

Paul and Timothy are named in the salutation, but as the letter closes it is Paul who gives the greetings with his own hand. Timothy was a co-worker with Paul, loved and trusted. Read Paul's letters to Timothy and his commendation of Timothy to the Corinthians to understand that love and trust (1 Corinthians 4:17).

Paul was an apostle by the will of God. God had chosen Paul, as Jesus told Ananias in Acts 9:10-18. Paul was an apostle and Timothy a brother. An apostle had a unique place in the early church, and their work remains till now in the records of the New Testament. The work of all the apostles is not given but many of Peter and Paul's actions and words are recorded. Paul was unique in that he was 'untimely born' as an apostle, but he claimed that authority and proved it by his works (1 Corinthians 15:8; 2 Corinthians 12:11-12; 2 Peter 3:15). The office of 'apostle' was given for the guidance of the early church and is no longer present¹. The letter to the Colossians was penned by Paul as he was guided by the Holy Spirit. His authority as an apostle was given to him by God.

The letter was addressed to "saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse." The word 'saint' comes from the word also translated 'holy'. Each disciple of Jesus Christ is made holy by the blood of Jesus at the cleansing of their sin and is therefore a 'saint' (1 Peter 1:18-19; Acts 22:16). The term 'brethren' is simply the plural of brother, but like the generic 'man' it refers to brothers and sisters in Christ. We are brothers and sisters if we are 'in Christ' and Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers (Hebrews 2:11). What a blessed relationship! That relationship begins when one is forgiven of their sins (Acts 2:38). That happens when one is baptized into one body (1 Corinthians 12:13), and puts on Christ in baptism (Galatians 3:27). The response to God is to be from the heart (Romans 6:16-18) which includes the understanding of what is being done and faith in the person's heart to choose to give themselves to God. No person can obey for another: obedience is our individual response to God. Consider Peter's words of Acts 2:38-41 and his instructions for necessary actions after they demonstrated their faith by asking what they should do. These truths were and are universal.

Grace and peace. These are blessings which come from God through Jesus Christ. Jesus was the 'once for all' sacrifice which makes it possible for us to have the blessings of grace and peace (Hebrews 10:12). Without Him we would still be in our sin and apart from God (Romans 5:6-8; Ephesians 2:11-14). 'In Christ' we have received grace, or favor, from God and are at peace in Christ Jesus. Paul noted these blessings to the Ephesians (Ephesians 2). Grace and peace continue for the faithful! We can have grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16). Peace that passes understanding is the possession of the faithful child of God (Philippians 4:7). The Christian is no longer alienated but is a fellow citizen with the saints.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:1-3 NKJ

¹In 1 Corinthians 12-14 Paul was speaking of spiritual gifts. He noted that the gifts were 'in part' in providing revelation. Then when the 'perfect' had come the 'in part' would cease. The faith was 'once for all delivered' (Jude 3), so since that perfect had been delivered the 'in part' ceased. The apostles had no successors, and God did not intend for them to have successors. They finished the work given to them. Ephesians 4 has the same focus.