

# Colossians 1:1 Commentary

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CHRIST IS ALL IN ALL  
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Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
[Colossians Overview](#) - Click Chart on right side

<b>Christ</b> <b>Preeminent in All Things</b> <b>Supreme Lord - Sufficient Savior</b>			
Colossians 1	Colossians 2	Colossians 3	Colossians 4
<b>Supremacy of Christ</b>		<b>Submission to Christ</b>	
Doctrinal and Corrective		Practical and Reassuring	
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Christ Our Lord		Christ Our Life	Christ our Love

Christ the Head of the Body	Christ the Lord of the Universe	Christ the Head of the Home	
Instruction	Warnings	Exhortations	Reminders
Reconciliation	Creation	Submission	Conversation
His Person and Word		His Peace and Presence	

**Colossians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God and Timothy our brother,(NASB: Lockman)**

**Greek:** [Paulos apostolos Christou Iesou dia thelematos Theou kai Timotheos o adelphos](#)

**Amplified:** PAUL, AN apostle (special messenger) of Christ Jesus (the Messiah), by the will of God, and Timothy [our] brother,

**Barclay** This is a letter from Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and from Timothy, the brother ([Westminster Press](#))

**KJV:** Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,

**Lightfoot:** Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by no personal merit but by God's gracious will alone, and Timothy, our brother in the faith,

**Wuest:** Paul, an ambassador of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timothy our brother

**Young's Literal:** Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Timotheus the brother

**PAUL, AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST: Paulos apostolos Christou Iesou:**

- Paul an apostle - Ro 1:1 1Co 1:1 2Co 1:1 Eph 1:1
- [Colossians 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Colossians 1:1-2 Introduction to Colossians](#) - John MacArthur

## PAUL: THE SAVIOR'S SENT ONE

**THOUGHT** - As you read this short letter, remember that Paul wrote one of the greatest descriptions of Jesus Christ ever penned from a dark, damp, dirty prison cell! Prison was a powerful pulpit for this Spirit filled man. What prison are you in today? God's Spirit can accomplish God's will through you just as He did through his instrument, Paul. Do you believe this true? Are you willing? May He turn all our prisons into pulpits for proclamation of the good (great) news of Jesus Christ until all the world has heard! Amen ([Why was Paul in prison? | GotQuestions.org](#))

Romans tells us how to enter into fellowship with Christ. Ephesians and Colossians tell us how to abide therein! First we come out of bondage, then we are brought into the banqueting house! Ephesians and Colossians represent the highest, fullest, richest presentation of Christianity! "It has been said that if you want to understand the true nature of Jesus Christ, you should study the first chapter of John's Gospel, the 19th chapter of Revelation, and the Book of Colossians. If you have those three under your belt, you will have a solid understand of who Jesus is and what He desires to do in our world today." (Salvato)

As you read and study Colossians keep Paul's pattern of presentation in mind - Colossians 1-2 are doctrinal and corrective whereas Colossians 3-4 are practical and reassuring. The first 2 chapters present Christ as our Lord, Chapter 3 presents Christ as our Life and Chapter 4 presents Christ as our Love. The first two chapters present Christ's person and work and the last two His peace and presence. While it might be tempting to rush through the first 2 chapters to get to the practical exhortations beginning in Colossians 3, this would be a great mistake, because sound doctrine is the basis and framework for sincere practice. Right living is a supernatural fruit of right thinking! You simply cannot practice the exhortations and commands in the last half if you do not have a sure foundation in the first half. And you cannot practice the commands by depending on the energy of self, but only by depending on the enablement of the Spirit! This is not "let go, let God," but "let God and let's go" (so to speak). His provision and our

responsibility working in synergy and harmony!

### **First orthodoxy, then orthopraxy!**

As **Chuck Swindoll** says "Your view of Jesus Christ will impact every area of your life. Many today want only practical instruction and helps for living, eschewing "esoteric" topics such as doctrine and theology because they seem to be out of touch with their day-to-day reality. Paul's view was different. He saw that the Christological problems in the Colossian church had practical importance as well. Believers have died with Christ; therefore, we need to die to our sins. We have also been raised with Christ; therefore, we must live well in Him and put on qualities that are motivated by Christian love. And because He is Lord over all, the life of the Christian is a life of submission to Jesus. Are you following after Jesus as you should? Our faith in Jesus Christ should transform the relationships we have in every area of our lives—in our homes, our churches, and our world. ([Colossians Overview](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - The message of this letter is greatly needed today. I hear too many voices telling me that I need something more than Jesus Christ—some exciting experience, some new doctrine, some addition to my Christian experience. But Paul affirms that what I need is appropriation of what I already have in Christ. 'And ye are complete in Him.' I also hear voices that want to judge me and rob me of the glorious liberty I have in Christ. How encouraging to hear Paul say: 'Let no man beguile you, let no man spoil you, let no man judge you.' The fullness of Christ is all that I need, and all man-made regulations and disciplines cannot replace the riches I have in God's Son....Do we have any of this heresy today? Yes, we do; and it is just as deceptive and dangerous! When we make Jesus Christ and the Christian revelation only part of a total religious system or philosophy, we cease to give Him the preeminence. When we strive for 'spiritual perfection' or 'spiritual fullness' by means of formulas, disciplines, or rituals, we go backward instead of forward. Christian believers must beware of mixing their Christian faith with such alluring things as yoga, transcendental meditation, Oriental mysticism, and the like. We must also beware of 'deeper life' teachers who offer a system for victory and fullness that bypasses devotion to Jesus Christ. In all things, He must have the preeminence.!" ([Quoted by Paul Apple](#))

**Warren Wiersbe's Outline** ([Quoted by Paul Apple](#))

**Theme:** Jesus Christ is Preeminent (Colossians 1:18)

#### **I. DOCTRINE: CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DECLARED** – Colossians 1

1. In the Gospel message – Colossians 1:1-12
2. In redemption – Colossians 1:13-14
3. In Creation – Colossians 1:15-17
4. In the church – Colossians 1:18-23
5. In Paul's ministry – Colossians 1:24-29

#### **II. DANGER: CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DEFENDED** – Colossians 2

1. Beware of empty philosophies – Colossians 2:1-10
2. Beware of religious legalism – Colossians 2:11-17
3. Beware of man-made disciplines – Colossians 2:18-23

#### **III. DUTY: CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DEMONSTRATED** – Colossians 3-4

1. In personal purity – Colossians 3:1-11
2. In Christian fellowship – Colossians 3:12-17
3. In the home – Colossians 3:18-21
4. In daily work – Colossians 3:22-4:1
5. In Christian witness – Colossians 4:2-6
6. In Christian service – Colossians 4:7-18

**Vaughan: Theme:** "absolute supremacy and sole sufficiency of Christ." ([Quoted by Paul Apple](#))

[Charles Wesley wrote Jesus, Lover of My Soul](#) with these great words (in bold below) which could have been the theme of Colossians -

**Thou, O Christ, art all I want,  
More than all in Thee I find.**

Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,,  
Heal the sick, and lead the blind.  
Just and holy is Thy name;  
I am all unrighteousness:  
False and full of sin I am;  
Thou art full of truth and grace.  
([Play this great hymn to Him](#))

#### Recommended Resources for a Overview of Colossians::

- [Background on Colossians - Hampton Keathley, III \(excellent!\)](#)
- [Colossians Overview - John MacArthur](#)
- [Analysis of Colossians - James Van Dine](#)
- [Book of Colossians Overview - Charles Swindoll \(see chart in upper right\)](#)
- [Colossians Overview - NIV Study Bible](#)
- [Keys to Colossians - William Orr](#)
- [Colossians - Synthetic Bible Studies](#) - James Gray
- [Keys to Colossians](#) - Willam Orr
- [Colossians - Through the Bible Book by Book](#) - Myer Pearlman

**Paul...apostle** (Ro 1:1, 1Cor 1:1, 2Cor 1:1, Gal 1:1, Eph 1:1, Col 1:1, 1Ti 1:1, Titus 1:1) - note the repetition of this key phrase in Paul's letters. Why was Paul an apostle? Was it because he chose to be? Look at the cross references above for the answer. Paul was a man with a mission ("missionary" is the word in Latin which corresponds to apostle) having been commissioned by Christ Himself, Whose will was made known in ((Acts 9:15+ Acts 22:14, 15, 21+ Acts 26:16, 17,18+). **See in depth article on [Paul the Apostle](#).**

**Paul** ([3972](#)) is from Latin, **Paulos** meaning "little, small". Before his Damascus Road experience he was known by his Hebrew name Saul (Greek **Saulos**) which means "desired" or "ask" (derived from Hebrew word for **"ask"**)

Paul further explained that he was "an **apostle** not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, Who raised Him from the dead." (Gal 1:1+)

Paul was commissioned as Christ's "**chosen instrument**" (Acts 9:15+) and ambassador to the Gentiles with a message of reconciliation (Ro 5:11+, 2Co 5:18,19+), a message that he "neither received...from man, nor was... taught, but ... through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal 1:12+).

