**The Apostle Paul - Colossians 1:1-2 - COL.003**

The apostle Paul was the apostle who has been recognized by God to be the missionary to the Gentiles with the Word of God to them. For three years he was in Ephesus, a base of information to the conversion of many people in the Lycus Valley, a hundred miles east of the city of Ephesus. There were the Colossian Christians. Somebody brought them the Word and they became believers. The Christians in Colossae were being contaminated, however, by some false doctrines. The Colossian Christians were very foolishly accepting the heresies which were given to them, and the apostle was countering that. Paul himself, we pointed out, was born one to three A.D. in Tarsus of Cilicia in Asia Minor. He lived in a very cosmopolitan town. It was a place of commerce and of learning, and it was the capital of Cilicia. Paul's father was a Roman citizen, so Paul was born free as a Roman.

**Paul’s education and background**

He was from a family which was in the business of making tents, and he learned the business of tent making. Paul was born into a very strict Pharisee family, would obey the Mosaic law, and Paul himself was a devoted student of Judaism. After studying at the University of Tarsus, which was no small city, he tells us that Paul went to Jerusalem to continue his higher education. He studied in Jerusalem under the famed Jewish Rabbi Gamaliel. Though his Hebrew religion was never contaminated by the Greek culture or the philosophy that he knew so well, he totally immersed himself in a religion of rituals and of good works. Unfortunately, he was not saved. He was not a man who had faith in the Messiah that was to come. Paul was a strong opponent, as a matter of fact, of Christianity and of the person of Jesus Christ. He pursued a course of persecuting Christians as a service to God. In Acts chapter 22:3-5, Paul says, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers being zealous for God just as you are all today. And I persecuted this way, referring to Christianity, to the death, binding and putting both men and women Into prison as also the High Priest and all the council of the elders can testify from them. I also received letters to the brethren and started off to Damascus in order to bring even those who are there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.”

**Paul meets Jesus on the road to Damascus**

So, Paul was not only determined to be a very faithful Judaizer, but he considered it his responsibility before God to bring those Christians who even were not out of the city of Jerusalem back into the city to be punished. Paul believed that Jesus Christ was a false messiah. He was convinced that Christ was an imposter who has now been dead. And His disciples have pretended that He was raised by the fact that they simply stole Him. Paul was brutal in his persecution of the Christians, and he pursued them in the surrounding cities to return them to Jerusalem in chains. However, Paul met Jesus Christ one day on the road to Damascus and was instantly converted as Jesus identified Himself from heaven to Paul.

Paul had created his own reality about Christ, and now that false reality simply crashed down on his head. Paul had lacked the spiritual reality that consequently made him out of touch with reality. And when you're out of touch with reality, you're crazy. That is the primary feature of a person who is insane. They're out of touch with reality, and Paul was out of touch and, therefore, he was a determined oppressor of the believers. Paul was told by Jesus Christ following his experience on that Damascus Road to go into the city where he would lodge in the home of a man named Judas. Judas was a representative of the Sanhedrin, and he was awaiting Paul's arrival. He lived on a street named Straight. Paul is physically blinded as he stands up from that experience with Christ. He goes to the home of Judas; he goes to the room, and he sits there meditating on what was happening to him.

He neither drank anything nor ate anything, Acts 9:12 tells us, for three days. Now came the time for the road back to reality. He is a blinded penitent. He goes to the guest room to fast and to pray and to meditate about Jesus. Paul is shocked about how wrong he had been about Jesus and what suffering he had brought to the Lord's people, the Christians, all in the name of religion. While he was overwhelmed by the enormity of what he had done, the love of Christ brought him great comfort. As the hours pass, Paul realized that he had been mentally wrong about Jesus, that he'd been emotionally hostile to God, and that he had opposed the will of God. While insane spiritually, Paul had no doubt that Jesus was the Messiah savior. Now he had no doubt that Jesus was alive because he had seen Him alive in heaven.

He knew that Jesus hung on the cross not as a sign of God's curse, but as a sign of His grace and love for Paul, the persecutor. The Old Testament law says that one of the signs that a person is under the curse of God, is that he hangs on the wood. That's the expression that was used. He is hung on the wood. He is hung out to die by putting him upon the cross as it were. And when Jesus was nailed to the cross, the Jews said, “There's your sign, there's your evidence that He is a malefactor. God opposes Him and God is bringing Him to judgment.” But Paul says, “No I was wrong. The reason He was on the wood was because He bore my sins.” So, Paul realized he had now absolute righteousness because of Christ hanging on that wood. He'd had this apart from any human doing, and it had nothing to do with the Mosaic law.

