

**Message #2**

**Colossians 1:1-2**

The opening two verses are typical in that it was normal to begin a letter by stating who the author was and who the recipients were. The opening verses are exceptional in that Paul had never personally been to Colossae and didn't even personally know most of the people (1:7; 2:1), and he was serving time in jail (4:18). Finally, the opening two verses are practical in that they challenge us and encourage us.

**OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS THE REASON WHY GOD GIVES US HIS INSPIRED INSTRUCTION.**

The common denominator between Paul and the Colossians was both were the work of God. It was this point that moved him to pen a letter to a church he had never visited.

**RELATIONSHIP #1 – Paul establishes his own relationship with God. 1:1a-c**

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

To be an apostle required:

1. Specific calling by Jesus Christ. Acts 9:15
2. Specific teaching from Jesus Christ. Gal. 1:11-12
3. See the resurrected Christ. I Cor. 9:1
4. Perform apostolic miracles. II Cor. 12:11-12

Paul is establishing his apostolic authority in writing this letter. Paul had not been one of the original twelve, but his appointment and authorization was just as sanctioned by God as any of the other apostles. He had been singled out and sent out by Jesus Christ. He may not have seen the Colossians, but he certainly had seen Jesus Christ and met all the prerequisites of an apostle (I Cor. 9:1; 15:8-9; Acts 9:3-8, 15).

In identifying himself as “an apostle,” he is establishing his full apostolic authority as one called by God, and as one commissioned by God, to set forth His truth concerning His Son.

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

The genitive “of Jesus Christ” indicates that Jesus Christ was the source of his apostleship and the object of his apostleship.

Jesus Christ personally gave Paul the Gospel (Gal. 1:11-12) and it was his job to communicate it. Paul was, as Curtis Vaughn said, “an authorized spokesman for God” (p. 172).

Paul had every right to address questions pertaining to Jesus Christ. He had every right to address problems in Christ's churches, for he had been fully authorized by Jesus Christ to be His apostle. He spent time with Jesus Christ, he was personally taught by Jesus Christ and he could testify as to who Christ really is.

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

This was not a career Paul picked; this was a calling God ordained.

Powerful men of God are not powerful men of God because of their aspiration, education, manipulation, nomination or usurpation; powerful men of God are powerful men of God because of God's sanctification. God is the one who calls, justifies and gives gifts as it pleases Him, not as it pleases us (I Cor. 12:18).

Paul did not become an apostle because he wanted to be one, he became an apostle because God willed it. Even though it would be years before Paul came to faith in Christ, he believed he was called from his mother's womb by God's grace to be an apostle (i.e. Gal. 1:15-16).

**RELATIONSHIP #2** – Paul establishes Timothy's relationship to everyone. **1:1d**

The Greek text literally reads "Paul...and Timothy the brother." Paul is particularizing Timothy as "the brother."

Commentators who wrestle with the inclusion of Timothy do so because after verse 9, Paul writes in the singular, not the plural. It was not Paul and Timothy who were writing the letter, it was clearly Paul who was writing the letter (2:1, 4; 4:3-4, 7, 8, 10, 18).

**Reason #1** - To contrast his apostolic authority with everyone else.

Timothy was Paul's son in the faith. He was very loyal to Paul and to Pauline instruction. Most churches knew of Paul's special relationship with Timothy. Because of the doctrinal attack against Jesus Christ, Paul wanted to establish that he was authorized in a way no other was, to address the matter.

**Reason #2** - To support his letter with someone everyone knew and loved and esteemed.

Timothy was well-known in Derbe, Lystra and Iconium (Acts 16:1-2). These cities were about 200 miles east of Colossae.

Timothy was in Ephesus with Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:1, 22) and it may be at this time that Epaphras came and met Paul and Timothy and then went back to Colossae and founded the church, based on Pauline teaching (Acts 19:10; Col. 1:7; 4:12). Robert Gromacki says Timothy may have even gone to Colossae while Paul was in Ephesus.

Timothy must have been known by the Colossians, so Paul included him (p. 267). By including Timothy's name, the people would recognize one from their region who they fully supported and respected.

**Reason #3** - To show the unique status that Timothy held with Paul.

Even though many had a relationship with Paul, including Epaphrus, none would equal the status of Timothy. He was "the brother." Paul personally wrote two of his final letters to Timothy. Paul turned his whole apostolic teaching over to Timothy and told him to keep teaching others (II Tim. 2:2).

Paul wanted all to know that Timothy was his key right hand man. Just as Jesus Christ picked him to be a very unique apostle, Paul picked Timothy to be a very unique brother.

**Reason #4** - To prepare for possible Pauline departure.

Paul was in jail. He sensed that God might use this imprisonment to open doors for him to minister, but he didn't know for sure (Col. 4:2-4). There was a chance he could be executed.

By naming Timothy as "the brother," he is pointing out that if something happened to him, Timothy would be next in line to contact in regard to his teaching concerning Jesus Christ. Timothy was, as Richard Melick said, "the heir apparent of Paul's ministry" (p. 188).

**RELATIONSHIP #3** – Paul establishes the Colossians relationship to his letter. **1:2a-b**

**Point #1** - He is writing to the saints in Colossae. **1:2a**

Colossae was located about 100 miles east of Ephesus, and 10-12 miles from Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col. 4:13). Paul did not write an inspired letter to the church in Hierapolis or Laodicea, cities that were much more impressive, but he did write an inspired letter to the church of Colossae. From a numerical perspective, Colossae was least impressive; from a spiritual perspective, it had the most potential.

The letter was for the "saint," the believers of Colossae, those who had been set apart by God. This first term "saints" refers to their position as having been saved. Even though these Colossians were unstable in their doctrine and unspiritual in their lives, they were still the saints of God.

**Point #2** - He is writing to the spiritual in Colossae. **1:2b**

Some suggest the terms "saints" and "faithful brethren" refer to the same thing; believers in Christ. However, the context would certainly support the interpretation that "saints" refers to position and "faithful" refers to practice.

It is not philosophy or intellectualism that will enable one to understand the Word of God; it is faithfulness. Carnal Christians will never understand the deeper things of the Word of God. Their diet will always consist of “elementary teaching,” not “solid food” (Heb. 5:14; 6:1).

The words “at Colossae” indicate that believers live in the world and the words “in Christ” indicate that they forever live in the heavenlies. Believers have two spheres of life, the earthly and the heavenly. When one is in Christ, it does not mean a change of physical location; it means a change of spiritual condition.

**RELATIONSHIP #4** – Paul establishes the Colossians relationship to God. **1:2c**

Even though we live in a day in which the great emphasis is on the choice of each individual human in regard to a variety of things, the Bible makes it clear that the source of grace that enables a sinner to have a peaceful relationship with God is God the Father.

It is the Father who chooses who will come to the Son (John 6:44).

The Christology of Colossians is at the ultimate level, but Paul always put that Christology in proper theological perspective to the Father.

Will you respond to the grace of God today? Will you give Jesus Christ the preeminence in your life that He deserves?

Come to Christ and you too, will experience the grace of God that gives you peace with God and the peace of God.

Our relationship with God the Father is contingent upon our relationship with Jesus Christ. That is the book of Colossians!