In (Ro 1:5+) Paul added that "through (Jesus Christ our Lord) we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake.

**Peake** explains why Paul used **apostle** in this opening - "The reference to his apostleship is not due to any attack on his apostolic authority or teaching, as in the case of the Epistles to the Galatians or Corinthians, but, as in the Epistle to the Romans, to the fact that he was unknown to those to whom he was writing. Similarly reference is made to it in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the letter being sent to Churches, to some of which, probably, Paul was unknown. In writing to the Macedonian Churches it is not mentioned, for they had been founded by him and remained loyal." ([Colossians 1 - The Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

**ILLUSTRATION** - In Leonardo Da Vinci's famous [painting of The Last Supper](#), our Lord's hands are empty. And therein lies an inspiring story. Da Vinci dedicated 3 years to this painting, determined that it would be his crowning work. Before the unveiling, he decided to show it to a friend for whose opinion he had the utmost respect. The friend's praise was unbounded. "The cup in Jesus' hand," he said, "is especially beautiful." Disappointed at once Da Vinci began to paint out the cup. Astonished, the distinguished friend asked for an explanation. "Nothing," Da Vinci explained, "must distract from the figure of Christ." Da Vinci focused attention solely on Christ by removing the distraction of the cup. Having removed the cup, he had to do something with the hand. The left hand was already outstretched just above the table, lifting, as if to bless and command. Now the right hand, also empty, was also outstretched invitingly. This seems to have been Paul's purpose in this postcard to the church of Colossae. (from Brian Bell)

#### Related Resources:

- [Paul - Bridgeway Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Paul the Apostle - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)
- [Paul the Apostle - Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible](#)
- [Paul - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)

- [Paul - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)
- [Paul \(2\) - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)

**Apostle** (652) (**apostolos** from **apostello** = send in turn from **apo** = off from + **stello** = send) (Click for another discussion) which literally means "sent one". **Apostolos** was a technical word designating an individual sent from someone else with the sender's commission, the necessary credentials, the sender's authority and the implicit responsibility to accomplish a mission or assignment. In a word an apostle is a "sent one!"

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, are we not all "SENT ONES" in a practical sense? Indeed, As far as your neighbors are concerned, YOU are Christ's ambassador, whether you like it or not. And who is your neighbor? Whoever is near (the root meaning of the word neighbor! See [neighbor = plesion](#)) We have a charge to proclaim the excellencies of Him Who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1Pe 2:9-10+) We are to live in such a way before the fallen world that we "sanctify Christ as Lord in (our) hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks (us) to give an account for the hope that is in (us), yet with gentleness and reverence." (1Pe 3:15+) May God grant that our watchword be "Here I am Lord. Send me!" (Isa 6:8+, cp 1 Cor 1:17) Take courage, for you do not have to do it on your own...just follow the template of the faithful brethren and "filled with the Holy Spirit, (begin) to speak the Word of God (the Gospel) with boldness." (Acts 4:31+, cp Acts 1:8+, Acts 9:28+, Acts 14:3+, Acts 18:26+, Acts 19:8+, Eph 6:20+, 1Th 2:2+)

Secular Greek writer Demosthenes gives a word picture of "**apostolos**" noting that it was used to describe a cargo ship sent out with a load. Demosthenes also described a naval fleet as "**apostles**" sent out to accomplish a mission.

**William Barclay** - The word **apostolos** literally means one who is sent out. Paul's right to speak is that he has been sent out by God to be his ambassador to the Gentiles. Moreover, he is an apostle by the will of God. That office is not something which he has earned or achieved; it is something which has been given him by God. "You did not choose me," said Jesus, "but I chose you" (John 15:16). Here, right at the outset of the letter, is the whole doctrine of grace. **A man is not what he has made himself, but what God has made him.** ([Colossians 1 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**Related Resources:** from Gotquestions.org

- [What is an apostle?](#)
- [Is God restoring the offices of apostle and prophet in the church today?](#)
- [What is the difference between a disciple and apostle?](#)

**W E Vine** says **apostolos** "is, lit., "one sent forth" (apo, "from," stellō, "to send"). "The word is used of the Lord Jesus to describe His relation to God, Heb. 3:1; see John 17:3. The twelve disciples chosen by the Lord for special training were so called, Luke 6:13; Luke 9:10. Paul, though he had seen the Lord Jesus, 1 Cor. 9:1; 1 Cor. 15:8, had not 'accompanied with' the Twelve 'all the time' of His earthly ministry, and hence was not eligible for a place among them, according to Peter's description of the necessary qualifications, Acts 1:22. Paul was commissioned directly, by the Lord Himself, after His Ascension, to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles. "The word has also a wider reference. In Acts 14:4, 14, it is used of Barnabas as well as of Paul; in Rom. 16:7 of Andronicus and Junias. In 2 Cor. 8:23 (RV, margin) two unnamed brethren are called 'apostles of the churches;' in Phil. 2:25 (RV, margin) Epaphroditus is referred to as 'your apostle.' It is used in 1 Thess. 2:6 of Paul, Silas and Timothy, to define their relation to Christ." \* [\* From Notes on Thessalonians, by Hogg and Vine, pp. 59-60.] (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words)

**Gilbrant** has a lengthy discussion of **apostolos** -

**Classical Greek** - Apostolos is derived from the verb *apostellō* (643), which is a combination of the preposition *apo* (570), "from, off," and the verb *stellomai* (4575), "keep away, stand aloof, avoid, put in order." *Apostellō* means "to send off" (persons or things). In classical Greek *apostolos* only rarely corresponds in meaning to the New Testament understanding of the word. Its background and origin are found in the maritime language. It occurs in connection with sea voyages and military expeditions; later it designated the fleet itself. From this the term came to signify a group of men who were sent on a special task, for example, a group of settlers (Rengstorff, "Apostolos," Kittel 1:407). Furthermore, *ho apostolos* signified the leader and commander of the expedition. Nevertheless, there was nothing inherent in the term which suggested anything more than someone being sent by someone else. Nothing in the term itself implied any transference of authority. The Greeks regularly used more emphatic words for this type of commissioning, such as *pempō* (3854), "send"; *angelos* (32) "messenger"; *kērux* (2755), "herald"; and many other such terms.

Ordinarily *apostolos* retained this vague and indefinite definition. The papyri indicate that the term was associated with a cover letter or a note, or a passport. Naturally one must wonder why the Christian

community chose such a word as a title for their leaders. However, several factors shed light on this phenomenon.

First, although its heritage provided little motivation for choice, some less customary usages show how appropriate the term could be. Herodotus (1.21) employed *apostolos* on occasion to denote a “minister” or “messenger” (Bauer). In the Third Century B.C. we read of a “minister (*apostalmenos*) of the king” (Muller, “Apostle,” Colin Brown, 1:127); in all probability here the term included some idea of the transfer of the authority of the king to the minister, an idea central to the New Testament understanding.