**Jesus sends Ananias to Paul**

Well, Paul sat up in that room waiting for instructions from Jesus. He wanted to learn all that he could upon the Lord. He was far behind everyone else that had associated themselves with the Lord. And, consequently, Paul was waiting for the next move. Now in another house in the city of Damascus lay a Christian whose name was Ananias. Ananias was half asleep when the Lord Jesus awakens him and tells him to go to the house on Straight Street, the home of Judas, where the apostle Paul is residing. Anais is shocked by this direction from the Lord because he knows that Paul was a murderous person who had come to a Damascus in order to attack the believers. So, Ananias argues with the Lord, but Jesus says that he is to be a chosen instrument for God's glory. And Ananias does what he's told.

Ananias arrives at the house where Paul is staying. He goes up to the room, meets Paul, and introduces himself. Ananias tells Paul that he has come to restore his sight to him. In Acts chapter 9, the incident is recorded for us. Acts 9:17-19 “Ananias departed and entered the house and after laying his hands on him, said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus Who appeared to you on the road by which you are coming, has sent me so that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales and he regained his sight, and he arose and was baptized, and he took bread and was strengthened. And Ananias tells Paul that Jesus will now teach him some very significant Church age doctrines. These would be recorded and that Paul, in time, would put these things down in writing, and they would become part of the New Testament scriptures.”

This is why Paul is such an enormously important man and the effect that he has on mankind because he was the primary agent of producing the New Testament scriptures. We read and he said, “The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the righteous one and to hear an utterance from His mouth for you will be a witness for Him to all men of that which we have seen and heard.” So, Paul was appointed to do a tremendous work in producing the scriptures. Ananias assured Paul that this would come to pass. Paul's destiny, furthermore, was to be a witness to Jews and Gentiles of all social levels and to bring them to salvation in Christ. Ananias baptized Paul in water to signify his new birth, and joy unspeakable and full of glory filled Saul's soul. He remained in Damascus with the Christians there for several days.

Acts 9:19 tells us, “Time came when he was ready to start witnessing and the impact of his testimony was significant. He stood in the synagogue of Damascus zealously proclaiming Jesus Christ as the resurrected God man, the Messiah savior of Israel.” The synagogue was going to be the point from which Paul would operate with the Jews. You could come into a synagogue, you were a Jew, you could stand up, you could speak to the audience. Paul took advantage of that system. And there he came into the congregation of the synagogue. Now everybody expected him to give his sermon about how terrible the Christians were and about how evil they were and about this blasphemous thing that they were doing, worshiping this man Jesus of Nazareth. But Paul's salvation testimony in the synagogue was something quite different. Instead, he proclaimed Christ as the Messiah of Israel.

**Paul stuns Jews by proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ**

And the people that had come to hear him and whose reputation has preceded him were stunned with disbelief by what they were hearing from him. The Jewish leaders were taken aback. The worshipers were in disbelief, and everything was in great turmoil because Paul was giving a totally different message. Acts 9:20-22: “And immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogue saying, He is the son of God. And all those hearing him continued to be amazed and were saying, ‘Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on his name and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priest?’ But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.” So right off the bat, Paul is saying Jesus is the Christ. He proceeded to prove it.

What a change! They had expected to hear from the Jerusalem High Priest representative. But, instead, they heard from a representative of Jesus Christ, Paul, in utter amazement. However, the Jews did not accept his testimony. That stunned him now. He was so sure that once he explained to them what had happened, what had taken place on the Damascus Road, that they would believe. There was no doubt in his mind that they would respond. As often we are when we give the word to people, when we speak to people that we are concerned with. And instead, they just simply dismiss what we say. We go to the word of God, and we say, “Here it is. This is what God has said.” And we think that having done that, there'd be no question people would believe. Instead, they just turned their backs upon it. And we have a hard time understanding how they can do that.

