



## “WHAT IS AN APOSTLE”

1 Timothy 1:1

**Theme:** *Even the greatest among us must rely solely upon Christ Jesus to save them.*

**Introduction:** The authority of God’s Word is – an always has been – under assault, both by direct assertions that it is unreliable and by subtle attempts to erode confidence in it through questioning its origins and relevancies. People struggle with the teachings of Scripture because it runs contrary to popular opinion of conventional wisdom. Our culture is constantly questioning why it is that Christians are loyal to a document that is so “outdated, archaic, and out of touch” with societal development and cultural evolution. Secular humanists “know better” than to remain stuck in what is considered medieval, conscience-binding, obstructions to justice, freedom, and self-actualization.

In our text, Paul provides us with the ammunition to repel such thinking by establishing for us the absolute authority of what he is saying, the current obligations to what he said, and the eternal value of submitting to what is said. Timothy didn’t need the assurances that what Paul is writing is from God, but the rest of the church did. That Paul goes into establishing his credentials signals that what is written is designed to transcend Timothy, and even the church in Ephesus, and is designed for the eternal counsel of God to the church for as long as it exists. His ultimate point in these things is practical – it brings our attention not to him, but to the higher authority and to our ultimate hope that is in Christ Jesus. In doing so, Paul demonstrates that *even the greatest among us must rely solely upon Christ Jesus to save them.*

### I. THE AUTHOR WHO WROTE

#### A. His Identity in His Sin

1. **“Paul”** - author of this letter to the Galatians is a man who knew first-hand the power of the Gospel of God – it had transformed his life.
2. Before coming to Christ, Saul<sup>1</sup> of Tarsus was a religious devotee who sought to make up for the depth of his sin by the height of his religious achievements.
3. Saul spent his childhood & young adulthood being taught the intricacies of Judaism in Jerusalem – cp. [Acts 22:3](#).
4. He is described as a man who was small in stature – his very name **“Paul”** means “little” or “small.”
5. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century, one writer provided a description of **“Paul”** – “a man small of stature, with a bald head and crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked, full of

<sup>1</sup> “Paul” was a Greek name while “Saul” was his Hebrew name.

friendliness ...”<sup>2</sup>

6. He was full of devotion to the cause of Judaism – cp. *[Philippians 3:4-6](#)*.
7. Saul was a man who was devoted to Judaism and extremely hostile toward Christians, engrossed in annihilating the church – cp. *[Acts 9:1-2](#)*.
8. Amid his zeal, he was still in unbelief – struggling against God as an unbeliever despite being religiously devout – cp. *[1 Timothy 1:12-15](#)*.

## **B. His Identity in His Savior**

1. In His mercy, God reached directly out of heaven and confronted Saul with his sin and called him to faith in Jesus Christ – cp. *[Acts 26:12-19](#)*.
2. As a result of his conversion, *“Paul”* became a herald of the good news of salvation through the name of Jesus Christ – obedience that resulted in his being tutored by Christ Jesus Himself because of his opposition to legalism - *[Galatians 1:15-18](#)*.
3. As an indication of God’s anointing him as His special messenger, Saul’s name was changed to *“Paul”* – cp. *[Acts 13:9](#)*.
4. *“Paul”* was willing to suffer anything for the sake of Christ – cp. *[2 Corinthians 11:22-27](#)*.
5. Paul’s gratitude for the grace that he had been shown fuels His avid devotion, eternal gratitude, and powerful service to the Lord, Christ Jesus.

## **II. THE AUTHORITY TO WRITE**

### **A. The Commission by Christ – *“an apostle of Christ Jesus ...”***

1. *“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus ...”* straightway highlights the authority that he possesses to write these instructions – indicating that since Timothy was already embracing Paul’s apostolic authority, these comments were intended for those in the church immediately (Ephesus) and remotely (the church through the ages).
2. The word *“apostle”* [ἀπόστολος] literally means “sent away” and indicates a delegate or messenger.
3. The term does not have an essential religious or spiritual connotation as it was used to refer to any kind of envoy – political, economic, military, or even personal.
4. However, in the New Testament, the term takes on a distinctly spiritual connotation – with two types of *“apostles”* in view – those sent by churches and those sent by Christ Jesus.
  - a) *Those sent by churches with ecclesiastical authority would include Barnabas, Epaphroditus, Apollos, Silvanus, and Timothy - cp. [Acts](#)*

---

<sup>2</sup> R. N. Longenecker, “Paul, The Apostle,” in Merrill C. Tenney, ed., *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 4:625.

