

Series: 2 Corinthians

“The Apostle Paul’s Irrefutable Credentials”

(Sunday Morning October 4th, 2026)

Passage: 2 Corinthians 3:1-6

O.S. The Small Book of Jude Was Written to Deal With the Problem of Apostasy Which is Always Perpetuated by the Presence of False Prophets

- > **And of Course, We Have Always Had False Prophets in Our World, and We Will Continue to Have False Prophets in Our World Until the End of Time**
- > **And So, We Need to Face Up to This Fact, and We Need to Learn How to Recognize Them and Contend With Them**
- > **This is Why Jude Tells Us in Verse 11 of His Little One Chapter Book That False Prophets Will Always Fall Into One of Three Categories; He Said,**

“Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.”

Q.n = So, What is “...the way of Cain,...”?

Ans = I Believe That It is the Way of Works

- > **In Gen 4, We are Told About How God Accepted Abel’s Blood Sacrifice, But God Rejected Cain’s Grain Offering**
- > **I Happen to Believe That God Had Already Given a Prescription for Worship That Involved a Blood Sacrifice**
- > **But of Course, You Don’t Have to Agree With Me on That, But You Do Have to Agree With What the Writer of Hebrews Said About This in Hebrews 11:4**
- > **And in That Verse, He Said, “BY FAITH Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous...”**

Q.n = So, if Abel’s Sacrifice Was Given on the Basis of FAITH, What Was Cain’s Given on the Basis of?

Ans = There is Only One Other Option and That is Works

- > **And So, We Know That Some (Really All) False Prophets Can be Identified by the Fact They Want to Draw People Into a Works Based System of Religion**

Q.n = What is “...the error of Balaam,...”?

Ans = This Refers to Being Ensnared by Greed

- > **For You See, Balaam Became a Prophet for Hire; We are Told in *Num 22* That Balak the King of Moab Asked Balaam to Curse the Israelites**
- > **Balaam Refused; But Then, Balak, the King of Moab, Offered Balaam Some Money, But He Still Refused**
- > **But Then, Balak, the King of Moab, Offered Balaam a Lot of Money; and So, Balaam Decided to Give the King of Moab Some Truly Demonic Advice (E...)**

Q.n = What is “...*the rebellion of Korah?*”

Ans = It Was Just That; It Was a Rebellion

- > **I Mentioned This Just Last Week, as Some of You May Recall, Korah Led a Spiritual Rebellion and Challenged the Authority of Moses and Aaron**
- > **And as a Result of This, God Caused the Ground to Open Up and Swallow Korah Along With All of His Followers (There Were 250 of Them)**

T.S. Those are the Three Categories of False Prophets; and I Want You to Know That These Men Who Came to Corinth, and Were Trying to Discredit the Apostle Paul, Were Guilty of All Three

- > **These “*False Apostles*,” Which is What Paul Called Them in *2 Cor 11:13*, Were Greedy, and Rebellious, and They Were Promoting a Works Based System of Religion**
- > **And They Knew That, in Order for Their Nefarious Plans to Succeed, They Would Have to Find a Way to Discredit This One Who Was Teaching the Truth**
- > **And as We Have Already Seen, They Were Relentless; They Criticized His Preaching; They Accused Him of Greed; They Attacked His Appearance; They Called His Motives Into Question Etcetera**
- > **And in This Passage, We Find That They Were Attacking Paul’s Credentials; They Were Saying That Paul Was Not Really Qualified to be a Spiritual Leader**
- > **And So, Paul Decides to Provide These Corinthians With a List of the Kinds of Credentials That He Possessed and That They Should Value the Most (T.S.)**

I. The Apostle Paul Had an Established Reputation

Verse 1 (Read)

-> Paul Begins to Deal With Their Accusations by Asking Two Questions That Both Demand a “No” Answer

Q.n # 1 = *“Are We Beginning to Commend Ourselves Again?”*

-> This Tells Us That Paul Had Been Placed in the Awkward Position of Having to Defend His Credentials Without Sounding Too Proud About It All

-> Now, He Could Have Just Reminded Them of the Fact That He Was an Apostle; But He Didn’t Want to do That, Because Then, He Would Have Sounded Defensive

-> And He Had Already Stated Back in *1 Cor 4* That His Own Assessment of His Life Really Does Not Matter, Because It is the Lord Who is the Ultimate Judge

