



## 1 corinthians 1.<sup>1-3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, <sup>2</sup>unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: <sup>3</sup>grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today's reading represents Paul's greeting to the Corinthian church. It is not only a fairly standard greeting for Paul, but it also contains elements of standard greetings of his day. It is not unusual for anyone, religious or not, to begin with an expression of grace toward the receiver. It is another way of saying, "Greetings." I would like to just comment on this idea of "grace" as "greeting."

Certainly, for Paul the word "grace" is loaded with all sorts of theological significance beyond the norm. It is at the heart of his gospel message. Nevertheless, in the word "grace," there is a basic and foundational idea of "greeting" and thus of acceptance. A greeting implies some contentment, happiness even in meeting another. To say, "greetings," or "hello," is a way of extending an accepting invitation of fellowship. When one says "grace" over a meal, it is their way of signaling their appreciation and thus acceptance of the blessings of the meal.

No doubt, in so greeting the Corinthian church, Paul was expressing his appreciation and acceptance of them. But, Paul is interested in and wishes the Corinthian saints to be aware of an acceptance, a grace, that is far more profound, much more life-altering than his.

*"Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."*

Here, Paul extends a greeting that comes from the Father and Son. Here, Paul reminds the saints of Father and Son's gracious characters; of their accepting nature. He invites them to bask in the knowledge of God's acceptance and ready willingness to enter into happy fellowship with them. In coming to earth, Jesus, God the Son, serves as the perfect revelator of Father's intimate acceptance.

We often say that grace is God's enabling power. But this is not precisely correct, it seems to me. Grace is that which lives inside God. It is a fundamental element of his character. It is a divine attribute; the attribute of acceptance. Any enabling power we may receive from God flows out of our acceptance and experience of his acceptance of us. This experience of his acceptance does indeed empower us to feel and behave in ways that would otherwise remain closed to us. Indeed, only through experiencing God's accepting disposition do and can we become saints. Only then can individuals, knowing God's character, slowly grow in imitating him and taking upon themselves his attributes until, finally, when he appears, we shall be like him.

Oh, the joy of God's greeting!

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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