Well, Paul was really disappointed that the Jews did not accept his testimony because, after all, they knew him well. They knew how antagonistic he had been to Christians. He wasn't some nut. He was a man of education and knowledge and substance and devotion. They should have paid attention to him, but they did not. And the result was that what they decided to do was now to plot against him, to do away with him. So, Paul now realized that he needed to get away for safety. And, furthermore, to learn about Jesus Christ and His teachings. He knew a lot about the Old Testament, but he did not know things about the New Testament Church age truth. And that's why it is always a bad thing when people try to promote Christianity by bringing in somebody who becomes a Christian, and he's a famous entertainer, he's a famous athletic star, he's a famous something.

**Jesus teaches Paul the Church Age doctrine**

What do they do? We bring this person who knows nothing about the word of God to give a testimony that's going to convince people that this is the truth and that is not God's way. What the word of God says is don't say much of anything until you've had a chance to learn something so that you may speak about the things of God accurately. Then your testimony will be based upon the word of God, and you'll impress people. They will now have to deal with what God has said. So, the apostle here is in a position where he says, “I need to learn something.” The primary thing that he would be taught was the doctrine pertaining to the Church age. This was a totally different era now from Judaism. So, Paul joins the caravan that is going from Damascus to Arabia. And for three years the Apostle is taught Church age doctrine by the Lord himself.

**Paul studies grace**

Paul knew what the other disciples did not know. Peter, James, and John, the great Apostles, did not have the grasp of doctrines relating to the new age of the Church. In Galatians 1:17-18, Paul says, “Nor did I go up to Jerusalem, following his experience in Damascus, to those who were Apostles before me. But I went away to Arabia and returned once again to Damascus. Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him 15 days.” So, for some time the apostle stayed, it seems like three years in Arabia where Jesus Christ was teaching him what it means to be a Christian in the age of the Church, in other words, to function on the basis of grace. And his mind became saturated with grace principles of New Testament doctrine, and he made the transition gradually from Judaism to Christianity.

**Jews plot to murder Paul**

Finally, he was ready to move out, to fulfill his divine mission, to teach Christ to the Gentiles. The synagogue of the ancient world would become his point of contact with people in his missionary work. Paul, however, was not ready when he finished with the Arabian experience to go back to Jerusalem to meet the apostles. So, from Arabia, he went back to Damascus. The Jewish Christians there now warmly received him. Paul on the Sabbath day showed up in the synagogue; there he preached Christ Jesus Crucified, Risen, and Coming Again. He spoke to them on the basis of the Old Testament scriptures. And in a spirit of loving concern, his testimony bore fruit among the Jews. And that was the problem. These Jews were listening, paying attention, and they believed him. Some of the Jewish leaders in Damascus, therefore, came to the conclusion as they had done with Jesus. So, they're going to have to silence Paul by killing him. Acts 9:23-25. “And when many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, but their plot became known to Paul, and they were also watching the gates night and day so that they might put him to death. But his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.” The plan that they devised was that they would kill Paul outside the city when he left Damascus. And so therefore they put a watch on the gate so that they would be ready when he walked outside of the city. They had no authorization to kill him inside the city. They had no proper legal basis upon which to execute him. So, what they did was to wait until he was outside the city and, literally, they were just going to murder him.

But the plan became known. The Christians who knew the plot quickly took Paul and put him in a Christian home, a home which was on the wall so that when you open the window and you look down, you were looking over the wall down to the outside beyond the wall of the city. And that night they put him in a fish basket, probably one that they had scrubbed clean and hadn't used recently, but they literally stuck him in a fish basket and lowered him carefully out the window, down to the ground over the wall. While the assassins were back there watching the main gate, He was making a flanking movement in order to escape. And thus Paul, early in his missionary career, learned what it was to be persecuted for Christ. But he also learned what it was not to be forsaken by God.

**Paul escapes Damascus in a fish basket**

Suffering, yes; troubles, yes; hard times; yes. But victory assured. Paul, who had come to Damascus with pomp and power as a persecutor of the High Priest, left Damascus secretly in a fish basket lowered of all things by the very people he had come to destroy. How ironic and what a transformation! There was a big change in this man, and it was a change which to this day is a problem for the Jews. They read the history of this true and genuine and fervent Pharisee, and then suddenly he changes completely. And the Christ that he hated, he now loves. The Jews don't understand that, and they have a very great problem with him because he didn't just fade into the woodwork. Because of his intellect, because of his training, because of his ability, he became a powerhouse that spread the gospel throughout all the known world in that day and time following this escape. Paul returned to Jerusalem to meet with the Christians.