-> And So, We Know That Paul Was Reluctant to do This, But He Really Had No Other Option Because of What His Accusers Were Saying About Him

-> And He Uses an Approach That He Uses Several Times Throughout This Book, He Appeals to Their Own Personal Knowledge of Him

Q.n = He is Asking, in Essence, *“Is This Really Something That I Need to Do?”*
Or *“Don’t You Know Enough About Me by Already to Avoid This Process?”*

-> Paul Had Been With Them for Two Years; Most of These People Had Come to Faith in Christ Because of Paul; He Had Taught Them, and Prayed for Them, and Celebrated With Them, and Cried With Them

-> And So, Paul Says, With This Kind of Experiential Knowledge of Me, There Should be No Need for Me to Convince You of the Fact That I am Sincere

-> This Reminds Me of the Verbal Exchange That Took Place Between Philip and Jesus in *John 14:8-9*; It Says *“8 Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” 9 Jesus *said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father...”*

-> I’ve Heard Our Young People Use a Saying That Captures This Idea; They Say *“C’mon, You’re Better Than That!”* (They Say It Like an Italian Person Would)

-> I Can Just Hear Paul Saying *“C’mon Corinthians, You’re Better Than That!”*

Q.n # 2 = *“Or do we need some letters of commendation to you or from you?”*

-> Letters of Commendation Were Not Uncommon in That Day; Paul Had, in Fact, Sent Letters of Commendation for Several People Himself

- > Paul Included a Commendation for Timothy, for Example, in His First Letter to the Corinthians; in *1 Cor 16:10*; He Said, *“Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid, for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am.”*
- > Paul Also Sent Letters of Commendation for Titus, and a Woman Named Phoebe and a Man Named Epaphroditus and Others (2 Cor 8:22; Rom 16:1; Phil 2:19-30)
- > Now, That Little Statement *“as Some”* Tells Us That Paul Was Referring to His Detractors
- > So Apparently, These Men Had Managed to Come to Corinth With Some Pretty Impressive Documentation
- > They Had Sort of Pulled These Letters and References Out of Their Satchel and Said *“Look at This” “We Can Prove That We are Qualified to Lead”*
- > And the Implication Was: *“Where are Paul's Letters of Commendation? Who Recommends Paul? What Proof Does Paul Have That He is Qualified to Lead?”*
- > And Listen, These Men, Not Only Came to Corinth With Letters of Commendation, They Also Wanted to Leave With More of Them, Because This is How They Worked

Q.n = This Sounds Very Contemporary Doesn't It?

- > People in Our Culture Put a Lot of Stock in Diplomas, and Certifications, and Written References Etcetera, and There is Something to be Said for That
- > But Listen, the Last Time I Checked There Was Also Something to be Said for Experience and First Hand Knowledge, and This Was the Basis for Paul's Claim to These Corinthians
- > These Usurpers Were Probably Tall and Handsome, and They Had Charisma, and They Were Probably Well-Dressed and Highly Educated
- > And Paul is Described in Some of the Ancient Writings as Being *“Small in stature, with a bald head and crooked legs...with eyebrows meeting and a nose somewhat hooked”* BUT LISTEN, THEY KNEW WHO PAUL WAS BY EXPERIENCE NOT BY A LETTER OF COMMENDATION.

Ill: If You Will Indulge Me This Morning, We are Going to go Used Car Shopping

- > Let's Just Say That You are a Father Who Has a Daughter Who Has Finished Her Driver's Education Classes, and She Has Past Her Driver's Test...

-> **You Don't Want to Buy Her a New Car, Because You Can't Afford It, and 90% of Young Drivers are Going to Have at Least One Fender Bender Anyway (YKTR)**

-> **So, You Have Narrowed It Down to Three Options, and They are All Within Your Price Range**

1) A 2017 Jeep Compass That You Saw at a Car Lot With About 100,000 Miles on the Odometer

-> **It Has Been Thoroughly Cleaned; It Smells Like a New Car; Everything Works, and They Have a Piece of Paper Called a "Car Fax" (And Your Daughter Loves It)**

2) A 2017 Kia Forte That You Saw at a Car Lot With About 100,000 Miles on the Odometer