With Stoic-Cynic philosophers *apostellō* became a technical term for divine authorization. Within these circles a word also occurred which paradoxically stood nearer to the New Testament idea of the apostle than the term itself, namely, *kataskopos* (2655). Literally this word means “a spy,” but in philosophical terminology it connotes the one who inquires of human circumstances and then brings those in need a helping message from the gods. The sending and the task-oriented motifs are both present here. This “messenger” also models an ideal of poverty, which can be traced back to Socrates and Plato. They assumed that anyone bearing divine messages should be characterized by poverty and suffering. Although this is a rather striking external similarity, it must be observed that is all it is. Some suggest it may be that such a concept indirectly prompted the first Christians to avoid *kataskopos*, just as they avoided identification with the philosophers and hucksters and “teachers of wisdom.” The Hellenistic world was virtually overrun by itinerant philosophers and quacks of every kind. In Athens these philosophers speculated that Paul was an advocate of “strange gods” (Acts 17:16f.).

Other examples suggest that *apostolos* could denote a “deputy” who received and put into effect a divine message, but this apparently belongs to a later period, and it may have oriental and Gnostic influences. It should hardly be considered as a background for the New Testament usage.

The development and use of the word in secular Greek can, of course, hold some importance for the New Testament’s understanding of *apostolos*. But far more critical is the influence of the Septuagint and the Old Testament (Hebrew), and Judaism.

**Septuagint Usage** - While *apostolos* occurs only once in the Septuagint, the verbs *apostellō* and *exapostellō* (1805) appear no less than 700 times. These words regularly translate the Hebrew *shālach*, “send” (with stress on the authority of the messenger [literally “the one sent”]). The same case applies to the passive participle *shālûach* (*apostolos* 1 Kings 14:6 [LXX 3 Kings 14:6]). This authorization, however, never concerns a position or an office but a certain, limited task. It is noteworthy that *shālûach* is applied to only one of the prophets—Isaiah. When he heard the Lord ask, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Isaiah responded, “Here am I; send me” (Isaiah 6:8).

Despite the Old Testament limits of understanding, the rabbis used *shālûach* in reference to the prophets who in a unique way had proven themselves to be messengers of God by performing signs and wonders (e.g., Moses, Elijah, Elisha, etc.). They had accomplished such feats which were otherwise restricted to God. Therefore, they were considered to be His authorized messengers in a unique way. The *shālûach* of God not only had to speak in the name of the Lord, but he had to act on God’s behalf. This provides an interesting background for understanding Paul’s words about the “signs of an apostle” (2 Corinthians 12:12; cf. Acts 4:30; 14:3; 19:11).

**Intertestamental Period** - There was an Old Testament background for the *shālûach* institution which developed in Judaism. The origin of this arrangement cannot be determined for certain, but at the turn of the First Century A.D. it had been fully developed. The rabbis maintained that the foundation was formulated in the Law (Torah). It was a specific legal institution which was based upon the principle that a messenger was furnished with authority to act on behalf of someone else. Thus, the status of a *shālûach* exceeded that of a simple messenger. Neither was there any suggestion that the duties of a *shālûach* were merely mechanically performed orders. Rather, it was recognized to be an independent course of action in which the messenger was entitled to the rights and authority of his sender. Even if the representative misused his authority, the decisions could not be revoked. A *shālûach* could conduct business transactions for his sender (i.e., he had “power of attorney”). The *shālûach* had the power to represent the bridegroom at his wedding! He could also perform legal functions including divorce. This was so irrevocable that the husband himself could not abolish the divorce (Rengstorf, “*apostolos*,” Kittel, 1:415). In the Mishnah the statement, “A man’s representative is like the man himself” (Berachoth 5.5), defines the role of the *shālûach* (Muller, “Apostle,” Colin Brown, 1:127f.).

The one sent by Jewish religious authorities into the Diaspora as their representatives to the synagogues were

understood to have the authority invested with the shālûach. Shālûach, however, was never used in connection with Jewish missionaries. Although the legal power of the position was a primary aspect, the functional role might be of a religious nature. A priest, as a representative of the priesthood, could be considered as the shālûach of God.

The leader of the synagogue who read the prayer in the name of the assembly was called the shālûach (shālîach, Aramaic) of the synagogue. But primarily it was the messengers from the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem who were granted shālûach as their official title. It would probably be correct to say that Saul/Paul was the shālûach of the high priests when he, with written authority, went to Damascus in search of Christians to arrest. This forms a striking background for Paul's claim to be an apostle of the Lord. Before he became an apostle, he had been a shālûach of the Jews (Acts 9:1,2), i.e., an authorized representative.

In the Diaspora a shālûach was generally associated with the Greek word apostolos. The rabbis did not use this Greek term, which gradually became exclusively Christian. When Jerusalem had been destroyed (A.D. 70), those with authority to collect the annual temple tax were termed "apostles." Josephus used the word in connection with a body of Jewish messengers to Rome (Antiquities 17.11.1).

The church father Jerome said that shālûach was a Jewish title comparable to apostle (To the Galatians 1.1). Furthermore, in the Aramaic-speaking Syrian church, an apostle was called a shēlîach which confirms that the two words in certain instances and to a certain degree were considered equivalent.

When this connection between these two words and what they denote in Judaism and Christianity is compared, it must be emphasized that the differences between a Jewish shālûach and a Christian apostle are greater than the similarities. A shālûach was usually dispatched by men, but an apostle was commissioned by the Lord himself (cf. Acts 13:1f., the sending of Paul and Barnabas; Galatians 1:1 precludes understanding this in any formal installation sense).

**New Testament Usage** - As it has been seen, apostolos is another expression in which a Greek word was appropriated by New Testament writers which is actually little used and is rather imprecise in meaning in secular Greek. The definition of apostolos in the New Testament can by no means be established from the customary meaning in secular Greek. Neither can the implications of the word be totally explained by any equivalent Hebrew term. As has been observed, it is actually difficult to establish any precise Hebrew equivalent to apostolos.

Apostolos denotes a ministry and an office that was instituted by Jesus himself: "And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles" (Luke 6:13). Here, as in Matthew 10:2 and Mark 6:30, we encounter the Greek word apostolos without any further explanation as to what the word means.

We note, however, that one of the most characteristic features of apostolic ministry in the New Testament is mission. This was totally absent within Judaism's understanding of shālûach (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 9:16,17). The apostles were sent to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). This missionary call, given by the risen Lord, reaffirmed and confirmed the original call to apostleship (Matthew 10:1f.; Mark 6:7f.).

This missionary orientation which is associated with the duties of apostleship should not be misinterpreted to mean that every missionary is an apostle. Charismatically endowed leaders who were called to special ministry have historically been called "apostles." We may speak of the "apostle to the North" or the "apostle to China." But it could prove problematic if such figures were given the authority equal to the initial apostles.

In earliest Christianity the word apostolos did not possess such a precise and technical meaning as it has today. Therefore, the term in the New Testament was used in a less-than-technical sense. For instance, apostoloi was used of the messengers to the congregation in Corinth (apostloi ekklesiōn, 2 Corinthians 8:23; cf. Philippians 2:25). The Greek term apostolos here was used differently from the way we understand the term. It would be improper to translate apostolos as "apostle" in the later formal sense of the word. Because apostolos in the ancient Christian period had such a broad meaning, it made it easy for "false apostles" (pseudoapostoloi [see 5405]) to claim apostolic authority (2 Corinthians 11:13; Revelation 2:2).

The fact that apostolos was not an ecclesiastical technical term in the New Testament is attested by its usage applied to those other than Paul and the Twelve, who were also sent out by the risen Christ. For example, Barnabas (Acts 14:4,14), James the brother of our Lord (Galatians 1:19), and perhaps Silas (Acts 15:40; cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:1) were also considered to be apostles in the wider sense by the writers of the New

Testament.

