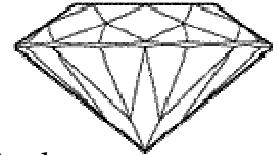


THE THEOLOGICAL TOUR DE FORCE OF EPHESIANS

According to Hoehner,² Ephesians was written to achieve unity among the Christians in Asia Minor through love. Unity is found when there is common ground—a piece of the rock on which all Christians can agree and hopefully stand. Even when sought, unfortunately, common ground is hard to find. So it is with chapter one of Ephesians.

Paul begins his letter by proclaiming the blessings that come from heavenly realms, “with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” Why? Because:

“ ... He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves.” (NIV, 1:4-6)



From this we can conclude that our destiny “to be holy and blameless” was chosen “before the creation of the world.” We also see a multi-faceted, multi-attributed image of God ...

Destiny's Attributes	Destiny's Facets
Our purpose?	To be blameless and holy, not by our standards, but by His.
His purpose?	To be wholly holy adopted children through our elder brother, Jesus the Christ.
Why?	To satisfy His pleasure and to fulfill the nature of His will.
Cost?	Free.
How paid?	By means of the very “One He loves.”

Intriguingly, a few words later Paul then adds a *conditional* element to the destiny set before the creation of the world. To wit:

Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory. (NIV, 1:13-14)

How does one reconcile this paradox; to wit, on the one hand, we were chosen to be holy and blameless before the world began, yet the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance is contingent upon “having believed?” What role does belief play in this redemption of God's possessions? What is saving belief? We know that mere belief is insufficient.³ Perhaps this is what Ephesians is all about—achieving unity, especially in matters of understanding our and God's role in the soteriological act of Christ's redemption.

²Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: 2002.

³In the raising of Lazarus, Jesus' act was seen and clearly believed by all present, for “many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him. ⁴⁶But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.” (NIV, John 11:45-46) At least here, seeing is not believing, or perhaps simply not *saving* belief?