-> **It Has Been Thoroughly Cleaned; It Smells Like a New Car; Everything Works, and They Have a Piece of Paper Called a "Car Fax" (And It Gets Great Gas Mileage)**

3) Your Mother Has Decided to Stop Driving; and So, She Has Decided to Sell Her 2007 Ford Crown Victoria Which Has About 100,000 Miles on the Odometer

-> **This Car is 10 Years Older Than the Other Ones, But It is Also a One Owner Car**

-> **And She Had It Serviced Regularly at the Dealership, and She Kept It in Her Garage, and She Doesn't Smoke, and She Only Drove It to Her Local Church and the Grocery Store, and You Know That These Cars are Legendary for Going 300,000 Miles or More, and They Made Millions of Them (E...Parts No Problem)**

-> **The Upholstery is Immaculate, Because Granny is the Only One Who Ever Drove It, AND THIS CAR HAS AN EXCELLENT CRASH RATING!**

Q.n = Which Used Car Would You Buy for Your Daughter?

Ans = Sorry Girl, But I'm Going to Say Granny's Crown Victoria

Q.n = And Why Would I Suggest That You Buy That One?

Ans = Because It Has an Established Reputation (E...)

T.S. I. The Apostle Paul Had an Established Reputation

II. The Apostle Paul Had Some Verifiable References

Verse 2 (Read)

-> **One of the Things I Love About This Statement is That I am Sure That It Took Paul's Critics Completely Off Guard**

- > Because Paul Simply Looked at These Corinthians & Said, “*You are My References*”
- > First, I Want You to Notice How Verifiable Paul’s References Are: Paul Says These References are “*Known and Read by All Men*”
- > And Second, I Want You to Notice Where Paul’s References are Located: Paul Says That They are “*...written in our hearts*” Using the Editorial Plural
- > Paul Didn’t Have to Pull These Reference Out of a Leather Satchel, in Other Words, Because He Carried Them With Him at All Times
- > Later, in 2 Cor 7:3. He Will Refer Back to This and Say “*...for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together.*”

Verse 3 (Read)

- > Paul is Saying Here That “*It is Being Manifested*”; This Means That It is Continuously Being Revealed and Made Obvious
- > He is Referring to Their Conversion, and Their Sanctification; Their Spiritual Growth; the Fact That They Had Matured and Grown in Their Faith
- > And Please Notice That This is “*A Letter of Christ*” – Did These False Prophets Have a Letter of Commendation Signed by Jesus Christ? Ans = I Don’t Think So
- > Credentials, as Most of Us Know, Can be Worthless or Even Deceptive, and This is Why They Need to be Verified

III: In Fact, I Watched a Documentary This Past Week About a Man Named Ferdinand Waldo Demara Who Has Been Called “*The Great Imposter*”

- > By Using Fake Credentials, He Became: a Psychology Professor at the University of Washington, a Civil Engineer, a Naval Surgeon Who Once Performed Heart Surgery (Successfully), a Benedictine Monk and Even the Warden of a Prison

III. The Apostle Paul Had a God-Given Resolve

Verses 4 (Read)

- > The Word Paul Used for “*Confidence*” is the Greek Word “*Pietho*” and It Literally Means “*To be Determined or to be Resolute*”

-> And This is Here to Remind Us of the Fact That There is an Indestructible Boldness That Comes to One Who Has Been Divinely Called by God to Accomplish a Certain Task, and Paul Had This

-> As Some of You Know, the Lord Sent a Man Named “Ananias” to go and Find Paul in the City of Damascus, and the Lord Said to “Ananias” - “...’Go, for he (Paul) is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel” (Acts 9:15)

-> Paul Was a Man Who Had Been Called by God to Spread the Gospel Throughout the Gentile World

-> And So, His Confidence Was Not Based on His Personal Talent, or His Personal Ability, or His Own Self-Confidence, It Was Based on His Strong and Unwavering Belief That God Had Called Him and Equipped Him for This Task

-> Paul’s Understanding of This Made Him Confident and Humble at the Same Time, Because He Knew That the Results Had to Come From the Lord

-> And Paul Expressed This in *Romans 15:18* When He Said, “*For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed*”

Pt = There is a Great Deal of Confidence That Comes to a Man of God Who Knows That He Has Been Called by God to Accomplish a Certain Task

-> Just Like When Amos, the Prophet of Social Justice, Was Confronted by the Court Prophet Amaziah Who Told Him That He Should Stop Prophesying in Israel (E...)

