

Colossians 1:1-2

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[0 : 00] Well, last week we concluded our verse-by-verse exposition of Mark's Gospel account. And this week we're going to begin our study of Paul's letter to the church at Colossae.

! So if you will, please with me, turn to the book of Colossians. Know that I say this often, and I say it because I mean it, but also for the sake of those who haven't heard me say it before, I'm immensely thankful to be part of a church that values verse-by-verse exposition. It has value for a number of reasons.

Firstly, we need to hear all that the Word of God has to say to us. It is His inspired, sufficient, authoritative Word, and none of it's unimportant. All of it is incredibly important.

I think it's helpful in our study verse-by-verse to help you better learn how to study the Bible for yourself. Me and others that help here, taking week-by-week and helping you place in context various texts of Scripture. We hope in doing so that we're looking at in a broad sense what other parts of the Scripture have to say. So as we're going through a New Testament epistle, for example, to pull in the Old Testament references and speak of them well, I know it's good for me because it keeps me from having pet topics that I preach upon all the time or being able to skip over hard things in the Scriptures, which I so very much want to do some weeks, but yet the schedule is before me and the task is at hand. And so just to reiterate to you the value and importance of that, as we're about to begin another verse-by-verse exposition of a book of the Bible, in this case, Colossians. I want you to know that my singular goal in today's sermon is to get you excited about what God would have to say to us in our study of Paul's letter to the Colossian believers, that it has relevance and meaning bearing on our lives as we work through this in the coming months.

[2 : 22] Colossians, as part of God's holy writ, has a great deal of significance for us today. But in order for us to fully appreciate that significance, we must rightly understand the original intent. So we'll begin our study by asking a series of questions of the letter.

Question number one. Who wrote Colossians? Now in the very salutation in verse one, we see that the letter was written by Paul. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy, our brother. Some people say that Colossians was written by Paul and Timothy. It's possible that Timothy was the scribe, the one who was actually writing down a secretary, so to speak, as Paul spoke the words to him. But certainly, we see the use of plural pronouns, we, throughout the text. It is a proper assumption to think that Paul is referring to himself and Timothy when he says we, but also much use of the singular pronoun I. It was right to understand that Paul himself is the ultimate author of this text. Colossians 4.18, he says, I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. So potentially, the very closing of it, he himself wrote out to emphasize that it was, in fact, a letter from him. Now there are some arguments against Paul's authorship, but they're so very weak that they're not worth mentioning in this setting and at this time. You are welcome to study that. I have some books you can borrow on it if you would care to, but they're incredibly weak arguments. Church history, certainly contained within the text itself, is the name of Paul, the context in which he writes, the way that your scriptures actually are organized as has to do with who they believe wrote this letter. If you like with me, turn to your table of contents in your copy of God's Word. For those of you who don't know, your scripture is not arranged chronologically, but rather categorically. In the New Testament, it's hard to find that table of contents, isn't it? Probably a good sign. It means you know your Bible if you can't find your table of contents.

If you look at your table of contents, we have in the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. These are the gospel accounts. They're historical accounts of the life, death, resurrection, ascension of Jesus Christ, and then the book of Acts, which is also, some people rightly call it the acts of Jesus Christ or the acts of the Holy Spirit, but also a historical narrative of the things that happened after Jesus' ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit. You then can see Romans,

