

**PAUL**  
**Colossians 1:1**  
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**August 27, 2019**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

- a. Today we are beginning a new sermon series through the book of Colossians.
- b. We need examples of the Christian life. It is not enough just to know what to believe and how to live. We need see how other people before us have carried out the teachings of Christianity in real life.
  - i. The stories of the Old Testament saints were written down as examples for us. 1 Corinthians 10:11
  - ii. Jesus came to exemplify the Christian life. John 13:15
  - iii. Paul told the pastors, Timothy and Titus, to set a godly example for their churches. 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7
  - iv. This is why reading Christian history and Christian biography can be so edifying.
- c. Today we are going to learn about the Christian life by studying the example of the apostle Paul.

**II. TEXT**

- a. **Colossians 1:1-2** 1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and Timothy our brother: 2 To the saints in Christ at Colossae, who are faithful brothers and sisters. Grace to you and peace from God our Father.
- b. Colossians is a letter; also called an epistle.
- c. These two verses are called the salutation, or the greeting. They are constructed like typical greetings from that time.
  - i. The author's name (every one of Paul's letters begins with the same word: Paul).
  - ii. The name of the recipient: "the saints in Christ at Colossae"
  - iii. A few words of greeting.
- d. Paul wrote 13 of the 27 books in the New Testament. To understand the New Testament, we must understand Paul.
- e. Verse 1 contains six facts about Paul.

### III. 6 FACTS ABOUT PAUL

#### a. His name is Paul.

##### i. Name:

1. When we are first introduced to Paul in the book of Acts, his name is Saul.
2. Paul was his Greek name; His Jewish name was Saul (named after the first king of Israel).
3. After his conversion to Christianity, he no longer goes by Saul, but Paul (beginning with Acts 13:9).
4. Saul means "asked of God."
5. Paul means "little."

##### ii. Paul's Story:

##### 1. Background:

- a. Paul was probably born around the time of Jesus. He might have been a few years younger than Jesus.
- b. Born in Tarsus (Acts 22:3), a province of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). Tarsus is about 12 miles north of the Mediterranean Sea.
- c. Raised in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3).
- d. Roman citizen from birth, which means that his father was a Roman citizen (he either bought it, or it was given to him). Acts 22:25-28
- e. Paul's father was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6), as was Paul. The Pharisees were the strictest Jewish sect.
- f. Paul was trained as a Pharisee under Gamaliel, a very famous rabbi and Pharisee noted for his great learning (Acts 5:34 says he was "respected by all the people"). Gamaliel was the president of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish governing body) for quite some time. This would have been like going to college at Harvard.
- g. Thus, Paul was a very zealous Jew (Acts 22:3).
  - i. **Galatians 1:14** "I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries among my people, because I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors."

## 2. The Persecutor:

- a. Our first introduction to Paul (Saul) in the book of Acts is of a persecutor of Christianity. When the Jews stoned and killed Stephen (the first Christian martyr), he was responsible for watching their garments (Acts 7:58).
- b. **Acts 8:1** "Saul agreed with putting him to death."
- c. Immediately following the martyrdom of Stephen, a great wave of severe persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and Saul seems to have been the leader (Acts 8:1-3).
- d. **Acts 8:3** "Saul, however, was ravaging the church. He would enter house after house, drag off men and women, and put them in prison."
- e. See also Acts 9:1-2; Gal 1:13-14; Phil 3:4-6

## 3. Radical Conversion:

- a. On the road to Damascus, Jesus Christ appeared to Saul. **Acts 9:3-9**
  - i. 3 As he traveled and was nearing Damascus, a light from heaven suddenly flashed around him. 4 Falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"
  - 5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul said.
  - "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting," he replied. 6 "But get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."
  - 7 The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the sound but seeing no one. 8 Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing. So they took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. 9 He was unable to see for three days and did not eat or drink.

- b. Blinded, Paul went into Damascus and fasted for the next three days.
  - c. Then God sent a Christian named Ananias to Saul to pray for him. **Acts 9:15-16** 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for this man is my chosen instrument to take my name to Gentiles, kings, and Israelites. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."
    - i. God indicated two things about Paul's future:
      - 1. He was God's chosen instrument to preach to Gentiles, kings, and Israelites.
      - 2. He would suffer much for God.
- 4. Preaching and missionary work:
  - a. Immediately after his conversion, Paul began preaching about Jesus Christ, and he did not stop until his death (Acts 9:20).
  - b. Paul went on three missionary journeys through much of the Mediterranean world.
- 5. Suffering for Christ:
  - a. After returning to Jerusalem with an offering for the needy church there, he was falsely accused by some Jews (Acts 21:27-29), savagely beaten by an angry mob (Acts 21:30-31), and arrested by the Romans. Two Roman governors, Felix and Festus, and Herod Agrippa, did not find him guilty of any crime, but pressure from Jewish leaders kept him in Roman custody.
  - b. After two years in Roman custody, he appealed his case to Caesar.
  - c. After a horrible trip, including a violent two week storm at sea that culminated in a shipwreck, Paul reached Rome.
  - d. Eventually he was released for a brief period of ministry, and then arrested again and suffered martyrdom in Rome (AD 65-67) (2 Tim 4:6).