If one recognizes that the usage of *apostolos* is paralleled by *prophētēs* (4254), "prophet," and *presbuteroi* (see 4104), "elders," which were used as fixed terms in Judaism, then it is less puzzling that *apostolos* only later became a technical term in ecclesiastical terminology. The striking paradox is that the technical use of the word appears only infrequently, if at all, in the New Testament. This apparently indicates that the word had early been reserved for the original apostles. If one attempts to use those remarkably few instances in Scripture to support a theory of a continued apostolic ministry within the early community, then one must also be willing to concede that such a succession involved a type of ministry inferior to the original founding apostolate. When the first congregations showed such a hesitancy to use the word, in spite of the fact that it was a common word, and when such emphatic words were used against those who "say they are apostles, and are not" (Revelation 2:2), then this should caution against assuming such a position.

The unique dimension of the New Testament apostolate is its role in establishing the apostolic doctrine. The Church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20). The prophetic word of the Old Testament was fulfilled; this fulfillment was proclaimed and explained by the apostolic word of the New Testament. The apostles performed a dual task. First, they witnessed the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Secondly, they explained the meaning of these basic events of the salvation history. They could not only testify that Jesus died on the Cross (John 19:35), they could also preach that He died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3). Not only did they testify that Jesus rose from the dead, but they preached that He was raised again for our justification (Romans 4:25). Therefore Jesus also declared in His prayer as High Priest that it is through the word of the apostles that we believe on Him (John 17:20).

Note that the ministry of the apostles is to advance the apostleship of Jesus Christ himself (Hebrews 3:1). Jesus had given the words of the Father to His disciples (John 17:18), and then the apostles gave the word of Christ to others. Their word was an authoritative word from God (Luke 10:16). Jesus spoke of His own mission as being sent (*apostellō*) from God into the world. This is a central theme, especially in the Gospel of John. To this sending of the Son by the Father we note that Jesus connected His own sending of the apostles (John 17:18).

As to the apostolic calling of Paul, this was of the same foundational nature as that which the Twelve (Eleven?) experienced. No less than 14 times in his epistles Paul appealed to his calling as a basis for his authority. As he stressed in Galatians 1:12, it was the ascended Christ who had called him to be His apostle to the Gentiles. His apostleship was also accepted by the other apostles. Paul gained their approval to share the gospel with the Gentiles when they "saw" (and recognized) his work and progress (Galatians 2:7-9). They also judged him according to his fruits (Matthew 7:15-20) which were in contrast to the false prophets'. Paul acknowledged this as foundational for recognizing his apostolic calling.

It is remarkable that Paul did not appeal to his validity as apostle on the basis of his visions and revelations or upon his ecstatic experiences. On the contrary, it appears that he waited 14 years before recounting that he had been caught up into the "third heaven" (2 Corinthians 12:1-6).

The basis of Paul's apostleship was not his charismatic gifts, although he certainly did not lack these. Rather, an encounter with the risen Lord on the Damascus Road was his appeal. Paul did not interpret the Damascus Road experience as some subjective event but as an objective reality which actually happened. Therefore, Paul appealed to this as a foundation for his position as an apostle. He had seen Jesus our Lord (1 Corinthians 9:1). This revelation concluded the series of revelations during which the resurrected Christ made himself known and was seen. Paul saw Him "last of all" (1 Corinthians 15:8). As the final eyewitness, he became the last great apostle of the Apostolic Age. ([The Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Apostolos** - 80x in 79v - **NAS** = apostle(19), apostles(52), apostles'(5), messenger(1), messengers(1), is sent(1).

Matt 10:2; Mark 3:14; 6:30; Luke 6:13; 9:10; 11:49; 17:5; 22:14; 24:10; John 13:16; Acts 1:2, 26; 2:37, 42f; 4:33, 35f; 5:2, 12, 18, 29, 40; 6:6; 8:1, 14, 18; 9:27; 11:1; 14:4, 14; 15:2, 4, 6, 22f; 16:4; Rom 1:1; 11:13; 16:7; 1 Cor 1:1; 4:9; 9:1f, 5; 12:28f; 15:7, 9; 2Cor 1:1; 8:23; 11:5, 13; 12:11f; Gal 1:1, 17, 19; Eph 1:1; 2:20; 3:5; 4:11; Phil 2:25; Col 1:1; 1Th 2:7; 1Ti 1:1; 2:7; 2 Tim 1:1, 11; Titus 1:1; Heb 3:1; 1 Pet 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1; 3:2; Jude 1:17; Rev 2:2; 18:20; 21:14.

The English word "**ambassador**" is a good translation of **apostolos** because an **ambassador** is "an official envoy of high rank appointed by one of higher rank and authority in the government to represent and transact its business at the seat of government of some other power."



Paul thought of himself as an ambassador of the King of kings, sent by Him to the Gentiles with credentials (miracles he performed) and the commission, "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me (Acts 26:17, 18, cp other references to his ministry to the Gentiles - Ro 11:13, Gal 2:7-8, 1Ti 2:7)

To reemphasize the word **apostle** as Paul uses it here does not merely refer to one who has a message to announce, but to an appointed representative with an official status who is provided with the credentials of his office. **Apostle** is also used once to describe Jesus Christ the Sent from the Father (Heb 3:1-note; John 20:21).

Paul apparently wrote while he was in prison at Rome (Col 4:18-note) and sent the letter to them by Tychicus (Col 4:7-note), by whom he also sent the Ephesian letter, presumably at the same time (Ep 6:21, 22-note), as well as the letter to Philemon.

As someone has written "Out of 95 verses in Colossians, 78 have a marked resemblance to Ephesians." The difference is that in **Ephesians** the primary subject is the **Church**; while in **Colossians** the primary subject is **Christ**!

## SIMILARITIES BETWEEN EPHESIANS AND COLOSSIANS

1. Eph 1:1	1. Col 1:1
2. Eph 1:2	2. Col 1:2
3. Eph 1:3	3. Col 1:3
4. Eph 1:7	4. Col 1:14
5. Eph 1:10	5. Col 1:20
6. Eph 1:15-17	6. Col 1:3, 4
7. Eph 1:18	7. Col 1:27
8. Eph 1:21	8. Col 1:16
9. Eph 1:22	9. Col 1:18
10. Eph 2:1,12	10. Col 1:21
11. Eph 2:5	11. Col 2:13
12. Eph 2:15	12. Col 2:14
13. Eph 2:16	13. Col 1:20
14. Eph 3:1	14. Col 1:24
15. Eph 3:2	15. Col 1:25
16. Eph 3:3	16. Col 1:26
17. Eph 3:7	17. Col 1:23, 25
18. Eph 3:8	18. Col 1:27
19. Eph 4:1	19. Col 1:10
20. Eph 4:2	20. Col 3:12
21. Eph 4:3	21. Col 3:14
22. Eph 4:15	22. Col 2:19
23. Eph 4:19	23. Col 3:1, 5
24. Eph 4:22	24. Col 3:8
25. Eph 4:25	25. Col 3:8
26. Eph 4:29	26. Col 3:8; 4:6
27. Eph 4:31	27. Col 3:8
28. Eph 4:32	28. Col 3:12
29. Eph 5:3	29. Col 3:5
30. Eph 5:4	30. Col 3:8
31. Eph 5:5	31. Col 3:5
32. Eph 5:6	32. Col 3:6
33. Eph 5:15	33. Col 4:5
34. Eph 5:19	34. Col 3:16
35. Eph 5:21	35. Col 3:18
36. Eph 5:25	36. Col 3:19
37. Eph 6:1	37. Col 3:20
38. Eph 6:4	38. Col 3:21
39. Eph 6:5	39. Col 3:22
40. Eph 6:9	40. Col 4:1
41. Eph 6:18	41. Col 4:2
42. Eph 6:21	42. Col 4:7

