

Sunday, November 24, 2019—Colossians 1:1 Paul’s Unique Apostleship

### Introduction

- Last Sunday we completed our Introduction to Colossians by looking at an outline and overview of the book’s contents. All told we considered the following points in our three-part Introduction.
  - The Church at Colosse
  - Place in the Canon
  - Outline and Overview
- With these items accomplished we are now prepared to begin our expository study of the book itself.

### Colossians 1:1

- **Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus *our* brother,**
- *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God*—there is no reason to doubt that Paul is the author. Every single one of Paul’s letters begins with his identification of himself as the author.
- According to the book of Acts, Paul’s name was changed from Saul to Paul in conjunction with his first Apostolic journey in Acts 13.
  - Acts 7:58—is the first mention of Saul in the Bible.
  - Acts 8:1-3—Saul consented unto the death of Stephan and “made havock of the church” in Jerusalem.
  - Acts 9:1-4—Saul was breathing out threatening and slaughter against the Jewish kingdom church. He had acquired pagers of the High Priest granting him the authority to seize members of the Little Flock in the synagogues of Damascus.
  - Acts 9:11—Saul of Tarsus
    - Acts 22:3
    - Philippians 3:4-6
  - Acts 13:2, 9—this is the first time we encounter the name Paul.

- Galatians 1:13:14—Saul of Tarsus was leading the persecution against the church of God in early Acts, i.e., the Jewish kingdom church that had been established by Peter and the 12.
- I Timothy 1:12-16—despite being the chief of sinners, Saul obtained mercy and was given a ministry by the ascended Christ from heavens glory. Paul was to serve as a “pattern” for how God is saving people in the dispensation of grace.
- *Apostle*—comes from the Greek word *apostolos* which means messenger, or one sent forth.
  - Matthew 10:2—this is same word used to describe the 12 men chosen by Christ during his earthly ministry.
- I Corinthians 1:1—Paul is both “called” and sent forth, i.e., he is an “apostle.”
- Acts 9:1-6, 10-16—the Lord tells Ananias the Saul is a “chosen vessel” unto him for the purpose of bearing his name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.
- Acts 26:16-18—offers more details regarding what Saul was told in Acts 9. Christ appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus for the purpose of making him “a minister and a witness.” Verse 17 is also very clear that Saul knew while still on the Damascus road that he was “sent” to the gentiles.
- The Greek word translated “send” in verse 17 is *apostellō*. Note the close relation to the Greek word translated “apostle” in Col. 1:1 *apostolos*. Furthermore, the verb translated “I send” in verse 17 is a present tense active voice and indicative mood which identifies an action that is occurring while the speaker is making the statement. In other words, while Paul is still face down in the Arabian sand in Acts 9, the Lord Jesus Christ is sending him to the gentiles.
  - Romans 11:13
- *Of Jesus Christ by the will of God*—Paul is “an apostle of Jesus Christ.” Jesus Christ called him and made him an “apostle,” i.e., sent him forth. Paul had nothing to do with it. It was all the work of Christ on Paul’s behalf.
- It was “by the will of God” that Paul was made an apostle. The Greek word rendered “by” in verse 1 is the same word translated “through” in I Cor. 1:1. Noah Webster’s American Dictionary of the English Language defines these words as follows:
  - By—“Through, or with, denoting the agent, means, instrument or cause; . . . This use answers to that of the Latin per, through, denoting a passing, acting, agency, or instrumentality.”
  - Through—“by means of; by the agency of; noting instrumentality.”

- The instrumentally or agency through which Paul was “called” and made “an apostle” was the will of God. It was by the “means of” God’s will that Paul was dealt with in this manner by Jesus Christ.
- God the Son was serving the will of his Father but interrupting the wild career of Saul of Tarsus, saving him, commissioning him, and sending him forth to the gentiles. In short, it was “through” the instrumentality of the will of God the Father that the Son acted with respect the Paul.
  - Galatians 1:15-16—dealing with Paul in this manner pleased God. Therefore, God the Son acts accordingly with respect to Paul.
- Ephesians 3:1-11—in making Paul an “apostle” Jesus Christ acted in accordance with the eternal purpose of God to reveal and make known the mystery of his will (Eph. 1:9). This revelation pertains to the formation of the church the body which from the beginning of the world was hid in God.
- Paul was the Godhead’s “chosen vessel” (Acts 9:15) or conduit through which the revelation of the mystery would be revealed and made known.
- I Timothy 2:4-7—Paul is the Godhead’s “due time” apostle. Paul is the one who testifies regarding all that Christ accomplished at the cross. Paul explains how the cross is the mechanism through which the church the body of Christ could be formed (Eph. 2:16).
- *And Timotheus our brother*—Timothy is with Paul in Rome after the conclusion of the book of Acts when Colossians is written. Of the four books written from Rome during Paul’s first imprisonment Timothy is mentioned in the greeting to three of them.
  - Philippians 1:1
  - Colossians 1:1
  - Philemon 1
- In addition to being mentioned in the greeting to these three books, Timothy is also mentioned in the following:
  - II Corinthians 1:1
  - I Thessalonians 1:1
  - II Thessalonians 1:1
- All told, Timothy is mentioned in the greeting in 6 of Paul’s epistles. With two books being addressed specifically to Timothy we see that Timothy was either the recipient or coauthor for 8

of Paul's 13 epistles. Moreover, Timothy is also mention in the salutation to the book of Romans (Rom. 16:21).

- I Timothy 1:2—Timothy was one of Paul's most trusted and faithful “fellowlabourers” in the work of the ministry.
  - I Corinthians 4:17
  - Philippians 2:19
  - I Thessalonians 3:2
- II Timothy 4:6-9—knowing that he is at the end of his life, Paul requests to have Timothy present with him.
- Colossians 1:1—Timothy along with Paul are the authors of the book of Colossians.