

COLOSSIANS 1:1-2 | PAUL'S GREETING

VERSE 1 – BLACK

The apostle Paul joined together with Timothy in writing Colossians. Colossae was a city in Asia Minor (Turkey) not far from Laodicea.

Paul is very specific about his apostleship:

- It is of Jesus Christ by the will of God.
 - Not of man - Galatians 1:11-12
- It is not of the same category as the 12
 - The 12 were sent to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom, a message of repentance - Acts 2:38-40
 - The 12 were under the leadership of Peter - Matthew 16
 - The 12 would have 12 thrones, judging Israel - Matt 19:28
 - The 12 were to preach Christ as the Messiah, coming to judge Israel and rule over the nations - Acts 3:19-21
 - The 12 were sent to teach obedience to the Law for Israel - Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 21:19-20
 - Paul was the recipient of a mystery revelation, not a prophetic revelation - Ephesians 3:2-3
 - Paul magnified his ministry over that of the 12 - Romans 11:13

The emphasis of Colossians is the preeminence of Jesus Christ. Christ is seen in His heavenly realm, not in His earthly walk (as in the Gospels) or in His future reign (as in the Prophets and Revelation).

VERSE 2 – BLACK

Paul addresses two groups: **saints and faithful brethren**. But are they two groups or could they be one and the same?

The "Granville Sharp Rule" states that when one definite article is used for two nouns (such as **saints** and **brethren**), then those two are the same. Here, only one definite article is used. However, that definite article is used for *those in Colossae*. If we kept the same word order as the Greek, it would read: *To the Colossians; saints and faithful brethren*. Thus, neither **saints** nor **faithful brethren** has a definite article, only *those in Colossae*. Thus, the Granville Sharp Rule does not apply.

Saints are those to whom has been promised the earthly Kingdom, and thus they are set apart as *holy ones*. The **faithful brethren** are believers under Paul's gospel, wholly separate from Kingdom promises.

Since we have a two-fold audience, we must work at **rightly dividing the word of truth**, as Paul instructed in 2 Timothy 2:15. In doing so, we will use the following color-codes for the Scripture:

- Black: We believe that the words are to the Saints or so specific to a context as to prohibit us from applying the words directly to our dispensation.
- Green: We believe that the words were not intended for our dispensation, but no harm would be implemented if we were to carry out the instruction. We should not use these words as the basis for our doctrine.
- Blue: We believe that Paul is writing these words to believers in the dispensation of grace and thus they can be used directly for our doctrine and instruction.

Like all of Paul's messages to churches, he began with a prayer of **grace** and **peace**. The message of this mystery age is one of grace and peace. Judgment and War was the only real message that could be given from the Old

Testament, which foreshadowed a rejection of the King and did not anticipate a pre-Kingdom age of grace. Compare Revelation 19:11.

COLOSSIANS 1:3-8 | THE REPORT FROM EPAPHRAS

VERSE 3 – BLACK

The first-person plural pronoun **we** is a reference to Paul and Timothy. This will be assumed to be true throughout the epistle unless context states otherwise. The authors express **thanks** and let the Colossians know that they are **praying always** for them.

VERSE 4 – GREEN

There are three things that cause Paul to **give thanks** and to be **praying always** (v. 3) for the Colossians. Two are mentioned in verse 4.

1. Their **faith**. Paul was not rejoicing in their health, wealth, or prosperity, or even their happiness or peace, but in their faith. They were saved by grace (v. 2) through faith (v. 4).
2. Their **Love...to all the saints**. The Colossian church was one that understood the promises God made to Israel, and thus had a love for the saints.

VERSE 5 – GREEN

Continuing from verse 4,

3. The **hope which is laid up for you in heaven**. While all the Jewish Apostles spoke of a coming *earthly blessing*, Paul speaks exclusively of *heavenly blessings* for the body of Christ. Compare to 1 Corinthians 13:3, which teaches that **faith, hope, and charity** are all that remain after the end of the era of the Kingdom offer when prophecies "become useless" (Young's Literal) and tongues cease.

VERSE 6 - GREEN

Which Gospel made it to **all the world**? It certainly wasn't the Gospel of the Kingdom, which the Apostles were to take "to the remotest parts of the earth," as such Gospel clearly never made it or the end of the age would have come (Matt 24:14).

Did the Gospel of grace make it to **all the world**? Was Paul exaggerating?

- Romans 1:5
- Romans 16:25-26
- Colossians 1:23
- Ephesians 3:9

How did Paul accomplish this? Read the book of Acts and his epistles closely to see the boldness, strength, and unfettered determination which he displayed.

What happened? Sadly, A darkness came even before Paul's death - 2 Timothy 1:15.

Largely without exception, those who come to know the Gospel of grace as Paul delivered it find that it **bringeth forth fruit** in their own lives. Before understanding Pauline truth, our faith may have been shallow, confused, and without direction. After learning **the grace of God in truth**, fruit began to form.

VERSES 7-8 – BLACK

The Colossians not only heard of **the grace of God in truth** (v. 6), but they **also learned of Epaphras**. We are not given circumstances, but almost all of us can think of someone we met *because we learned the grace of God in truth*.

From this verse and 4:12 it appears that Epaphras may have been the pastor of the church or a deacon (the word δίακονος [*diakonos*] is translated **minister**).

Epaphras is also mentioned in Philemon 1:23 in connection with Philemon and the church that met in his house. Philemon's companion (possibly son, or the pastor of Philemon's church), Archippus is mentioned in Colossians 4:17. In the light of the references to Philemon's family, it is possible that the church of Colossae met in Philemon's home (Philemon 1:2). It is also possible that either Epaphras or Archippus could have been the Pastor. All is speculative.