**Apostle** - ([Click here](#) or [here](#) for more notes on *apostle*)

#### **Related Resources on Apostle:**

- [Apostles - Nave's Topical Bible](#)
- [Apostle - Bridgeway Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Apostle - American Tract Society Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Apostle - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)
- [Apostles - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Apostles - Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible](#)
- [Apostle - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)
- [Apostle - Watson's Biblical & Theological Dictionary](#)
- [Apostle - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)

- [Apostle and Apostleship - The 1901 Jewish Encyclopedia](#)
- [Apostle - Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature](#)
- American Church Dictionary [Apostle](#)
- American Tract Society [Apostle](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Apostle](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Paul the Apostle](#) [Apostle](#)
- Charles Buck Dictionary [Apostle](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Apostle](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Apostle](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Apostles](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Apostles](#) [Paul the Apostle](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Apostle](#)
- Hawker's Poor Man's Dictionary [Apostle](#)
- Smith Bible Dictionary [Apostle](#)
- Webster Dictionary [Apostle](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Apostle](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Apostle](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Apostle Paul, the Apostle](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Apostle](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Apostle and Apostleship](#)

**Related Resources: John MacArthur has sermons on all of the apostles.**

- [Luke 6:12-13 Common Men, Uncommon Calling](#)
- [Luke 6:14 Common Men, Uncommon Calling: Peter, Part 1](#)
- [Luke 6:14 Common Men, Uncommon Calling: Peter, Part 2](#)
- [Luke 6:14 Common Men, Uncommon Calling: Peter, Part 3](#)
- [Luke 6:14 Common Men, Uncommon Calling: Andrew and James](#)
- [Luke 6:14 Common Men, Uncommon Calling: John](#)
- [Luke 6:15 Common Men, Uncommon Calling: Matthew and Thomas](#)
- [Luke 6:16 Common Men, Uncommon Calling: Judas Iscariot, Part 1](#)
- [Luke 6:16 Common Men, Uncommon Calling: Judas Iscariot, Part 2](#)
- [Luke 6:15-16 Common Men, Uncommon Calling: James, Simon, and Judas](#)
- [Matthew 10:2 The Master's Men Andrew, James Son of Zebedee, John](#)
- [Matthew 10:3 The Master's Men, Philip and Bartholomew](#)
- [Matthew 10:3b The Master's Men, Matthew and Thomas](#)
- [Matthew 10:3-4 The Master's Men James Son of Alphaeus, Simon Zealot](#)
- [Matthew 10:4 The Master's Men, Part 5: Judas Iscariot](#)

**QUESTION - [Who was Paul in the Bible? Watch the accompanying video.](#)**

**ANSWER** - There is much we can learn from the life of the apostle Paul. Far from ordinary, Paul was given the opportunity to do extraordinary things for the kingdom of God. The story of Paul is a story of redemption in Jesus Christ and a testimony that no one is beyond the saving grace of the Lord. However, to gain the full measure of the man, we must examine his dark side and what he symbolized before becoming “the Apostle of Grace.” Paul’s early life was marked by religious zeal, brutal violence, and the relentless persecution of the early church. Fortunately, the later years of Paul’s life show a marked difference as he lived his life for Christ and for the advancement of His kingdom.

Paul was actually born as Saul. He was born in Tarsus in Cilicia around AD 1–5 in a province in the southeastern corner of modern-day Tarsus, Turkey. He was of Benjamite lineage and Hebrew ancestry (Philippians 3:5–6). His parents were Pharisees—fervent Jewish nationalists who adhered strictly to the Law of Moses—who sought to protect their children from “contamination” from the Gentiles. Anything Greek would have been despised in Saul’s household, yet he could speak Greek and passable Latin. His household would have spoken Aramaic, a derivative of Hebrew, which was the official language of Judea. Saul’s family were Roman citizens but viewed Jerusalem as a truly sacred and holy city (Acts 22:22-29).

At age thirteen Saul was sent to Judea to learn from a rabbi named Gamaliel, under whom Saul mastered Jewish history, the Psalms, and the works of the prophets. His education would continue for five or six years as Saul learned such things as dissecting Scripture (Acts 22:3). It was during this time that he developed a question-and-answer style of teaching known in ancient times as

“diatribe.” This method of articulation helped rabbis debate the finer points of Jewish law to either defend or prosecute those who broke the law. Saul went on to become a lawyer, and all signs pointed to his becoming a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court of 71 men who ruled over Jewish life and religion. Saul was zealous for his faith, and this faith did not allow for compromise. It is this zeal that led Saul down the path of religious extremism.

In Acts 5:27–42, Peter delivered his defense of the gospel and of Jesus in front of the Sanhedrin, which Saul would have heard. Gamaliel was also present and delivered a message to calm the council and prevent them from stoning Peter. Saul might also have been present at the trial of Stephen. He was present for his stoning and death; he held the garments of those who did the stoning (Acts 7:58). After Stephen’s death, “a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem” (Acts 8:1). Saul became determined to eradicate Christians, ruthless in his pursuit as he believed he was acting in the name of God. Arguably, there is no one more frightening or more vicious than a religious terrorist, especially when he believes he is doing the will of the Lord by killing innocent people. This is exactly what Saul of Tarsus was: a religious terrorist. Acts 8:3 states, “He began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.”

The pivotal passage in Paul’s story is Acts 9:1–22, which recounts Paul’s meeting with Jesus Christ on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus, a journey of about 150 miles. Saul was angered by what he had seen and filled with murderous rage against the Christians. Before departing on his journey, he had asked the high priest for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for permission to bring any Christians (followers of “the Way,” as they were known) back to Jerusalem to imprison them. On the road Saul was caught in a bright light from heaven that caused him to fall face down on the ground. He heard the words, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” He replied, “Who are you Lord?” Jesus answered directly and clearly, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” (verses 4–5). As an aside, this might not have been Saul’s first encounter with Jesus, as some scholars suggest that young Saul might have known of Jesus and that he might have actually witnessed His death.

From that moment on, Saul’s life was turned upside down. The light of the Lord blinded him, and as he traveled on he had to rely on his companions. As instructed by Jesus, Saul continued to Damascus to make contact with a man named [Ananias](#), who was hesitant at first to meet Saul because he knew Saul’s reputation as an evil man. But the Lord told Ananias that Saul was a “chosen instrument” to carry His name before the Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel (Acts 9:15) and would suffer for doing so (Acts 9:16). Ananias followed the Lord’s instructions and found Saul, on whom he laid hands, and told him of his vision of Jesus Christ. Through prayer, Saul received the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17), regained his sight, and was baptized (Acts 9:18). Saul immediately went into the synagogues and proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God (Acts 9:20). The people were amazed and skeptical, as Saul’s reputation was well known. The Jews thought he had come to take away the Christians (Acts 9:21), but he had in fact joined them. Saul’s boldness increased as the Jews living in Damascus were confounded by Saul’s arguments proving that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 9:22).

Saul spent time in [Arabia](#), Damascus, Jerusalem, Syria, and his native Cilicia, and Barnabas enlisted his help to teach those in the church in Antioch (Acts 11:25). Interestingly, the Christians driven out of Judea by the persecution that arose after Stephen’s death founded this multiracial church (Acts 11:19–21).

Saul took his first of three missionary journeys in the late AD 40s. As he spent more time in Gentile areas, Saul began to go by his Roman name Paul (Acts 13:9). Paul wrote many of the New Testament books. Most theologians are in agreement that he wrote Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus. These thirteen “letters” (epistles) make up the “Pauline Authorship” and are the primary source of his theology. As previously noted, the book of Acts gives us a historical look at Paul’s life and times. The apostle Paul spent his life proclaiming the risen Christ Jesus throughout the Roman world, often at great personal peril (2 Corinthians 11:24–27). It is assumed that Paul died a martyr’s death in the mid-to-late AD 60s in Rome.