**14:14; Philippians 2:25; 2 Corinthians 8:23.**

- b) **Those sent by Christ Jesus with divine authority** – a specialized and duly authorized authority commonly known as “the twelve” (minus Judas + Matthias) and Paul.
5. The great majority of references to an “**apostle**” refers to those sent by Christ:
- a) **10 times in the Gospels**
- b) **30 times in Acts**
- c) **30 times in Pastoral Epistles**
- d) **8 times throughout the rest of the New Testament**
6. In this sense, an “**apostle of Christ Jesus**” is one who were:
- a) **Personally chosen by Christ** – **Luke 6:13** – **Acts 9:15**.
- b) **Witnesses of the ministry of Jesus Christ** – **Acts 1:21-22**.<sup>3</sup>
- c) **Witnessed the resurrection of Christ** – **Acts 1:22** – **1 Corinthians 15:4-8**.
- d) **Endowed with a unique manifestation and ministry of the Holy Spirit**
- 
- (1) **Revelation of Truth** – **Galatians 1:12-13**.
- (2) **Inspiration of Sacred Writings** – **2 Peter 1:21**.
- (3) **Signs and Wonders as authentication** – **2 Corinthians 12:12**.
7. “**Paul**” refers to Jesus as “**Christ Jesus**” nearly exclusively while other NT writers refer to Him as “Jesus Christ” most commonly – the explanation could be that Paul never knew Jesus intimately before the resurrection while the other disciples did.

## **B. The Commandment of God – “... according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus ...”**

1. Paul now emphasizes that he was not a usurper of this title, nor was he self-appointed, but served at the unalterable “**commandment of God**” – a direct charge bringing negative consequences if disobeyed.
2. The term “**commandment**” [ἐπιταγή] – conveys a non-negotiable obligation imposed upon a lesser by a greater, hence a mandatory and consequential command.
3. Meaning, Paul had absolutely no alternative but to serve as “**an apostle of Christ Jesus**” – including writing this letter.
4. Calvin emphasized that all those who are pressed into service of God as

<sup>3</sup> Saul of Tarsus would undoubtedly have been an observer of the ministry of Jesus as an avid supporter of Judaism and a “pharisee of the pharisees,” often in Jerusalem at the times when Jesus was (and as mandated by the Law) – a zealot for the defense of the Mosaic system against the encroachment of “The Way.”

“preachers” of God’s Word are likewise under such a *“commandment”* – a *“commandment”* they break if they wander from God’s Word – “When, therefore those who are charged with preaching God’s word seek to promote their own ideas, the church is made to deny the faith pledged to her spouse, that is, to the Son of God.”<sup>4</sup>

5. We might be a bit surprised that Paul refers to *“God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus”* as we are most accustomed to seeing Jesus referred to as *“our Savior.”*
6. However, such a reference is a glorious and appropriate adoration of God the Father as the One who:
  - a) *Sent His only begotten Son – John 3:16.*
  - b) *Spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all – Romans 8:32.*
  - c) *Save through the foolishness of preaching – 1 Corinthians 1:21.*
  - d) *Give the gift of salvation by grace through faith – Ephesians 2:8.*
  - e) *Chooses whom to save – 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14.*
  - f) *Foreknows, predestines, calls, justifies, and glorifies sinners – Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-5.*
7. Yet Paul must also include *“Christ Jesus”* and His role as our Savior – linking salvation as the act of both the Father and the Son – establishing through such a reference the deity of Christ – cp. Titus 2:13.

### III. THE ALLEGIANCE – *“... and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope.”*

#### A. The Personification of Our Hope

1. As Paul considers the salvation that has God as its architect, his emphasis on Christ as the One who secures our salvation focuses on the *“hope”* that has replaced the despair of sin.
2. *“our hope”* [ἐλπίδος] – is not placed in the plan – even that plan of God – but rather in the Person of our Lord – *“Christ Jesus ...”*
3. Earlier, in the book of Colossians, Paul had indicated the marvelous distinction of the Church is the condition of having Christ dwelling in us – resulting in “the hope of glory.” – cp. Colossians 1:25-27.
4. The presence of Christ in us means that our *“hope”* is not a foreign object to be sought but an internal reality to be embraced – cp. Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 3:16-19.
5. As long as we listen to the wisdom of men, sinful men, who advocate self-

---

<sup>4</sup> John Calvin, Sermons on 1 Timothy, translated by Robert White, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2018), p.

reliance, performance-based favor with God, hope will be a vacillating and indecisive sentiment instead of a settled, sure anchor for our souls – cp. *Hebrews 6:19*.

## B. The Prospect of Our Hope

1. *“our hope”* resting in the Person of Christ provides us the earnest expectation of the fulfillment of the redemption that is by faith in Christ – *1 Timothy 1:16*.
2. Since Christ Himself *“is our hope,”* our confidence is in Jesus not on ourselves – that is, “we are not our hope ... He is!”
3. The result of having *“our hope”* fixed on Christ is the insatiable desire to see the reality of His grace at work in our lives – cp. *1 John 3:2-3*.
4. **Am I washed in the blood of Christ? – Yes! ... Is my debt to God fully paid? – Yes! ... Has my sin been blotted out? Yes! ... Do I stand faultless & welcome before God in the righteousness of Christ? Yes! ... Has Christ promised to deliver me safely to the gates of glory? Yes! ... Shall I expect Him to fail? No!** My hope is in Him!

## So What?

1. **What motivates you to serve Jesus ... to sacrifice for Him, obey Him, defer to His Lordship, and yearn to see Him – is it an eternal gratitude?**
2. **The teachings of Scripture cannot (& must not) be dismissed as archaic, irrelevant, or socially dismissible since they are not the words of men, but of an eternal God.**
3. **Is your hope “wrapped up” completely in Christ Jesus and His competence to keep His promises to eternally save you?**

**Even the greatest among us must rely solely upon  
Christ Jesus to save them.**