down through 2nd Thessalonians. These are Pauline epistles, letters that Paul wrote to specific churches. The church at Corinth, the church at Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, Thessalonica. Then you have the pastoral epistles, also written by Paul, 1st and 2nd Timothy, letters written to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. And then Hebrews, which is a letter written to Jewish believers, but we're not sure who in fact authored it. Some believe that Paul did, some do not, and no one can quite agree on this, and we're all okay with that. So we stick it there. It's kind of the dividing point after Paul's writing, the book of Hebrews. And then from there on you have other epistles by various apostles, and then finally the book of Revelation by John. So that's why it's organized in this fashion, and how Colossians finds itself in the midst of the Pauline epistles. And it's important for us to know, to rightly understand the book itself. Who wrote it? Paul wrote it. Clay said for us very well last week, so I won't get into all of the details of it, but when we believe that the Word of God is the inspired Word of God, that it was written by God Himself, that it's breathed out, that it's exhaled out by Him, that God did not circumnavigate the personalities and the context of the writer himself. So we've got to know who Paul is, and why he would have written in the particular way that he wrote as he was being carried along by the Spirit. So who wrote Colossians? Paul. Secondly, when and where was Colossians written? When and where? And you might wonder why I ask it in that way. When and where?

The question of when is largely dependent on the answer to the question where. Colossians is a prison epistle. It was written from a prison cell, from a sentence that was given to Paul. Imprisonment is mentioned in chapter 4, verse 3, and chapter 4, verse 18, as well as some form of suffering, but we can rightly assume the suffering in a prison mentioned in chapter 1, verse 24. So the debate about when really has to do with which imprisonment. Paul was imprisoned a number of times, and we have to know which imprisonment it was to rightly set the field for when, in fact, it was written. The wide scholastic agreement, and again, there are some varying arguments, a little stronger than some of the arguments against Paul's authorship together, but there's some other arguments, but again, not worth getting into. The wide scholastic agreement is that it is most likely written during Paul's Roman imprisonment, which dates the letter at approximately 62 AD, which had been around the same time that the letter to the Ephesians and to Philemon were written, right? So AD 62, from Roman imprisonment some thousand miles away from Colossae. So when and where, written in Roman imprisonment around AD 62.

[8 : 33] Thirdly, to whom was Colossians written? A little easier off the top, we can answer fairly quickly the church at Colossae, chapter, or excuse me, verse 2, chapter 1 of the salutation, to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae, but it's good and important for us to understand a few things about this city before we proceed in our study. Colossae was located in the Lycus River Valley of West Central Asia Minor, and if you want to later look at a map, this is in modern-day Turkey, approximately in the center of modern-day Turkey. It's important to know that Paul did not establish the church at Colossae, but it was likely the fruit of his three-year ministry in Ephesus, Ephesus being about 120 miles west of Colossae. The text tells us in chapter 1, verse 7, that Epaphras was the one who came and spoke the Word of God to the people of the Colossian church. So it's presumed that Epaphras traveled to Ephesus, became a convert to Jesus Christ while he was there, and then, as a proper disciple of Jesus Christ, went home and made disciples and founded a church back in his hometown of Colossae. Colossae, at one time, before Paul's time, was a very significant city. In fact, it had become famous for a particular high-quality dark red wool that was actually known as Colossian wool, and you can find references to that in other historical works. It was located at the crossroads of two major highways going through the region. But before Paul's time, the Romans moved the road to pass through Laodicea, which was 12 miles to the west of Colossae, and Hierapolis, which was 15 miles to the northwest. They built a bypass, so to speak, and sort of left Colossae off the map, and so it had declined in its prominence. In fact, it was a rather insignificant city altogether in the days of Paul.

J.B. Lightfoot, this rather famous commentary on Colossians, wrote, Colossae was the least important church to which any epistle of St. Paul was addressed.

So, a rather insignificant church as regards the spread of the gospel, because the city itself was rather insignificant. Those of you who live in Dahlonega and Dawsonville, even though 400 miles right through the middle of Dawsonville, may be able to relate to this. Those of you who live in Gainesville have no idea what's being talked about, because it is the chicken capital of the world.

Really, all fairly insignificant in the large scheme of things. And our little church can feel that way at times. Rather insignificant, hidden behind the hill on the side of Highway 60 South, with a deteriorating sign, which is going to be fixed very soon.