So, what can we learn from the life of the apostle Paul? First, we learn that God can save anyone. The remarkable story of Paul repeats itself every day as sinful, broken people all over the world are transformed by God’s saving grace in Jesus Christ. Some of these people have done despicable things to other human beings, while some just try to live a moral life thinking that God will smile upon them on the day of judgment. When we read the story of Paul, we are amazed that God would allow into heaven a religious extremist who murdered innocent women and children. Today, we might see terrorists or other criminals as unworthy of redemption because their crimes against humanity are just too great. The story of Paul is a story that can be told today—he isn’t worthy in our eyes of a second chance, yet God granted him mercy. The truth is that every person matters to God, from the “good, decent,” average person to the “wicked, evil,” degenerate one. Only God can save a soul from hell.

Second, we learn from the life of Paul that anyone can be a humble, powerful witness for Jesus Christ. Arguably, no other human figure in the Bible demonstrated more humility while sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ as Paul. Acts 20:19 tells us that he “served the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to [him] through the plots of the Jews.” In Acts 28:31, Paul shares the good news of Jesus Christ: “Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord

Jesus Christ." Paul was not afraid to tell others what the Lord had done for him. Paul spent all his days, from conversion to martyrdom, working tirelessly for the kingdom of God.

Finally, we learn that anyone can surrender completely to God. Paul was fully committed to God. In Philippians 1:12–14, Paul wrote from prison, "I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear." Despite his circumstances, Paul praised God and continually shared the good news (see also Acts 16:22–25 and Philippians 4:11–13). Through his hardships and suffering, Paul knew the outcome of a life well lived for Christ. He had surrendered his life fully, trusting God for everything. He wrote, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Can we make the same claim?[GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

## BY THE WILL OF GOD AND TIMOTHY OUR BROTHER: *dia thelematos theou kai Timotheos o adelphos*:

- Ro 1:1-note; 1Co 1:1 2Co 1:1, Ep 1:1-note, 2Ti 1:1-note
- [Colossians 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Colossians 1:1-2 Introduction to Colossians](#) - John MacArthur

### IF GOD WILLS

**By the will of God** - This phrase ought to be the watchword of every Christian, the "[warp and the woof \(weft\)](#)" undergirding all our daily activities, all our goals and aspirations, etc. It occurs 8x in the NT and all uses are by Paul - Rom 1:10; 15:32; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:5; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1

**By (1223) (dia)** is the Greek preposition **dia**, which means "through" and in this context describes that which "intervenes between the act of the will and the effect and through which the effect proceeds" (Zodhiates). Stated another way, **dia** describes the **channel** (God's will is the channel) of the **act** (Paul's appointment as an apostle). The will of God is the means by which Paul had become an apostle.

**Moule** - The will of God is regarded as the means of the Apostle's consecration, because with God to will implies the provision of the means of fulfilment. See Galatians 1:1 for the deep certainty of a direct Divine commission which underlay such a phrase in St Paul's mind. He knew himself to be "a vessel of choice, to bear the name" (Acts 9:15) of his Lord. ([Colossians 1 Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges](#))

**Guzik** - "Some of us could write, "pastor by the will of God" or "evangelist by the will of God" or "pray-er by the will of God" or "encourager by the will of God" or "supporter by the will of God." We all have our role to play, and God wants us to walk in it!

**THOUGHT**- If we are in ministry (and to one degree or other ALL of us are in ministry, some "unofficially" and some "officially") the question should resound in our ears "Am I where I am in ministry by His will or my will? It's a question pondering, for apart from Him we can do absolutely nothing of eternal value (Jn 15:5).

**Will (2307) (thelema [word study])** used of **God's will** in 49 of 64 NT uses, 3 uses relating to Jesus' humanity, 3 to the Father in the parables and only 9 uses referring to man's will) refers to a desire which comes from one's heart or emotions and is what one wishes or has determined shall be done. **Thelema** refers not to **will** which is conceived as a demand but an inclination of pleasure towards that which is liked, which pleases and creates joy. Thus God's **will** signifies His gracious disposition toward something, what God Himself does of His own good pleasure. **Vine** explains thelema in this verse this way "**thelema** of God often signifies His determined resolve; here, however, it expresses His gracious design. These meanings are to be discerned in the passages where His will has reference to the lives and conduct of believers, as, e.g., in 1Th 4:3 and 1Th 5:18."

Here in Col 1:1 **thelema** refers to God's gracious disposition. The point is that Paul was not a self made minister but one called by God because that is what God determined should come to pass. How easy it is to miss His **will** in this life and instead to "kick against the goads" building "mud pie ministries" when we could be bearing much fruit, proving that we are His disciples (Jn 15:8) and letting our "light shine before men in such a way that they may see (our) good works, and glorify (our) Father Who is in heaven". (Mt 5:16-note)

**Thelema** - 62x in 58v - **NAS** = desire(1), desires(1), will(57).Mt 6:10; 7:21; 12:50; 18:14; 21:31; 26:42; Mark 3:35; Luke 12:47; 22:42; 23:25; Jn 1:13; 4:34; 5:30; 6:38, 39, 40; 7:17; 9:31; Acts 13:22; 21:14; 22:14; Ro 1:10-note; Ro 2:18-note; Ro 12:2-note; Ro 15:32-note; 1Cor 1:1; 7:37; 16:12; 2Cor 1:1; 8:5; Gal 1:4; Ep 1:1-note, Ep 1:5-note, Ep 1:9-note, Ep 1:11-note; Ep 2:3-note; Ep 5:17-note; Ep 6:6-note; Col 1:1-note, Col

1:9-note; Col 4:12-note; 1Th 4:3-note; 1Th 5:18-note; 2Ti 1:1-note; 2Ti 2:26-note; He 10:7-note, He 10:9-note, He 10:10-note, He 10:36-note; He 13:21-note; 1Pe 2:15-note; 1Pe 3:17-note; 1Pe 4:2-note, 1Pe 4:19-note; 2Pe 1:21-note; 1Jn 2:17; 5:14; Rev 4:11-note.

**Timothy (5095)** (**time** = worth or merit of some object + **theos** = God) means "honoring God." The Greek word for "honor" (time) has in it the ideas of reverence and veneration. What a great name Timothy had and as best we can discern from Scripture he lived up to it!

**McClintock** - Timotheus as the name is given in the AV. (Timothy occurs 24 verses in NT = Acts 16:1; 17:14-15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; Ro 16:21; 1Cor 4:17; 16:10; 2Cor 1:1, 19; Phil 1:1; 2:19; Col 1:1; 1Th 1:1; 3:2, 6; 2Th 1:1; 1Ti 1:2, 18; 6:20; 2Ti 1:2; Philemon 1:1; Heb 13:23), one of the most interesting of Paul's converts of whom we have an account in the New Test. Fortunately we have tolerably copious details of his history and relations in the frequent references to him in that apostle's letters to the various churches, as well as in those addressed to him personally . ([See Complete Entry](#))

**Hoehner** - **Timothy** is joined with Paul as a coauthor in the salutation here, as also in 2Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; 1Thess 1:1; 2Thess 1:1; Philemon 1:1. (Cornerstone biblical commentary, Vol. 16: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon)

**Turner** adds that "**Timothy**, who was not an apostle and did not have Paul's authority, was considered by Paul to be his equal when it came to servanthood. (Quoted from Apple's [Philippians Commentary](#))

**Matthew Henry** offers an interesting thought that "Though Paul was alone divinely inspired, he joins Timothy with himself, to express his own humility, and put honor upon Timothy. Those who are aged, and strong, and eminent, should pay respect to, and support the reputation of, those who are younger, and weaker, and of less note."

