**Colossians 1:1-2**

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/col/col-1/colossians-11-2/>

Paul and Timothy set the stage for the book of Colossians by establishing their authority and celebrating their recipients.

This letter, or epistle, is written by Paul, who identifies himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul is one of the most well known of the first century church apostles. He traveled extensively throughout Asia Minor (or Anatolia), the protrusion of the continent toward the west that forms the peninsula of modern-day Turkey.

An apostle, the Greek word “Apostolos,” is a messenger or a delegate. Like an ambassador. Perhaps the best definition is “a messenger that is sent,” which would certainly describe Paul and his efforts in Asia Minor.

Paul is an ambassador of Jesus Christ. Throughout Chapter 1, he will show what this means. He is a witness-bearer, proclaiming the gospel and espousing the Kingdom of Heaven, of which Jesus reigns as king.

Like all of Paul’s letters, he is writing to a church that is experiencing a challenge. In order to speak to that challenge, Paul needs to remind everyone of their shared purpose. So, Paul starts here by establishing his apostleship unto Jesus Christ by the will of God to emphasize the reason and the authority from which he writes.

Paul serves in the role of apostle by the will of God. Paul will explain later that he is imprisoned as he writes this letter to the Colossians, sharing in the suffering of Christ (which is the only way to truly participate in His glory; Romans 8:17b). The heart and purpose of this writing is not Paul’s self-seeking agenda or some other pressure, but the will of God. In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul says this about the will of God:

 “For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality...”
(1 Thessalonians 4:3)

In each case, the word translated will is the same Greek word that indicates desire. God desires each of us to choose to be sanctified, but leaves it to our choice whether to do so. In Paul’s case, Paul was appointed by God to be an apostle. But it was up to him whether to fulfill that appointment. Paul writes about this in 1 Corinthians 9:

“For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward...”
(1 Corinthians 9:16-17a).

Clearly Paul is fulfilling his apostleship, and following in faithfulness, even in persecution.

Paul is not alone in his faithfulness. In fact, there is a cast of characters he will mention as co-laborers in this mission. There is no explicit mention within Colossians, or anywhere else, that Paul has been to Colossae and visited the church himself. Some of the people he will evoke are those likely more familiar with the city.

The first of these is Timothy our brother, a constant companion of Paul. Timothy was a half-Jewish, half-Greek believer from Galatia. Paul met Timothy on his second missionary journey:

“Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a  Greek, and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted this man to go with him.”
(Acts 16:1-3a)

Timothy joined Paul’s ministry and faithfully served alongside (or on behalf of) his mentor. Timothy was Paul’s disciple and his protégé. They shared a close relationship in ministry together. Timothy helped Paul write no less than six letters (2 Corinthians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, and Philemon). Additionally, Paul addressed two personal letters to Timothy (1 Timothy and 2 Timothy), which indicate Paul’s close personal connection with Timothy.

These two, Paul and Timothy, are therefore presented as the contributing authors of this letter to the Colossians. Timothy was with Paul while he was a prisoner in Rome. They were able to continue meeting and collaborating for the Gospel’s sake during Paul’s imprisonment. Timothy sometimes served to deliver messages to and from Paul.

Paul and Timothy are writing their letter to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colossae.

Colossae is located in modern day Turkey, about 350 miles due south of Istanbul. The word Colossae literally means “monstrosities.” It was once one of the grandest cities in the world, but by the time Paul is writing this letter, Colossae has begun to lose some of its historical luster. In Paul’s era, Colossae was a Roman city, in what was then the Roman province of Asia.

While there is no affirmative historical evidence Paul had been to Colossae, his missionary journeys took him to the surrounding areas. He (and Timothy) wrote another book in the New Testament that was aimed at the church in Colossae (The Book of Philemon).

The text itself does not explicitly say why Paul is writing to Colossae, but the contents of the letter suggest it is in response to a report he received concerning issues among the community of believers located there. The most likely candidate for such a report is Epaphras, who Paul mentions as being a founder of the church community in Colossae (Colossians 1:7) as well as someone who is with Paul during his imprisonment (Colossians 4:18), and who sends his greetings at the end of the letter (Colossians 4:12).

Just as Paul established the authority by which he writes, referring to himself as an apostle, he addresses the believers in Colossae as saints (or “holy ones”) and brethren. He begins by celebrating the spiritual identity of the community of believers in Colossae, making it clear they are valuable, capable, and adored. Key contributors to the Kingdom of God. To be a “saint” as the Bible uses the word in this context only requires someone to have believed and been born again (John 3:14-15).  Accordingly, this letter is addressed to the community of believers in Colossae.

Paul further compliments the Colossian believers by this exhortation: grace to you and peace from God our Father. The word for grace in Greek, “charis,” can mean “favor,” “gratitude,” or “acceptable.” The Greek word for peace, “eirene,” is a synonym for “rest” or “tranquility.”

Paul is setting up the letter to the Colossians by calling out the best in them. Their holiness (saints) and place as important members (brethren) in the community of Christ is a matter of their position as members of God’s family. As Paul will point out, their righteousness is derived from having been reconciled to God through the body of Christ (Colossians 1:22).  He showers them with an admonition of grace (favor) and a call to be at rest (peace). Paul further notes that they are not only brethren by virtue of having believed, they are also faithful brethren by virtue of the good choices they have made.

He is complementing them, showing that he values who they are, and that Paul/Timothy and the saints in Colossae are all on the same team. He wants to make it clear he does not write in anger or out of aggression. They are not antagonists, but friends. Brothers. Paul’s aim is to accentuate the already-present goodness within the believers in Colossae.

All of this comes not from Paul himself, but from God our Father. Paul, after all, is writing as the ambassador of Christ. Paul is Christ’s emissary. His apostle. The compliments are not just how Paul feels about the Colossians, but how the Lord of All sees them.

These two verses are a powerful introduction to the book of Colossians, establishing the authority of Paul and the intrinsic value of the Colossae believers, all while revering the supremacy of Christ. It is an explicit way to say, “we are on the same team, working for the same Master toward the same goal.” This introduction is meant to connect author and reader, binding the two together under a shared purpose.

**Biblical Text**

**Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,
2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.**