

## Message #2

## Colossians 1:1-2

We get emails and letters from various people who live in various places in the United States and in the world. Whenever we get one of these, no matter who it is or where it is from, I will typically begin my response in a similar way. Typically, I begin by saying thank you for your question and/or encouragement. Then I move to the specific nature of their letter. Now each letter has its own contents, but the way we begin a response is generally the same.

That is the way it was for the Apostle Paul. He is not only writing personal responses, but he is writing inspired revelation. Paul was asked a lot of questions back in his time. He did not have email or a postal department, so typically someone would contact him with their concerns and questions.

It was normal for Paul to begin a letter generally the same way. He usually would start a letter by introducing himself and introducing the recipients of the letter.

A typical N.T. letter from Paul did not come in an envelope; it came written on a scroll made of papyrus leaves or vellum animal skins. By giving an introduction at the beginning, the recipients did not have to unravel the scroll to figure out who wrote it and to whom it was written.

What makes Colossians different is not the fact that he is writing to a place he has never been before. He did the same thing with Romans. He had not been to Rome and yet he wrote the Romans. However, **what makes Colossians so different from Romans is that he did not know most of the people in this church.**

It is clear from Romans 16, that Paul knew most of the people in the church of Rome, but he didn't know most of the people in the church of Colossae.

Now Paul was in jail at the time he wrote this letter. What that shows us is Paul cared for the work of God and church of God and the truth of God even when he had never been to the church and didn't know most of the people.

He was not in jail feeling sorry for himself. He had learned of the doctrinal problems in the church and decided to write a letter to straighten it out.

Several years ago, I got lost in the mountains. Two guys whom I had never met before rode up and saw the trouble I was in and invited me into their camp and put me up for the night. They saw my predicament and took it upon themselves to help.

That is what Paul did in Colossians. He saw the doctrinal predicament the people were in and he decided to write them a letter. There were those who were coming into the church who were adding things to Grace. They were adding various works and claiming that faith in Jesus Christ and the written Scriptures were not enough. They were affecting people, so Paul decided to write this book.

What Paul does here is this:

**PAUL BEGINS HIS LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS BY IDENTIFYING HIMSELF AND THOSE TO WHOM HE IS WRITING.**

Now we want to point this out, the Scriptures are written. This is what we need and this is what God has given to us, His written word.

**INTRODUCTORY MATTER #1 – Paul introduces himself. 1:1a-c**

Paul begins by introducing himself to the Colossians. There are three facts he presents:

**Fact #1 - Paul is an apostle. 1:1a**

By beginning with this fact, the Colossians would realize this is an authoritative letter written to us by an authoritative Apostle. This was Paul's spiritual gift. A spiritual gift is a supernatural Divine gift and ability that God gives to a believer that enables that believer to accomplish everything in ministry that God wants accomplished. One with a gift functions at a whole different level than one without that gift.

In the classification of spiritual gifts, being an Apostle was the highest gift one could have (I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11).

To be an apostle was a very unique and special and sacred calling and gift:

- 1) One had to be specifically called and appointed by Jesus Christ Himself to be an Apostle.  
Acts 9:15
- 2) One had to be specifically taught and instructed by Jesus Christ for three years. Gal. 1:1-11
- 3) One had to have specifically seen the resurrected Christ in a Personal appearance. I Cor. 9:1
- 4) One had to be given by Jesus Christ the power to perform sign apostolic miracles.  
II Cor. 12:11-12; Heb. 2:3-4

Now Paul was not one of the original twelve Apostles, but he was just as authorized to be an Apostle as any of the other Apostles. Paul made it clear that he was the least of the Apostles and the last of the Apostles (I Cor. 15:7-9).

The gift of Apostle is no longer operative. There are no more Apostles today. They are gone. What we do have is their inspired writings.

By Paul beginning his letter this way, he is establishing that a rare Apostle of God has taken a personal interest in this church and has a message from God for this church.

When Paul says he is an Apostle, he is not thinking more highly of himself than he ought; he is stating facts and truth and there is nothing wrong with that.

*(For a complete discussion and classification of all Spiritual Gifts, see our Pneumatology study pp. 96-146)*

**Fact #2** - Paul is an apostle of Jesus Christ. **1:1b**

**The genitive construction “of Jesus Christ” means that Jesus Christ was the source of his Apostleship and the object of his Apostleship.**

By using the noun “Jesus” first, Paul is stressing that Jesus is the Savior.

By using the noun “Christ” second, Paul is stressing that Jesus Christ is the Messiah.

When Paul begins a letter, he uses:

- 1) The combination Christ Jesus - Romans; II Corinthians; Ephesians; Philippians; I Timothy; II Timothy; Philemon
- 2) The combination Jesus Christ - I Corinthians; Galatians; Colossians; Titus
- 3) The combination Lord Jesus Christ - I Thessalonians; II Thessalonians

The emphasis here is that his Apostolic authorization came from the Savior/Messiah, Jesus Christ.

When we examine all of Paul’s writings, it is very clear that Paul teaches Jesus Christ is the God/Savior/Messiah/King.