Who are we that we should even have the Word of God put before us, that God might speak to us from this letter today. All the same, even though the church at Colossae seemed fairly insignificant, note Paul's care for them as a church, and for all the churches for that matter. Colossians 2, verse 1 and 2, he says, For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ. He has a great struggle, a contest, or a battle, because he has great concern for any who claim the name of Jesus Christ. His suggestion by all of this is that there is no insignificant extension of God's redemptive work in the world, that if you are a body of Christ, then you are His, and therefore very significant. The city itself, because of the region in which

[13:01] Colossae was located, would have been primarily Gentile. And for those of you who don't know, this would just simply mean not Jewish. This area particularly would have been Greek. But there was also likely a significant Jewish population. Josephus, a Jewish historian in antiquities, said that Antichius the Great settled 2,000 Jewish families in the area in 213 BC. So a little over 200 years ago, a massive number of Jewish families were moved and settled in the area. So it was likely also a very Jewish populated region. So both a mix here of Jew and Gentile in the area. So that's who it was written to, the Colossians. Number four, why was Colossians written? Why was Colossians written? Now the letter itself makes no explicit claim about its purpose. However, the warnings contained within make it clear that it is intended to encourage the Colossians to resist some kind of erroneous teaching that's going on at the time. The actual teaching itself is not stated. We don't know for sure. And there's a lot of conjecture about that. There were a number of heresies floating around in that day. An example of one would be Gnosticism. Certainly there seems to be some Gnostic elements in the heresy, but we can't say for sure that it was the Gnostics that were teaching in the area. So there's this mix of heresy going on, and Paul seems to be writing to correct those things. Many people believe that, as we know, Epaphras is with Paul at the writing of this letter. You can see that in chapter 4, that Epaphras has actually traveled to see Paul in Rome, where he's in prison but in a house arrest kind of a situation. So he's able to go and see him, and Paul, hearing about the trouble that's happening in this church, writes them to help do away with some of these heresies. Due to the population of Colossi being made up of both Gentiles and Jews, it is no surprise, or it shouldn't be, that this heresy contains both Jewish and pagan elements. I'll tell you what I mean. Firstly, the pagan elements, the false philosophy of the Greeks. The Greeks loved knowledge. They worshipped knowledge. And they prided themselves in the sophistication of their philosophical systems.

If you study philosophy, you're going to study the Greeks as college students. They actually believed that the Gospel was too simplistic. It was too easy. It wasn't worthy of believing in because it wasn't complex enough. Some evidence of that is in Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians 1, 22 and 23. For Jews demand signs, and Greeks seek wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, right? The simple message of the Gospel. Christ crucified. A stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles. It was so simple that it was silly in their thinking. Colossians 2, verse 4. Paul says, I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. And in chapter 2, verse 8, see to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world and not according to Christ. So you've got this false philosophy of the Greeks. You also have this Judaistic legalism happening as well. The Colossian heretics embraced elements of Jewish ceremonialism. They taught that circumcision was necessary for salvation. They also taught rigid self-denial and harsh treatment of the body. Things like keeping the Jewish dietary laws and observing holy days. Chapter 2, verse 16. Paul writes, therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. And verse 18, let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in details about visions puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind. So both radical groups suggested that salvation necessitated Christ plus something else. And we'll get into the details of what those something else's were in our coming study together. But all of them were saying Jesus Christ crucified was not enough. You must have Christ plus something else. And this

is what Paul seeks to set straight. So question five, what does Colossians teach? What does Colossians teach? What is the overarching theme of the letter? Because certainly it teaches many things. But thematically, what is Paul trying to communicate to the Colossian believers and us today? The sufficiency and supremacy of Jesus Christ.

The sufficiency and supremacy of Jesus Christ. Says it in this way, this kind of perfectly sums it up. Christ is all. Christ is all and in all. Chapter 3, verse 11. He is God. Chapter 2, verse 9. He is the creator.

Chapter 1, verse 16. Jesus is the savior. Chapter 1, verse 20 and 2, 13 through 14. He is the head of the church. Chapter 1, verse 18. And kind of wrapping it all up in chapter 1, verse 18. That in everything, Jesus Christ is supreme.