In the letter to the Thessalonians Paul refers to "**Timothy**, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ." (1Th 3:2). Paul gave him a lofty testimony writing "Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid; for **he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am.**" (1Cor 16:10) In the letter to Philippi Paul gave him a warm, wonderful description writing "I have no one else of **kindred spirit** who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare." (Phil 2:20-note) where the Greek word for kindred spirit is **isopsuchos** (**isos** = equal + **psuche** = soul, mind, life) and literally means one of equal soul, one who is like-minded, one who is of similar character and energized by the same motives. **Timothy** was indeed a man after Paul's own heart, one in thought, feeling, and spirit with Paul and his love for the church of Jesus Christ. Mathematically speaking their "triangles were congruent." The idea is that Timothy thought like Paul and had a similar perspective so that he would likely interpret a situation much like Paul would if he had been present. Paul could rely on any report from Timothy as being similar to one he himself would have brought back. If you have a "Timothy," then count yourself as greatly blessed. If you are a "Timothy" to a "Paul," then may God be greatly praised!

#### Related Resources:

- [Who was Timothy in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Timothy - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- [Timothy - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)
- [Timothy - Bridgeway Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Timothy - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Timothy - Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible](#)

**Our brother** (80)(**adelphos** from the prefix **a** = denoting unity + **delphús** = womb) is literally one born from same womb, but used figuratively to describe close association of a group of persons having well-defined membership and in the context of the New Testament clearly refers to fellow believers in Christ and so in the family of God and thus united by the bond of affection. Brother speaks of the intimacy of fellowship -- Do you ever refer to your fellow Christians as "Brother?"

**Barclay** - With himself Paul associates Timothy; and he gives him a lovely title. He calls him the **brother**, a title which is given to Quartus (Romans 16:23); to Sosthenes (1 Corinthians 1:1); to Apollos (1 Corinthians 16:12). The fundamental necessity for Christian service and for Christian office is brotherliness. Premanand, highborn Indian who became a Christian, tells in his autobiography of Father E. F. Brown of the Oxford Mission in Calcutta. E. F. Brown was every man's friend; but he was specially the friend of the hackney carriage drivers, the carters, the tram conductors, the menial servants, and the hundreds of poor street boys. Later in his life, when he was travelling about India, Premanand would often meet people who had stayed in Calcutta, and they would always ask for E. F. Brown, saying, "Is that friend of the Calcutta street boys still alive, who used to walk arm-in-arm with the poor?" Sir Henry Lunn tells how his father used to describe his grandfather: "He was a friend of the poor without patronage, and of the rich without subservience." To use our modern idiom, the first necessity for Christian service is the ability to "get alongside" all kinds of people. Timothy is not described as the preacher, the teacher, the theologian, the administrator, but as the **brother**. He who walks in aloofness can never be a real servant of Jesus Christ. ([Colossians 1 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

Elsewhere Paul refers to "**Timothy, my son**" (1Ti 1:18) and "Timothy, my beloved son" (2Ti 1:2-note) suggesting a father-son relationship in the spiritual realm.

**THOUGHT** - The spiritual relationship between Paul and Timothy begs the question "Do you have a brother in Christ who you would call your spiritual father and discipler?" In 2012, as we see the modern church in America being led by younger, more energetic men, the crucial question to ponder if you are one of those younger men is this -- "Do you have a Paul (discipling me) and a Barnabas (encouraging me)?" I see a hesitancy or reticence on the part of many younger church leaders (men and women) to actively seek out a mature older person to disciple them and I am not sure why this is occurring. If this describes you, it is a mistake, for Solomon wrote that "The glory of the young is their strength; the gray hair of experience is the splendor of the old." (Pr 20:29NLT) W A Criswell commented "Young men delight to show strength and agility of body; whereas in old age physical strength is often replaced by wisdom and experience (Pr 16:31)."

<b>PAUL AND TIMOTHY: AN ABBREVIATED CHRONOLOGY</b> (Note: Not exhaustive & dates are approximate)		
<b>47AD</b>	Paul's <a href="#">first missionary journey</a> took him to <a href="#">Lystra</a> , probably Timothy's home town, so that Timothy either witnessed or heard of Paul's stoning	<b>Acts 14 esp Acts 14:19</b>
<b>49AD</b>	Paul's <a href="#">second missionary journey</a> again to <a href="#">Lystra</a> , where Paul chose Timothy to come with him	<b>Acts 16:1, 2, 3</b>
<b>49AD</b>	Timothy followed Paul as they trekked westward across Turkey to Philippi where Timothy witnessed Paul and Silas being beaten and imprisoned for the sake of the Gospel	<b>Acts 16:22, 23</b>
<b>55AD</b>	1Corinthians written - Paul sends Timothy his beloved, faithful "child" in the Lord to remind them of his ways	<b>1Co 4:17</b>
<b>61AD</b>	Philippians written - excellent summary of Timothy's character based on over 10 years as a co-laborer in Christ	<b>Php 2:19, 20, 21, 22</b>
<b>66-67AD</b>	Paul's last written communication was to Timothy	<b>2 Ti 1:1, 2</b>

When we study Paul's epistles we see that each has a dominant theme. In Romans, it is justification by faith. In Ephesians, it is the mystery of Christ and his Church. In Philippians, it is the joy which Christ brings. In Colossians, it is the absolute supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as the Head of all creation and of the Church. There is no book in the New Testament, including John's Gospel, which presents such a comprehensive picture of the fullness of Christ as found in Colossians. Accordingly, there is no writing better-equipped to draw our hearts (our minds, our desires, etc) upward than the book of Colossians.

### **PAUL'S POWER FOR MINISTRY**

**How was Paul able to minister in such a powerful way?** And recall that Paul commands us to **continually imitate him** (1Cor 11:1-note), so it would be a good thing to know what energized Paul! While I admit that I am speculating somewhat (especially because NT dating is not known with absolute certainty), I think it would fall into the category of "*sanctified speculation!*" Let's look at a key event in Paul's life described in 2 Corinthians 12:1-10. In 2 Cor 12:2 Paul wrote "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago-- whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- such a man was caught up to the third heaven." Who is that man? Surely this is Paul's personal testimony describing an event in which he was "raptured" (same verb [harpazo - Latin Vulgate translates it "rapturo"] used in 1Thes 4:17-note) into the Third Heaven (2Cor 12:2), to [Paradise](#) (2 Cor 12:4), and because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, he was given "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet" him (no one knows exactly how this was manifest) to keep Paul from exalting himself. (2 Cor 12:7). And after praying three times for the Lord to take away the thorn (2 Cor 12:8), **Jesus** responded by teaching us a truly life changing truth...

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for (My)**power** (dunamis) is perfected (made to reach its intended goal) in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the **power** (dunamis) **of Christ may dwell** (episkenoō) **in me**. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor 12:9-10-note)

**See Related Article on Divine Dunamis**, discussing the Spirit of Jesus Who energizes and empowers every believer for life and ministry.

And so we see that the Lord Jesus clearly equates the **grace** that is in Him (Jn 1:14-note, Jn 1:16-17-note) with the **power** to live a supernatural life (cp Jn 10:10). And what is the key that unlocks the door to that **abundant life**? Our weaknesses (plural)! This is one of the great truths of Scripture and as with most of the profound teachings of the Bible, it is totally antithetical to the way the world thinks. The world says "*up*" is the way to power, but Jesus says "*No, down is the way to My power!*" Grace flows down, as we humbly bow at the foot of the Cross (cp James 4:6-note).

And so why did I make the presumptive statement that this passage unlocks the secret for Paul's dynamic ministry (and for us who are called to imitate him -1Cor 11:1-note)? The answer requires some comparison with the chronology of the major events in Paul's life.

Recall that Second Corinthians was written about **56AD**, but Paul's being caught up to the third heaven and Paradise occurred 14 years earlier (2Cor 12:2-3), roughly **42AD**, which would have been **after his conversion** (Acts 9:1-9) but **before his 3 great missionary journeys**.