In fact, in this very book of Colossians he will establish that Jesus Christ is fully God even though He was a human with a body (Colossians 2:10).

**Fact #3** - Paul is an apostle by the will of God. **1:1c**

Paul was not an Apostle because he wanted to be one. He never set out in life with an ambition to become an Apostle. He was not seeking this gift or position.

He makes it very clear that he did not become an Apostle through manipulation, usurpation, human nomination, seminary education or congregational election.

He did not become an Apostle because someone thought he would make a good one. **He was an apostle by the will of God.**

Paul believed that God had sovereignly decreed he would be an Apostle from his mother’s womb (Gal. 1:15-16). Even though it would be years until he would believe on Jesus Christ and be saved, God’s will for Paul’s life was that he be an Apostle.

It is a shame that so many people spend their lives jealous of others and missing what God has made them and given them the unique gifts to be able to do.

**INTRODUCTORY MATTER #2** – Paul introduces Timothy. **1:1d-e**

Paul introduces Timothy as “the brother” (ο αδελφος). Paul wants these Colossians to realize that Timothy was “the brother” in two relationship ways:

**Brother Relationship #1** - Timothy is the brother of Paul.

Timothy was not only Paul’s brother in Christ, he was his son in the faith. I Tim. 1:2

**Brother Relationship #2** - Timothy is the brother of the Colossians.

Timothy was in the family of God and was a brother to the Colossians.

Now some commentators are puzzled by this inclusion of Timothy because after **verse 9**, Paul writes in the singular “I” (1:20, 24, 25, 29; 2:1, 4; 4:3-4, 7, 8, 10, 18) and not the plural “we, our, us.” It is clear that Paul is the one writing this letter and not Timothy, so why include him here?

Timothy must have been known by the Colossian congregation. Timothy was in Ephesus with Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:1, 22), and it may be at that time that Epaphras came and met Paul and then went back to Colossae and started a church based on Paul’s grace teaching (Acts 19:10/Col. 1:7; 4:12).

Some have speculated that Timothy had gone to Colossae while Paul was in Ephesus to help see that the church was taught Pauline grace theology. The Colossians apparently knew Timothy, and Paul wanted them to know that Timothy was there with him.

**INTRODUCTORY MATTER #3** – Paul introduces the recipients of this inspired letter. **1:2a-c**

The word of God is written to God’s people. It is an amazing grace gift. Paul did not write letters to the lost world, hoping lost people would like him and his message. He wrote God’s inspired truth for God’s people.

**Fact #1** - Paul is writing this letter to the saints in Christ. **1:2a**

Paul is not writing this letter to lost people in hopes it will evangelize them. The word “saint” means these believers had been set apart by God. This word refers to their position.

One who believes in Jesus Christ is classified by God as a saint. Notice you don’t have to die to be a saint and no church has to vote you into sainthood. You are a saint, set apart unto God the moment you believe.

**Fact #2** - Paul is writing this letter to faithful brethren in Christ. **1:2b**

Paul is not writing this letter to carnal, fleshly believers. He is writing this letter to spiritually minded people.

This is why most people who say they are Christians are not serious about God and His word. They are not faithful people to God. God's word comes to life for faithful people. God's word is loved by faithful people. Faithful people of God are fed by systematic teaching of God's word. Carnal, fleshly people would rather have shallow warm their heart and feeling things. Faithful people want a careful unraveling of the written Scriptures. The written Scriptures will always be the top priority for faithful people.

Faithful people of God are not content with religious talk; they want to be fed God's written word. Carnal believers NEVER understand the true deeper things of God. Their diet is shallow, surface level, elementary teaching and not solid food.

**Fact #3** - Paul is writing this letter to faithful believers in Colossae. **1:2c**

These believers living in a specific area got their own personal letter from Paul. It is not a big time area like Rome or Ephesus or Laodicea or Hierapolis. It is a smaller area, but they got an inspired letter by Paul.

God's word can come to life for people in all kinds of locations. These believers lived in Colossae. It was not a big and impressive city, but it had a group who wanted to know God's word so Paul wrote them an inspired letter.

God was interested in and knowledgeable of the specific issues in that specific local church.

**INTRODUCTORY MATTER #4** – Paul introduces a specific message from God. **1:2d-f**

There are three messages Paul gives:

**Message #1** - Grace to you.

The undeserved, unmerited favor of God has been given to you. Paul never says, "O.T. law to you." Paul never says, "Sabbath Day services to you." He always says Grace to you.

Why we are in the dispensation of the grace of God.

**Message #2** - Peace to you.

The peace of God has been given to you. There is positional peace with God and then there is practical peace of God. The peace of God comes through grace, not O.T. law.

**Message #3** - Grace and peace is from God our Father.

The actual source of the Grace and peace that believers have is God the Father. Now this grace and peace will come by a relationship with the "Lord Jesus Christ" (1:3).

He is the way and there is no other way to having grace and peace.

Now the preposition “from” (apo) is one that means the departing place and source of grace and peace.

In other words, to experience the grace of God and the peace of God, it must be from Him and the only way one may have this is by faith in Jesus Christ (1:4).