[18 : 52] Chapter 1 has much to do with the vision and mission statement of Christ's family church, desiring that in all things, Jesus Christ would be shown as supreme.

So the sufficiency and the supremacy of Jesus Christ. That He is all and in all. That He is enough. So last question, how does Colossians pertain to us?

We've got some background settings, some general broad understanding of the book itself and the writer, the people that were receiving it. So how does it then pertain to us? What is the relevance for us today?

Because certainly we don't deal with the exact same heretical teachings. No one's coming into this congregation and suggesting that you must be circumcised to be a Christian. The heresies of our day are much different, but the doctrines taught in Colossians speak to all of our falsehoods as well. We live in a day when science seeks to explain away the very existence of God. A day when the deity of Jesus is widely questioned.

[20 : 06] When the truth of God is being laid aside for a false unity amongst the religions of the world. We live in a day when grace is peddled cheaply.

We live in a day when followers of Jesus think they don't need the church or that it is acceptable to merely show up to a congregational meeting to consume a presentation rather than being a part of the life of the body of Christ.

We live in a day when the definition or role of the family is being redefined and redistributed. And Colossians speaks to all of these things and some more.

It's timely for us because it answers all of these with absolute authority as Paul's letter to the church at Colossians is Scripture and should be treated as such.

This is the word of Almighty God for us. And with all of that in mind, I'm now going to read the entirety of the letter to you.

[21 : 07] Now, I know that some of you may be already going, oh my word. It only takes ten minutes. It's a rather short epistle. It contains within it some phenomenal truth for how short it is.

It certainly has had more impact on the church for its length than probably any other of Paul's epistles. It is important that we publicly read the Scripture.

After today, certainly no one can say that we don't read the Word of God in our meetings together. Remember that the way this would have been received would have been a letter on a piece of parchment and it would have been read to a congregation meeting much the way we are today. Many people would have been illiterate. They definitely wouldn't have had a copy of it in front of them. I'm going to read from the English Standard Version. If you have a copy and you'd like to follow along, feel free.

If you don't, it might be better for you just to listen to what's being said. To imagine yourself in that day living in a time with much heresy running around and trying to hear what it is Paul has to say to set all of that straight.

[22 : 18] This would have always been taken together and sometimes we're so damaging to the Word of God because we piecemeal it up. Because we pull excerpts from here, we pull excerpts from there, and we ignore the greater context of what's happening.

And so there's some value in us seeing it collectively together this morning. So here we go. I'll do my best to read it well to you so you can follow along. Colossians 1.1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and Timothy our brother to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae, grace to you and peace from God our Father.

We always thank God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ when we pray for you since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope laid up

for you in heaven.

Of this you have heard before in the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing as it also does among you since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant.

He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

[23 : 51] May you be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him.

And he is before all things and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

[24 : 55] And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he is now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.

To them God chose to make known how great among you Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea. For all who have not seen me face to face, for their hearts may be encouraged, excuse me, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments, for though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

[26 : 38] Therefore, as you receive Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in Him who is the head of all rule and authority. In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God who raised Him from the dead.

And you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.

This He set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in Him. Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.

These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by His sensuous mind and not holding fast to the head from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

[28 : 18] If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations, do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, referring to things that all perish as they are used, according to human precepts and teachings?

These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these, the wrath of God is coming.

In these you too once walked when you were living in them, but now you must put them all away, anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

[29 : 28] Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices, and have put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and in all.

Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

And above all these, put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything for this pleases the Lord.

[30 : 46] Fathers, do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged. Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye service as people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a master in heaven.

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us that God may open to us a door for the word to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison, that I may make it clear which is how I ought to speak.

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

[31 : 49] Tychicus will tell you about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts.

And with him, Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you, they will tell you of everything that has taken place here. Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you.