There they still feared him because they knew him by reputation. They thought perhaps he might be a spy for the Sanhedrin. Acts 9:26 says, “And when he had come to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples, and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.” People had heard of his so-called terrific, magnificent conversion, but then he dropped out of sight. All these years they hadn't heard anything more about him. So suddenly he shows up, and they're on guard. Finally, however, a man named Joseph Barnabas, a respected Christian leader, came to Paul's rescue by extending to him the right hand of Christian fellowship. Acts 9:27: “But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to him how he had seen the Lord on the road and that he had talked to him and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in a name of Jesus.”

So, Barnabas vouched for the genuineness of Paul's conversion, and he commended him now to the leader of the apostolic band. And Peter himself responded with a positive reception of Paul as a brother in Christ. Galatians 1:18. “Then three years later I came up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him 15 days.” Now this was a wonderful 15-day period for Paul because he was able to sit down with somebody for the first time who is an actual eyewitness of Jesus Christ. Paul had the disadvantage that he had never met Christ, he had never seen him, he had never listened to him, he had never dealt with him. Suddenly he's able to sit down with Peter, who could speak to him in detail about Jesus. And while Paul listened, he carefully matched what Peter said against the Old Testament scripture to confirm that what Peter was saying was true.

**Paul spends two weeks with Peter**

And the result was by speaking for this two-week period with Peter, he, in effect, had an eyewitness acquaintance with Jesus from Peter on which he would now base his own preaching. Because what Peter gave him was the very words of Jesus Christ accurately. The Jews did not paraphrase the scripture. The Jews consider that improper. To paraphrase what scripture said is to include man's words with the Holy Spirit's words. So, we are reluctant to use certain translations of scripture such as the NIV, the New International Version, because the New International Version is partly a paraphrase. It will throw words in that are interpretive. It will read, for example, the word Sarxs, which is the word *flesh*, and it will translate it as the sin nature. It'll do several things like that which is mostly true interpretation. It's accurate, and for some people it might be helpful, but it is borderline now that it is not an actual representation of what is in the original Greek and is not a regular translation of scripture.

Now of course, the most horrendous example of paraphrasing the word of God and putting in man's words with God's words is the Living Bible. The Living Bible is strictly a man who sat on the train between Wheaton and Chicago going to work daily. And as he rode along, he read the scripture, meditated upon it, got in mind what it said, and then said it in his words. And, in no way is that Bible the word of God. Now it's okay to read that and it's okay to publish it and sell it as long as you say that this is a commentary instead of calling it the Bible. So, Paul had, in effect, the same experience that he had sat there and listened to Jesus the way Peter did because Peter conveyed to him the great words of truth.

People in those days had a great capacity that they developed for memorizing. They had a great capacity for remembering details because they couldn't write things down. Paul received this instruction. He had, therefore, a kind of an eyewitness acquaintance and he received the words accurately. He didn't meet any of the other apostles. He did meet the Lord's half-brother James, who is the leader of the Church in Jerusalem. Galatians 1:19 tells us, “But Peter's the only real apostle that Paul met. Peter did not at this time fully grasp that the gospel was for the Gentiles.” Paul had already grasped that the gospel was for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. The incident at Joppa, which clarified this for Peter, was still something like seven years in the future. And Peter had not yet put this together to discover, to realize that the gospels for the Gentiles. Peter was still of the opinion that only the Jews were to receive this gospel message.

His brother, the half-brother of Jesus, James, was a very devoted Jewish leader. He was very devoted to the mosaic law in his Christianity. Well, Paul went about Jerusalem boldly proclaiming to these Jews with a Greek culture, we call them Hellenistic Jews. He proclaimed to them that Jesus Christ was indeed the Messiah. Acts 9:28-29: “And he was with them moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews, but they were attempting to put him to death.” Now the apostle Paul was capable, because of his background and education, to speak to the Hellenistic world. That was the sophisticated world. But he could talk to them. He had the background; he had the understanding,

and Paul was in Jerusalem proclaiming Christ. And the testimony concerning Jesus was, in effect, a continuation of what Steven had started. Stephen, who had been silenced *(killed)* with Paul's help.