- e. Paul described some of his suffering for Christ in **2 Corinthians 11:24-27** “24 Five times I received the forty lashes minus one from the Jews. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked. I have spent a night and a day in the open sea. 26 On frequent journeys, I faced dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers at sea, and dangers among false brothers; 27 toil and hardship, many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, cold, and without clothing.”

6. Death:

- a. According to tradition Paul beheaded and died in Rome a martyr at the hands of Nero between AD 65-67.

**b. He wrote a letter to the Colossians.**

- i. Paul wrote a total of 13 letters that became a part of the canon of Scripture.
- ii. What is the background of the epistle to the Colossians?
  - 1. The city of Colossae was in the Roman province of Asia (present day Turkey), about 100 miles east of Ephesus.
  - 2. Paul had never been to Colossae (or had never met the believers there). While he was ministering in Ephesus for three years, a man from Colossae named Epaphras was saved. Epaphras then took the gospel back to his hometown and started the church at Colossae (Acts 19:10; Colossians 1:7).
  - 3. The church was being infiltrated by heretical ideas. So Epaphras traveled to Rome, where Paul was under house arrest, and told Paul about the problems. Paul then wrote this epistle and it was delivered by Tychicus and the slave Onesimus, who was on his way back to his master Philemon, a member of the Colossian church (Col 4:7-9).

4. Colossians is known as one of the prison epistles (or captivity epistles), because Paul wrote it while he was under house arrest in Rome (his first imprisonment in Rome). These include Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon. Paul was living in his own rented house, where for two years he was free to receive guests and to share the gospel with visitors (Acts 28:30).

**c. He was an apostle of Jesus Christ.**

i. What an apostle?

1. Greek: *Apostolos*, one who is sent out. A person sent by another; a messenger; an envoy.
2. Paul meant something more: He was claiming to be one of the official representatives of Jesus Christ, chosen personally by Him to lead His mission and to write down His message for others.
  - a. Jesus had many disciples, but twelve were hand-picked and appointed to be His apostles.
3. 4 Qualifications of an Apostle:
  - a. They personally saw the Lord and were able to testify of him and his resurrection from personal knowledge. **Acts 1:21-22** “Therefore, from among the men who have accompanied us during the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us — 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day he was taken up from us—from among these, it is necessary that one become a witness with us of his resurrection.”
  - b. They were personally called to the office of apostle by Christ.
  - c. They were infallibly inspired, and thus secured against all error and mistake in their public teaching, whether by word or by writing. **John 14:26** “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.” See also Jn 16:13; Lk 10:16

- d. They were given the power of working miracles to validate their message and authority. Mt 10:7-8
- 4. Who were the apostles?
  - a. “The twelve” (Mt 10:1-5). Minus Judas Iscariot. Plus Matthias (Acts 1:21). Plus Paul (Acts 9:3-20), who had a later revelation of the risen Christ and was commissioned. Plus James, the Lord’s brother, who saw Jesus after the resurrection and was apparently commissioned as an apostle (1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19).
- 5. There is a second meaning of the word *apostolos* in the New Testament. It can also be translated messenger. These messengers were Christians who were sent out by churches on special assignments, such as Barnabas (Acts 14:14); Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25); Silvanus and Timothy (1 Timothy 2:7; see also 2 Cor 8:23).

ii. Lesson:

- 1. Some people claim to be apostles today, but the special office of apostleship no longer exists. Only those who had been with Christ, witnessed the resurrection, and were specifically chosen by Jesus qualify for that title.
- 2. However, in its most basic sense, all Christians are apostles of Christ Jesus. The word “apostle” simply means one sent with a special message or commission (New Unger’s Bible Dictionary). We are all sent by Jesus to share the message of the gospel with the world around us.
- 3. **John 20:21** Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you.”
- 4. Are you acting like an apostle – one who has been sent out by Christ?

**d. He was an apostle by God’s will.**

- i. Remember that Paul had never been to the church in Colossae; he had never met the Christians there. So from the very beginning of his epistle he emphasizes his authority to teach and correct them. He says that he is:
  - 1. An apostle – an official representative chosen and sent by Jesus Christ.

