



Greetings to the Church

The Christian life is often compared to a long race or a challenging journey. As Jesus discussed His second coming, He spoke of a slave that did not have the inner strength to stay faithful until his lord arrived. "If that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' and shall begin to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know" (Matthew 24:48-50). With that illustration as a base, He went on to tell the parable of the ten virgins, five of whom were foolish and five of whom were wise enough to prepare for a long wait for the bridegroom's return. The exhortation, of course, is for the Christian to be prepared for whatever challenges

come in his life, and to be faithful until his physical death or until the Lord's return. Early on, this is one of the themes of the book of second Corinthians.

- ▼ **Paul's apostleship** — In this letter, Paul establishes his apostleship right up front with the brethren in Corinth. Although he had started the congregation, people had come in after he left for Ephesus and challenged his apostleship and the doctrines he preached. Hence, it was necessary for him in this epistle to re-establish that apostolic authority in their minds. He is not going to belabor that point early on, but is emphatic in his opening. "Paul," is his introduction, "an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia" (2 Corinthians 1:1). Note these words: *an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God*. He was specifically called and commissioned by Jesus Himself, and had all the authority of an apostle. Furthermore, lest there be any doubt, that apostleship was conferred in accordance with the will of God! He is also including Timothy, his "son in the faith" and long time associate in his greeting to the congregation.

- ▼ **The church** — Paul is writing to "the church of God" in Corinth, as well as to the other brethren in the surrounding Roman province of Achaia. It is clear in the New Testament writings that Christians were organized in congregations, rather than simply being "free range" Christians, saints at large. While some resist, that is clearly the New Testament pattern for the church and the individual disciples of Christ. The reason for such organization is so that each follower of Jesus can be spiritually nourished and encouraged, as well as being put into useful service. As Paul explained to the church in Ephesus, among the functions of modern evangelists, pastors, and teachers is to equip "the saints for the work of service" (Ephesians 4:11). The "church," then, is this organization (not the building). Additionally, although Paul calls the congregation here "the church of God," that is more of a description of ownership rather than a specific name by which the congregation must be named. Congregations in the scripture were called "the church," "churches of Christ," "churches of God in Christ Jesus," as well as "the church of the first-born ones." That early Christians worked in close association together is evident in that the apostle addresses this epistle to the brethren throughout Achaia, as well as to those who specifically were designated "the church of God which is at Corinth."

To these brethren, the apostle gives a fairly standard greeting: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:2). These words are more than just a mumbled greeting; they are actually a prayer that God's magnificent grace and peace that passes understanding might be granted to each individual within the purview of this epistle.

Paul was tremendously concerned about the church in Corinth, and in this letter is doing his Holy Spirit-inspired best to keep this congregation on track and the saints' salvation intact. Modern saints would do well to heed the contents of this powerful and motivating epistle.

THESE WORDS
ARE MORE THAN
JUST A MUMBLED
GREETING