Now of all things, Paul comes to Jerusalem, and he picks up where Steven left off. The Jews in Jerusalem did their thing that they always do. They proceeded to plot again to silence him. That has to be a big strain. Every time he goes someplace and proclaims the word of God, the next thing they want to do is to find a way to execute him. Acts 22:17-18: “And it came about when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple that I fell into a trance and I saw him saying to me, ‘Make Hast and get out of Jerusalem quickly because they will not accept your testimony about me.’” So, Jesus warns Paul that they're out to get him again. And Paul again was incredulous that the Jews would not be impressed with his testimony. Acts 22:19-20: Paul says, “And I said, Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in Him. And when the eyewitness of the blood of Steven was being shed, I also was standing by, approving, and watching out for the cloaks of those who were slaying him.”

**Jews do not accept Paul’s teachings**

Paul says, “I can't believe this. These people knew what my previous attitude was. How can they not listen to me? How can they not believe me when I tell them what has happened?” Well, Paul's Christian friends again came to his rescue. They hurried him off to the seacoast to Caesarea, got him on board a boat, and sent him back home to Tarsus to rejoin his family. And Paul's divine mission was now to the Gentiles. Acts 22:21: “He said to me, ‘Go for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’” And in effect this was saying, that's it with the Jews, I have given them a full opportunity. They won't listen to me; they won't take my testimony seriously. Now Paul begins to shift gears to the Gentile world. In the meantime, he comes back home, he resumes work in the family business of tent making, but now things are very strained because he's back in the presence of his Pharisee father who did not accept Jesus as Messiah and a strange situation naturally developed.

Paul, who had once been the pride and the joy of his family, was now an embarrassment to them and an outcast. Paul's ministry to the Gentiles of Tarsus was not welcomed by his family. It may be that at this time is when he received some of those scourings that he records in scripture. It was common that when somebody, a Jew in the synagogue community, was guilty of something that they considered her improper, they would simply whip him. He would be put under scouring by the leaders of the synagogue because anybody who would not behave in the proper way, was disciplined in this way. And it may be that his talk about Jesus, his insistence about His resurrection may have been part of the time when he was punished by these leaders when he was back home in Tarsus.

He was indeed hated for the sake of Christ, and he was suffering now as Jesus had told him that he would be. But Paul never denied the Lord and he did not compromise with Judaism. Paul spent this as a time of waiting, but he put it to good use because he spent his time now to develop a strong spiritual maturity structure in his soul. This had to be done for him to really be ready for his missionary work and the great demand that that would be. He was now talking; he was now organizing. He was writing out and codifying all the information that Christ had given him about Church Age truth. And he was getting his spiritual maturity structure in place and in operation. As was usual with the Pharisees, we think that he probably was married to a girl which was a custom in that day, and his wife either died or when he proceeded to return now to his missionary work, she may have abandoned him. She may have refused to go with him as a Christian. And that is a problem that off that sometimes happens when somebody becomes a Christian, they're married to somebody who's non-Christian or incapable of going with what is Christian. The apostle Paul gave us instruction I Corinthians 7, that if you find yourself as a believer, but you marry somebody who refuses to accept Christ. Now you find yourself one of the sheep of God associated in a close tie of marriage with a goat, and therefore your position is twofold. You stay with that person, and you live as peacefully as you can with that individual hoping that they will accept Christ and be saved. Otherwise if that person refuses to live with you as a Christian and abandons you, then you are free to walk away from that person. That's the principle of abandonment that then breaks a marriage bond.

**Paul’s later years and death**

So, we don't know why. We think probably by 30 years of age as a member of the Sanhedrin, it would be normal for Paul to be married. We don't know what his situation was because when he goes into his work, he no longer has a wife. Paul teamed up with Barnabas for his first missionary journey. He left from Antioch in Syria. He was especially now selected by an act of the Holy Spirit for this first missionary journey after all this time of preparation of several years. Acts 13:2-5, “And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me, Barnabas, and Saul for the work to which I've called them.’ Then when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to sous, to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cypress. And when they reached Seleucia, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they also had John as their helper.” John was related to Barnabas. Barnabas said, “Let's take John with us as a helper.” And so off they went. On the first missionary journey, Paul was recognized among the Apostles as one who had been chosen by God to be the special missionary to the Gentiles as Peter would be to the Jews. When Paul left on his first journey, he was about 44 years old. Many years of service, four missionary journeys later he was arrested for the second time in 66 AD. Tradition says that he was charged with treason against the divine emperor Nero. The consequence of his trial was that he was condemned to death. So, on June the 29th, 67 AD, the executioner’s sword came down upon Paul whose neck was on the chopping block. And as his mind ran over the long service that he had had for Christ the promises of suffering, but the glory which is to come. As he was pondering those things, the blade flash came down and his head was severed from his body, and instantly angels took his soul and spirit and carried them to heaven to Jesus. Suffering was over. Eternal glory had begun.