I will submit that Paul never "shed" that *thorn* in his side and that in a continual state of weakness he was continually in a state of supernatural strength (power) wrought by the grace which is in Christ Jesus (2Ti 2:1-note). Paul knew about **grace** and **power** and he knew Timothy and all disciples that would follow would need to depend on the same power source! The highly respected commentator Warren Wiersbe makes a similar statement declaring that 1Cor 15:10 was "**the secret of Paul's great ministry**," and while I totally agree (read that verse and note the repeated word!), the event which led to Paul's utter dependence on God's grace for ministry occurred in Second Corinthians 12. As always I encourage you to be a Berean (Acts 17:11-note). I could be wrong, but I can't wait to ask Paul in the future if this was the pivotal event (after his conversion of course) that fueled his dynamic distribution of the Gospel of Jesus throughout most of the Roman Empire.

Below is an overview of the approximate chronology (Bible does not give specific dates) of Paul's life...

**32AD** - Stephen's stoning Acts 7:58, 8:1

**33AD** - Persecution of church (Acts 8:1-3; Phil 3:6)

**34AD** - Paul born again on the Road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9) Goes to Damascus (Acts 9:10-19) Acts 9:22 says "Saul kept increasing (endunamoo in the imperfect tense) in strength."

**35AD** - Travels to Arabia where he spends 3 years (Gal 1:17note - most authorities say this event occurred between Acts 9:22 and Acts 9:23 - note phrase "when many days had elapsed")

**46AD** - Barnabas travels to Tarsus in order to seek Saul (Acts 11:25)

**56AD** - Second Corinthians Written

## BACKGROUND ON COLOSSAE and GNOSTICISM

**Colossae** was located about 80 miles inland from the city of Ephesus, in the Lycus River Valley, in what is today the western part of Turkey (click on map below to enlarge or more photos of Colossae click HolyLandPhotos.org

- [What is Christian Gnosticism?](#)

Click [this map](#) for the geographic relationships of **Laodicea** ("justice of the people" - [description](#)), **Hierapolis** ("holy city" - see [description](#)) and **Colossae** ("punishment" - see [description](#)). Located about a hundred miles east of Ephesus, its nearest neighbors were Laodicea (ten miles away) and Hierapolis (thirteen miles away). ... In Paul's day it was only an insignificant market town." (Vaughan) In fact Lightfoot said, "Colossae was the most unimportant town to which Paul ever wrote a letter." "An unimportant town



maybe, but surely not an unimportant people!" (Bell)

The tributaries of the Lycus River brought a calcareous deposit of a peculiar kind that choked up the streams and made arches and fantastic grottoes. In spite of this there was much fertility in the valley. At one time Colossae was one of the prominent towns of the valley. Herodotus describes Xerxes' march westward in 480 B.C. writing that "He came to Colossae, a great city of Phrygia situated at a spot where the river Lycus plunges into a chasm and disappears. Antiochus III (223-187 B.C.) transported about two thousand Jews from Mesopotamia to Phrygia and Lydia (Jos., Ant., 12:147-53). By the NT era Colossae was a small town in the shadow of its nearby neighbors, Laodicea and Hierapolis. Apparently the Colossian church came into being during Paul's ministry in Ephesus, because Acts 19:10 says that Paul remained in Ephesus "for two years, so that **all who lived in Asia** heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." Thus a new, thriving church sprouted in Colossae though Paul had never been there himself. Although the specific word is not mentioned by Paul, most scholars agree that Paul wrote Colossae to counter the growing influence of **Gnostics (Gnosticism)** who considered themselves of superior knowledge who could help "lesser" ones attain deeper spirituality. **Gnosticism** is from **gnosis**, "to know" and thus Gnostics were the "people in the know" who considered themselves the spiritual elite. According to them, it was by knowledge as opposed to faith, that humanity was to be regenerated. Faith was suited only to the rude masses, the animal-men. **Gnostics** held the basic doctrine that matter (physical or created) was evil and that only the spirit was good. They reasoned that God could not be involved in creation, because being perfect he could not touch matter which was intrinsically evil. Therefore, the world came into being through a complicated process as God put forth thousands of emanations (or lesser gods), each of which was a little more distant from him, so that finally there was an emanation (a little god) so distant from God that it could touch matter and create the world. Of course, this lesser god of creation was so far removed from the ultimate God that it was evil. This reasoning led to the belief that Jesus Christ, if he really was the Son of God, could not have taken on a human body because matter is evil. This delusion spawned the Gnostic lie that Jesus was only a ghost-like phantom. To the Gnostics, Christ was **not** Creator, the Incarnation was **not** real, and Christ was **not** enough! So the Gnostics built a system by which one could begin with Christ and work one's way up the series of emanations to God. In Colossae, this system (**gnosis**) appears to have consisted of ascetic disciplines (Col 2:20-23-note), mysticism, and legalism, all complex and proudly intellectual.

**Kenneth Wuest** - "From these philosophical speculations, two opposing codes of ethics emerged, **arigid asceticism** and an **unrestrained license**. The problem confronting the Gnostic was as follows: Since matter is evil, how can one avoid its baneful influence and thus keep his higher nature unsullied? The answer, according to one group, was a rigid asceticism. All contact with matter should be reduced to a minimum. Thus, the material part of man would be subdued and mortified. One should live on a spare diet and abstain from marriage. The edible flesh of animals was forbidden. The anointing of the body with olive oil, so necessary in hot climates, was prohibited. But with others, such a negative course of procedure produced but slight and inadequate results. These argued that matter is everywhere. One cannot escape contact with it. Therefore, one should cultivate an entire indifference to the world of sense. One should not give matter any thought one way or the other, but just follow one's own impulses. (this sounds all too modern doesn't it?)...This group argued that the ascetic principle gives a certain importance to matter, and thus he fails to assert his own independence to it. The true rule of life is to treat matter as foreign or alien to one, and as something towards which one has no duties or obligations, and which one can use or leave unused as one likes. This philosophy led to **unbridled license**...Paul warns every man and teaches every man in every wisdom, that he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. The word "perfect" was the term applied by the Gnostics to members of the exclusive group which possessed the superior wisdom. The Gnostics made much of **wisdom (sophia)**, **intelligence (sunesis)**, and **knowledge (epignosis)**. Paul takes up the language of the Gnostics and translates it to the higher spheres of Christian thought. Against the false wisdom of the Gnostics, the apostle sets the true wisdom of the gospel. The initiatory rites of these Gnostics in which certain were inducted into their order, were **secret mysteries**. Paul sets over against these the fact that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in that comprehensive mystery, the knowledge of God in Christ. Paul had also to combat the Gnostic teaching of successive emanations from deity, the **angelic mediators** who were responsible for the act of creation, and for the headship of the spiritual creation, which took the place of the Lord Jesus as Creator of the universe and Head of the Church. The apostle meets these false doctrines by showing that "all things were created by Him," and "He is Head of the body, the Church." As to the teaching of the Gnostic to the effect that the divine essence is distributed among the angelic emanations from deity, Paul declares that the **pleroma**, or plenitude of the divine essence is permanently at home in the Lord Jesus. For the totality of the divine essence, the Gnostics had this word **pleroma**, "fulness" or "plenitude." Paul says that Jesus Christ is not only the chief manifestation of the divine nature. He exhausts the God-head. In Him resides the totality of the divine powers and attributes. From the necessities imposed upon Paul by the character of the Gnostic heresy, it is easy to see that as Bishop Lightfoot says: "The doctrine of the Person of Christ is here stated with greater precision and fulness than in any other of St. Paul's epistles."

#### Other Resources on Gnosticism

- [Gnostics - Charles Buck Theological Dictionary](#)
- [Gnosticism - CARM Theological Dictionary](#)
- [Gnosticism - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)

- [Gnosticism - Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible](#)
- [Gnosticism - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)
- [Gnostics - Watson's Biblical & Theological Dictionary](#)
- [Gnosticism - 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica](#)
- [Gnosticism - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- [Gnosticism - Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature](#)
- [Gnosticism - The 1901 Jewish Encyclopedia](#)