covenant, declares that, “I will be a father to him [David] and he will be a son to Me” (2Sam 7:14), surely gives the sense of adoption. But the fact that no legal formula or ceremony was prescribed in ancient Israel for adoption means we must look elsewhere for the background to Paul’s use of adoption as a metaphor for the new life of a believer in Yeshua.

1 cf. Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5.

2 See “Adoption” in Skolnik and Berenbaum, eds. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd Edition, 22 vols. (Thomson-Gale, 2007), 1.417.

The obvious place to look is in the legal and societal aspects of adoption in the Roman empire of the 1st Century CE, about which Paul's readers would have been keenly aware. In fact,

the practice of adoption was carried out by the Caesars for succession of power and would have been common knowledge for those under Rome's rule.¹

The primary legal basis of adoption in the Roman empire was the absolute power of the father over his family, known as *patria potestas*. So absolute was his power that he could even take the life of a member of his family and yet would not be charged with murder. He likewise had full legal ownership of everything the family had, and he could dispose of it as he saw fit.

There were two steps to adoption under Roman law. First, the child had to be released from the control and authority of his natural father. This was done by the father selling his child as a slave, with the transaction being repeated three times, with the adopter releasing the child twice, and only retaining legal ownership on the third transaction with the child being freed from the authority of his natural father.

The second step was a proclamation that the natural father no longer had any authority over the child and the adopter was now the new father with absolute authority over the child until his or her death or the adopter freed the child. As such, in the case of a son, he would become the natural and legal heir of the adopter and would continue the family line and maintain property ownership. He would become the *patri potestas* of the next generation.²

The parallels Paul wishes to emphasize are obvious. Believers in Yeshua were formerly "sons of disobedience" and "children of wrath" (Eph 2:2–3) but now, having been adopted by God, they have absolutely no obligation or responsibility to their previous father, who is the devil (Jn 8:38, 44), referred to by Paul as "the prince of the power of the air... the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience" (Eph 2:2).

Now, as believers, we have been adopted into God's family, and have Him as our Father. We willingly acknowledge that He has abso-

1 Hoehner, *Ephesians*, p. 197. See also Yamauchi, and Wilson, *Dictionary of Daily Life in Biblical & Post-Biblical Antiquity*, 4 vols. (Hendrickson, 2014), 1.15.

2 See Francis Lyall, *Slaves, Citizens, Sons: Legal Metaphors in the Epistles* (Zondervan, 1984), 86-87.

lute authority over us since our lives are in His hands. This means He disciplines us when needed, for whom the Father loves, He disciplines (Heb 12:5–6). But because He is a good and loving father, we know that He adopted us into His family in order to bless us and that we might carry His Name upon us forever, for He is eternal and will never die.

Just as in ancient Rome a father adopted children in order to maintain the family line and property, and would therefore do everything necessary to insure the health and welfare of the adopted one, so our Father has adopted us in order to bestow upon us every possible blessing. This connects perfectly with Paul's opening statement that the Father "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Messiah" (v. 3). And although we know we are now children in God's family, the full realization of our true inheritance comes at the time of our final redemption to eternal life. As Paul writes to the Romans:

And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. (Rom 8:23)

...through Yeshua Messiah to Himself – Yeshua is never spoken of as "adopted" for He is the eternal Son of God by His very essence and being. Thus, the means by which the believer is adopted into the family of God is "through Yeshua Messiah." It is by and through the infinite work of His death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession¹ that the elect are brought into the family of God to be fellow heirs with Him (Eph 3:6), having inherited eternal life through being united to Yeshua, i.e., as believers we are "in Messiah." Since Yeshua will never cease being the Son of God, those who are "in Him" will likewise always be fellow heirs with Him and thus the inheritance of eternal life is just as secure as He is. Moreover, this means that we who are children in God's family will never be separated from Him, for He has adopted us "to Himself." We belong to Him and no one can take us from the Father's hand (Jn 10:29).

according to the kind intention of His will, – This phrase begins with the preposition *κατά* (*kata*), which when followed by an accusative, denotes a standard or measure of something. That which is being measured is "the kind intention" of God Himself. The word translated "kind

1 Cf. Rom 8:34.

intention” (εὐδοκία, *eudokia*) has a semantic range of meanings which includes “purpose, will, desire, goodwill, benevolence, good pleasure, satisfaction, and well-pleasing.”¹ What fits the context of our verse is “good pleasure,” and expresses the infinite joy and pleasure which the Lord had in choosing and ordaining the salvation of the elect.

Not a grim Lord watching over the execution of His pre-
determined plan, but a smiling Father is praised. He enjoys im-
parting His riches to many children.²

to the praise of the glory of His grace... – The intermediate purpose of divine election and foreordination was noted in v. 4, “that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love.” Here in our verse we have the ultimate purpose, that God would receive the praise for His glorious and abounding love. This is because the whole divine plan of salvation flows from God’s grace. There was nothing outside of Him that compelled Him to take such action and to put into place a predestined plan to bring about the salvation of the elect. Since by its very nature “grace” (χάρις, *charis*) cannot be earned or purchased, all of the glory must go to God alone, for it was out of His pure and sovereign grace that the whole plan of redemption was put into place.

