

CRENDITIALS FOR THE MINISTRY
II Corinthians 3:1-18

Introduction:

A. *There was a Jewish faction that followed Paul everywhere:*

1. *They tried to “expose” him as a fake...*
2. *They said he was not a true apostle:*
 - a. *He did not have credentials....*
 - b. *He did not have a letter of commendation from the church in Jerusalem...*

B. *Some teachers apparently arrived at Corinth with papers proving they had been sent ...*

1. *Their purpose was to discredit Paul...*
2. *Paul uses this accusation to show the contrast between the OT law ministry and the NT grace ministry...*

C. *Some of Paul’s critics said he was always praising himself:*

1. *II Corinthians 2:12*

Furthermore, when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

2. *Paul was never said that there was anything wrong in using these credentials:*
 - a. *The apostles had credentials...*
 - b. *Acts 18:27*

And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:

3. *The shame here is that they were accusing Paul because he did not have such credentials...*

- a. *It was customary for the synagogues and churches to provide credentials to prevent deception...*
- b. *So Paul must be an imposter...*

4. *Are you an imposter?*

- a. *What kind of credentials do you have?*
- b. *Have you been called of God...?*

I. The Seal of His Credentials

A. *Their conversion was his credentials:*

1. *"You are our epistle..." (v.2)*

- a. *"...written in our hearts..."*
- b. *This is what keeps you going...*
- c. *Do you have any credentials of souls saved?
of ministry people...?*

2. *Everybody is reading these epistles...*

- a. *"...known and read of all men."*

- b. What a tremendous testimony...*
- c. The best testimony is not what people say about you, but what they say about those you minister unto...*

3. I ask again, "Do you have any credentials?"

- a. The most convincing credential is a changed life...*
- b. The most enduring...*

4. Their conversion was Paul's Credentials...

B. Their Conversion was God's Commendation of Paul's ministry...

(II Corinthians 10:18)

For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

1. The epistle was written by Christ...v.3a

2. Ministered by us...v.3b

- a. God uses us...*
- b. God uses me...*

3. Written by the Spirit of the Living God...

- a. v.3c*
- b. Not with perishable ink – it is alive....*

4. Their Conversion:

- a. *Was the Credentials of his Ministry*
- b. *Was God's Commendation of his Ministry*

C. *Their Conversion was the Credentials of His Confidence*

- 1. *Confidence in his call from God...*
- 2. *Confidence in the gospel message he preached*
- 3. *Confidence in his Lord...to be used of Him...*

D. *The Seal of His Credentials was:*

Their Conversion
God's Commendation
His Confidence

II. The Source of His Credentials

A. *Negative*

- 1. *Not in himself...*

a. *II Corinthians 1:9*

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

- b. *There is no good thing within me...*
- c. *Paul was not his own credential...*

2. *Not in visions and revelations...*

a. *II Corinthians 12:1-5*

It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

b. *So many false teachings have begun because someone had a vision...*

c. *Visions and revelations were not his credentials...*

3. *Not in ministry and sufferings*

a. *II Corinthians 11:21-30*

I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.

22 Are they Hebrews? so *am* I. Are they Israelites? so *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so *am* I.

23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I *am* more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

24 Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one.

25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26 *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren;

27 *In* weariness and painfulness, *in* watchings often, *in* hunger and thirst, *in* fastings often, *in* cold and nakedness.

28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

- b. After all I have been through...*
- c. All his sufferings were not his credentials...*

4. Not in his wisdom

a. I Corinthians 2:1-5

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

b. Not my wisdom...

B. Positive

1. Trust in God

a. He gloried in his infirmities...

b. II Corinthians 12:8-10

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

2. *I can do all things through Christ...*
3. *We have been made and equipped to be ministers of the Lord God...(3:6)*
4. *When God calls, He qualifies...*

a. Jeremiah – 1:4-10

4 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

6 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I *am* a child.

7 But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I *am* a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I *am* with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

10 See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

b. Gideon – Judges 6:12

And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD *is* with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

c. Peter – John 1:42

And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.

5. *This was the source of Paul's Credentials...*

III. The Superiority of Paul's Message

A. A Covenant of Grace – not law (Hebrews 8:6-13)

6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

7 For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

10 For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

13 In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away.

B. Ratified by the blood of Christ (Matthew 26:26-28)

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

C. Brings life to death.... (II Corinthians 3:6b)

1. Ministration of death – Galatians 3:10

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

2. Ministration of the Spirit - II Corinthians 6:9-11

As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

10 As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.

D. Ministry of Righteousness, not Condemnation

1. *II Cor. 3:9*

2. *II Cor. 5:21*

E. Lasting Glory that fades not away...II Cor. 3:7, 11

F. Unveiled Glory – not veiled Exodus 34:33

And *till* Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face.

1. *Face of Christ – not Moses*

2. *II Corinthians 4:5-6*

G. Produces Liberty – not Bondage

1. *Yoke of Bondage – II Corinthians 3:14-17*

2. *Made Free – Galatians 5:1*

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

H. Transforms instead of Deforms

1. *II Cor. 3:18*
2. *Turn your eyes upon Jesus...*

- a. *He Transforms...*
- b. *Romans 12:1-2*

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.