2. By God's will – He did not choose to be an apostle; God chose Him and sent Him out.
- ii. Paul knew God's will for his life. Do you?
- iii. What is God's will? God's will is what God wants for you.
- iv. 2 Characteristics of God's will:
  1. God's will is good, pleasing, and perfect. **Romans 12:2** "the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God."
    - a. It is *good* because it benefits others when you follow it. Proverbs 14:34
    - b. It is *pleasing* because it benefits you when you follow it. Isaiah 48:17; Matthew 7:21
    - c. It is *perfect* because it is holy, pleasing God when you follow it. Psalm 18:30
  2. God's will can be known. **Colossians 1:9** "For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we haven't stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,"
- v. What is God's will for you?
  1. To be sanctified (your growth and maturity in holiness – moral blamelessness). **1 Thessalonians 4:3-4** "For this is God's will, your sanctification: that you keep away from sexual immorality, 4 that each of you knows how to control his own body in holiness and honor."
- vi. What is God's specific will for your career and relationships?
  1. Devote yourself wholeheartedly to that part of God's will that you know, and He will guide you to the part of His will that you do not know.
  2. **Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT)** "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take."

**e. He was assisted by Timothy.**

- i. "and Timothy our brother."
- ii. Timothy was either under house arrest with Paul, or he was staying with Paul, or he was with Paul when he wrote the letter.
- iii. Who is Timothy?



1. He was from the town of Lystra (present-day Turkey). He was probably converted during Paul's first visit. This is why Paul called him his son in the faith (1 Tim 1:2).
2. On Paul's second missionary journey, the churches in Lystra and Iconium encouraged him to take Timothy along as an assistant (Acts 16). From then on Timothy became Paul's closest coworker.
3. Timothy is an inspiring figure:
  - a. He was dedicated to Christ's interests, not his own.
    - i. **Philippians 2:20-22** "20 I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare. 21 All the others care only for themselves and not for what matters to Jesus Christ. 22 But you know how Timothy has proved himself. Like a son with his father, he has served with me in preaching the Good News."
  - b. He was willing to suffer for Christ, as evidenced by his circumcision:
    - i. Timothy was only half Jewish. His father was a Gentile, which meant that he wasn't circumcised as a child. But when Paul decided to take him along as an assistant, Paul wanted Timothy to get circumcised so that he would be qualified to preach to both Jews and Gentiles. Timothy went through with it. Now that's devotion!

iv. Lesson:

1. How devoted are you to the cause of Christ? Are you will to do whatever it takes to reach the lost, even if it means suffering?

**f. He referred to Timothy as "our brother."**

- i. Why did Paul refer to Timothy as "our brother"?
  1. Not biologically, but spiritually. Throughout the New Testament, believers are called brothers and sisters.

2. **Colossians 1:2** “To the saints at Colossae, who are faithful brothers and sisters.”
- ii. What makes believers brothers and sisters?
  1. We have been adopted into God’s family. Adoption is one of the results and blessings of salvation.
  2. **John 1:12** “But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name”
- iii. What are the benefits of adoption? (4)
  1. We have the best Father – the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. 2 Corinthians 1:3
  2. We are no longer slaves to sin and Satan. Galatians 4:7
  3. We no longer need to fear God’s wrath. Romans 8:15
  4. We have a new family – many brothers and sisters. Ephesians 2:19
- iv. What are the responsibilities of adoption? (3)
  1. To imitate our Heavenly Father. Ephesians 5:1. Children should resemble their parents.
  2. To obey our Heavenly Father. 1 Peter 1:14
  3. To love our brothers and sisters. 1 John 3:14

#### **IV. LEARNING FROM PAUL’S EXAMPLE (9 Lessons)**

- a. Continue to serve God despite adversity. 2 Timothy 4:5
  - i. Even though Paul was in jail, he still found ways to serve the Lord, by sharing the gospel with visitors, by writing letters.
  - ii.
- b. Make the most of your time for Christ. Ephesians 5:15-16
  - i. Paul was under house arrest, but he didn’t just sit and sulk. He found ways to make the most of his time. He wrote four letters that became Scripture while in jail.
- c. Be humble or you will stumble. 2 Corinthians 12:7
  - i. Paul was a very humble man. He believed that he was the least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle, and that he was the least of the saints, and the worst of sinners (1 Cor 15:9; Eph 3:8; 1 Tim 1:15). Yet to ensure that Paul did not succumb to pride,

God gave Paul a “thorn in the flesh.” This reveals the importance of humility, and the danger of pride.

- d. Don't wait to start serving the Lord.
  - i. **Acts 9:20** Immediately he began proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues: “He is the Son of God.”
- e. Don't expect your devotion to keep you out of trouble. 2 Corinthians 11:24-25
  - i. Paul suffered greatly for Christ and was eventually martyred.
- f. Dedicate your life to sharing the gospel.
  - i. **Acts 20:24** “But I consider my life of no value to myself; my purpose is to finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God's grace.”
- g. Don't let your circumstances steal your joy.
  - i. **Philippians 4:4** “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”
- h. Be content with where God has you.
  - i. **Philippians 4:11** “... I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself.”
- i. Do not rely upon good works for salvation.
  - i. **Ephesians 2:8** “For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift”

## V. CONCLUSION

- a. Paul set a great example for us.
- b. Who is watching you?
- c. What kind of example are you setting?