The final goal, to which everything else is contributory, is the adoring recognition (“praise”) of the manifested excellence (“glory”) of the favor to the undeserving (“grace”) of him who is called “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”³

Therefore, we dare not take to ourselves any aspect of our salvation as having depended upon our efforts, abilities, or intellect. All we are as God’s children and all we hope to be, flows from the fountain of His grace. As we engage in the walk of faith, we do so having been given the ability to submit to the Ruach and His leading, to put to death the deeds of the flesh, and to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Yeshua. So while we must strive for holiness, we do so always from the strength and power that He provides by His grace.

which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. – Not only is God’s pure and sovereign grace the fountain from which redemption flows to the elect in bringing them into God’s family, but He also grants ongoing

1 Cf. BDAG, “εὐδοκία,” p. 404.

2 Marcus Barth, *Ephesians*, 1.81.

3 Kistemaker, *Ephesians*, p. 80.

grace to the elect so that they might persevere in becoming conformed to the very image of the eternal Son, Yeshua. The words “freely bestowed” translate one word in the Greek, ἐχαρίτωσεν (*exarītōsen*) which is an aorist form of the verb χαρίτω (*charitōō*), the verb related to *xaris*, “grace,” which carries the meaning “bestow favor on, favor highly, bless.”¹ Thus, in vv. 5-6 Paul has used the *charis* word-group three times: He has adopted the elect as a matter of His grace, and by them the greatness of His grace is extolled (praised), and He continues to shower His children with His grace so that they are enabled to persevere and to be living trophies of His grace.

...in the Beloved. – All of God’s bounty and blessing come to the elect through the person and work of Yeshua, God’s Son.

For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. (2Cor 1:20)

Thus, all praise and glory are given to the Son, through the energizing work of the Ruach, which in turn is given to the Father, for to honor the Son is to give praise the Father. For speaking of Yeshua, Paul writes:

He is also head of the body, the *ekklesia*; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. (Col. 1:18)

Paul refers to Yeshua as “the Beloved” (τῷ ἠγαπημένῳ, *tō āgapāmenō*), for He is “loved by the Father,” and this love is, in one sense, unique. For though the Father’s love is given to all of His children whom, through divine adoption, He brings into His family, the love that exists between the Father, Son, and Spirit is eternal and infinite and describes this eternal relationship as covenantal. Thus, when the Father refers to the Son as “the One in Whom I am well pleased,” this is covenant language. We know this by the use of the word “love” in covenants and treaties of the Ancient Near East. In fact, “love” is used in this sense to describe God’s covenant relationship with Israel. Note these examples.

Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power, (Deut 4:37)

1 BDAG, “χαρίτω,” p. 1081.

Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day. (Deut 10:15)

This use of “love” as legal, covenant language is attested in covenants and treaties of the Ancient Near East, which forms the background for its usage in the Scriptures. For instance, in a covenant text between the Egyptian Pharaoh and his vassal, we read that

The Pharaoh is expected “love” (*rêmu*) his vassal, and the vassal must “love” the Pharaoh.¹

This helps us to understand covenant significance of the Father’s declaration when Yeshua underwent a *mikveh*. Coming up from the water the heavenly voice declared: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”² The same declaration was heard by those who ascended the mountain with Yeshua and saw His glory.³ Interestingly, we have the same two words in this divine declaration over the Son as we find in our text regarding God’s pleasure in giving His grace to the elect. The “Beloved” is the One in Whom the Father is “well pleased,” and those who have been adopted as children into the family of God have been granted this blessing “in the Beloved” because it was “well pleasing” to the Father. We are children of God, beloved by God because He is well-

1 See *Tel el Amarna Tablets*, 121:61; 123:23, as noted by Larry L. Walker, “‘Love’ in the Old Testament: Some Lexical Observations” in Gerald F. Hawthorne, ed. *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation* (Eerdmans, 1975), p. 283. For further information on the use of “love” in ANE treaties and covenants, see: W. L. Moran, “The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy,” *CBQ*, 25 (1965), 77–87; D. J. McCarthy, “Notes on the Love of God in Deuteronomy and the Father-Son Relationship Between Israel and YHWH,” *CBQ* 25 (1965), 144–47; Larry Walker, “‘Love’ in the Old Testament: Some Lexical Observations,” Hawthorne, ed. *Studies in Honor of Merrill C. Tenny* (Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 277ff; D. R. Hillers, “Treaty Terminology,” *BASOR*, 176 (1964), 46–47; M. Weinfeld, “Covenant Terminology in the Ancient Near East and Its Influence on the West,” *JAOS*, 93/2 (1973), 191–93; L. Moran, “A Note on the Treaty Terminology of the Sifre Steles,” *JNES*, 22 (1963), 173–76; F. C. Fensham, “Father and Son as Terminology for Treaty and Covenant,” Goedicke, ed., *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William F. Albright* (John Hopkins Press, 1971), pp. 121–135.

2 Matt 3:17; Mk 9:7.

3 Matt 17:5.

pleased with the Son of His love. This is the essence of what it means to be “in Messiah.” We who are believers in Yeshua, who have been brought near by His grace, have entered into an eternal covenant, the basis of which is the eternal and infinite covenant between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which will bring about the “summing up all things in Messiah” (Eph 1:10). Therefore, our adoption as children into God’s family is as secure as the eternal and infinite covenant love that exists between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.