And Mark, the cousin of Bartimus, concerning whom you have received instructions, if he comes to you, welcome him. And Jesus, who is called Justice, these are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort for me. Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Heropolis. Luke, the beloved physician, greets you, as does Demas. Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea and to Nympha and the church in her house. And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church at Laodicea and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. [33 : 01] And say to Archippus, see that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord. I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

So this is how it would have been read originally to the church at Colossae. And this is God's word to us written for His glory and our good.

We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. Let's look in conclusion at the first two verses in just a bit more detail and then we'll close out our time together.

Let me read to you again Colossians 1, 1, and 2. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and Timothy, our brother, to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father. A very familiar salutation. Most of Paul's openings were very similar to this. He establishes first off that he is an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.

[34 : 07] And I believe he intends to do two things here. Firstly, that this is an expression of his entire theological perspective that all things happen by the will of God.

You remember that Paul was once Saul, a very zealous persecutor of the church of Jesus Christ. That he had every intention of imprisoning all that he could who claimed to follow Jesus.

He was on his way to do this very thing when Jesus encountered him on the road to Damascus. You can read about that in Acts 9, 1-9. Took hold of him.

Changed his very personhood in these moments. According to Paul, God works all things according to the counsel of his will. It's Ephesians 1, 11.

I believe he's trying to say his entire theological perspective that if things come to pass, they come to pass by God's will. I would not be an apostle of Jesus Christ.

[35 : 08] I would not be a follower of Jesus Christ if it had not been for God's intervention. I would not stand before you this morning caring at all about what Paul had to say to the church at Colossae if it were not for God's intervention in my life.

If God had not turned me from an enemy to a friend by the will of God. We are what we are.

Secondly, he needed to make very clear to the Colossians and to us their and our obligation to listen to him.

He was an apostle. Capital A Apostle. A sent one. Sent directly from Jesus Christ. Had spent time with him. Had been taught by him.

This is a special category in church history. There have not been apostles since. Little A sent into the world, but not capital A. Falling in this lineage of Jesus' apostles and Paul.

He was set apart for missionary service by the Holy Spirit. Acts 13.2. Commissioned with this calling. He authored the vast majority of the New Testament.

[36 : 21] He has the authority from God to speak to us. So Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.

And then in verse 2, he greets the saints and faithful brothers. And these are not two distinct groups. He's kind of piling up description of the people at the church at Colossae.

They're merely qualifiers of the same group. Saints, the Greek word, refers to separation. These are people who have been set apart from sin and set apart to God.

These are people who have been changed. No longer sinners in need of a Savior, but people who have received a Savior. They are now in a new category. Saints. And the fact that they're faithful brothers notes the source of that separation, which is saving faith.

They had believed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is the way and the only way in which God saves mankind. The great issue with mankind is that we're separated from God because of sin.

[37 : 30] Our activity says to Him that we hate Him and His ways. And we must have somebody pay the price for that sin on our behalf. That is the person of Jesus Christ.

All of this is also by the will of God. Paul writes in Ephesians 2 verses 8 and 9, For by grace you have been saved through faith.

And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

If you don't know that to be true of yourself this morning, please heed the warning. You are being swept downriver, surely to be taken over a large waterfall that will crush you at the bottom if you were not saved saved by Jesus Christ.

Galatians 6.14, Paul says, But far be it for me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

[38 : 40] Paul, saved by the will of God, set apart, commissioned as an apostle, wrote this book to the Colossian believers, and it has been canonized now as an inspired work of the Lord God Almighty for us to receive in these coming months.

So we have a background, a summary, and a theme for Paul's letter to the Colossian believers. And we have some bearing on the salutation.

I hope that you will join me with your mind and with your heart in these coming months by praying for our study, praying for one another as we receive God's Word to us, by attentively listening, by being active listeners, taking notes, really applying your mind to the text that's before us, and then taking that truth and taking it from this place and living by it for the glory of God.

Let's pray together. Amen.