**Definition of apostle**

So, this is the man that we are dealing with in a brief review in such a simple statement in the book of Colossians, which begins with the name Paul. Paul, the significant person. And the next thing we are told about him in Acts 1:1 is that he is an Apostle. This was very important because this bore an authority. The word *apostle* looks very much like the English word Apostle. Apostelló (ap-os-tel'-lo) means a *messenger*. It means one who is sent on a mission. It is made up of two words, this word *apos*, which means from, and the word *stello*, which is a verb which means to send. So literally it means one who is sent forth, one who is a messenger. This was one of the temporary spiritual gifts in the New Testament era. It is listed for us in Ephesians 4:11 where we're told that one of the communication gifts is that of being an apostle. And he gave some apostles. The Gift of Apostle does not exist today.

One, it is one of the communication gifts which were given by God until a New Testament was written along with the gift of the prophet. It's a gift of the highest authority over local Churches. An apostle could walk into any Church and tell them what to do. An apostle had the very authority of Christ delegated to them. A pastor teacher has authority only in one single congregation. He has authority within that group of believers, but he has no authority in some sister Church that may be nearby. However, an apostle could walk in and exercise his authority anywhere and especially over the Churches that he had founded. So, Paul, this great and special man chosen by God through such a marvelous experience of salvation, was immediately constituted an Apostle, one of the spiritual gifts. And he's an apostle, we're told, of Jesus Christ. The apostles were the Lord's official witnesses. That's what the Apostle's duty was, to be an official witness. John 15:27 says, “And you will bear witness also because you have been with me from the beginning.” You could not be an apostle if you had not seen Jesus Christ alive and then seen Him raised from the dead. That was one of the prerequisites to being an Apostle. And you had to be with Him to have seen Him in life, to seen Him dead, to see that He was back alive again. Acts 10:39, and we are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. And they also put him to death by hanging Him on a cross. This was a testimony of the Apostles to what had been done to Jesus. Now this was sovereignly given. You cannot pray to have the gift of an apostle.

There are some Churches which claim that they have apostolic succession passing it on from one person to the next person. But that is not true. It's a spiritual gift. And like all spiritual gifts they have to be given by God himself. Paul reserves the title of Apostle; you'll see here only to himself. He is going to include his associate Timothy in this greeting. But it does not indicate that Timothy is an Apostle. Paul is an official Apostle. So, he writes on his own with divine authority, which the Colossian Church must obey. Paul is chosen by God to be an apostle and he was chosen to be that long before he was saved. So, the apostle is a gift of tremendous importance, and, therefore, what the Apostle Paul says is a true word of God. His letters that he wrote produced the New Testament scriptures, and they were under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and he was raised up to provide this.

Now the idea of being an apostle by some desire on your part today is false, as I say, because you have to be able to see Christ alive. And there are, therefore, no apostles today and no apostolic authority. Sometime ago in the past we had a lady who was visiting, who came out of one of the great denominations today, which has bishops, bishops who are apostles, apostles by the official laying on of the hands of other higher officials who have received their apostolic authority, and so on. And when I pointed out that there are no apostles today because there is no one today who has been alive to see Jesus Christ risen from the dead; therefore, they do not qualify and, therefore, there is no apostolic authority. There is no apostolic succession. And when she left that night, she really took issue with me. And I'm surprised and I said, “Well, I read the scripture to you tonight. You know that you had to see Christ alive from the dead to be an apostle, and there's nobody who can fulfill that requirement today.” And she, instead of saying, “That's right, thank you for enlightening me,” tossed her head and said something snide and walked out the door and crushed me because what was she faced with? She's part of a huge denomination. And when her bishop stands up, he speaks with authority of an apostle. And, as we have indicated, this is a very great authority. The closest thing you can come to being a Pope was to be an apostle, and, therefore, to claim that today is the arrogance and extreme. Now, the gift of the apostle is one of the things, therefore, that we need to understand because Paul has his authority, he can speak for God. We will look at that in more detail next time.

**Closing prayer**

God, our Father, we thank you so much for this, the word, for what we have learned, and for the great apostolic gift. We are thrilled by the life of the Apostle Paul.

**Dr. John E. Danish**