-> Amos Stood His Ground, and This is a Steve Daily Paraphrase; He Said, “*I’m not a Prophet or the Son of a Prophet; for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs, BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME UNTO ME!*” (Amos 7:12-15) (E...)

T.S. I. The Apostle Paul Had an Established Reputation

II. The Apostle Paul Had Some Verifiable References

III. The Apostle Paul Had a God-Given Resolve

IV. The Apostle Paul Had a Humble Reliance

Verse 5 (Read)

-> I Hope That I Can Communicate This Properly, Because It is Such a Beautiful Point

-> For You See, Paul Was a Highly Educated Man and an Intellectual Genius; He Had a Pedigree; and if He Had Wanted to, He Could Have Played This Game

-> In *Phil 3:4-5*, Paul Said, “*4...If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee*”

-> In Addition to This, Paul Had Been Personally Trained by the Famous Rabbi Gamaliel, But He Had Come to Count All of These Things as Loss Compared to Knowing Jesus and Him Crucified

-> And Paul Had Come to Learn, as He Will Express Later in This Same Book, That It is When We are Weak That We are Strong

-> And Listen, There are Many Who Have Had to Learn This Lesson of Humility Before They Could be Used Mightily by God

Q.n = Are You Familiar, for Example, With What Happened to Moses?

-> He Sensed That God Was Calling Him to be the Deliverer of Israel; So, He Tried to Accomplish This in His Own Flesh; One Egyptian at a Time (E...Buried Him)

-> This Caused Him to Have to Flee to the Backside of the Sinai Desert Where He Resided for Forty Long Years

-> But After He Had Been Sufficiently Humbled, the Lord Appeared to Him in the Burning Bush, and He Told Him to go and Confront the Pharaoh of Egypt

-> Moses Responded by Saying “*...’Who am I, that I should to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?’*” (Exod 3:11) (He Was a Different Man)

-> Gideon Likewise, When He Was Called by God to Deliver the Israelites From the Midianites, Said, “*...’O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father’s house.*” (Judges 6:15)

St = As I Thought About This and Meditated on This, I Thought About How Some Churches Stand in Great Contrast to One Another

Ex = There are Some Pastors and Churches, for Example, Who Promote Themselves by Trying to Convince Everyone That They Have It All Together

-> They Have a Pastor Who Always Presents Himself as 100% Confident and Self-Assured at All Times

-> If He Has Any Problems in His Life, He is Going to be Sure to Keep These Things as Private as He Possibly Can, Because This Might Ruin His Image

-> And Because He is a Model for the Members of His Congregation, Most of Them Choose to Put on the Same Kind of Façade

-> And Sadly, I Have to Say That There are Many People in Our Society Who are Attracted to This

Ex = There are Some Other Churches That do Exactly the Opposite; There is Very Little Pretense by the Pastor or the People in His Congregation

-> The Pastor in This Church Readily Admits That He Has Struggles and Difficulties Just Like Everyone Else in This World

-> And Those Who Choose to be a Part of His Congregation Behave the Same Way

-> And Yet, They are All Able to Say That the Lord Always Seems to Find a Way to Pull Us Through These Problems in Life

Q.n = Now, Let Me Ask You a Question: Which of These Two Churches is More Likely to Enjoy Genuine Spiritual Success?

Ans = I Think It's Going to be the Pastor and the Church That Most of the People in Our World Can Identify With; the Church That is Real and Believable

-> And So, One Thing I Hope That We Can Communicate as a Church is That You Don't Have to be Perfect to Fit in Around Here (Can I Get a Witness?)

T.S. I. The Apostle Paul Had an Established Reputation

II. The Apostle Paul Had Some Verifiable References

III. The Apostle Paul Had a God-Given Resolve

IV. The Apostle Paul Had a Humble Reliance

V. The Apostle Paul Had an Imputed Righteousness

Verse 6 (Read)

-> With This Verse, Paul Pulled the Mask Off of These False Prophets, and He Revealed Exactly What They Were Trying to Accomplish

-> This Verse Tells Us That These Men Were Most Likely Judaizers Who Were Trying to Place These Gentile Christians Under the Old Covenant System

-> Dr Luke Mentioned These Men in *Acts 15:1* When He Said, *"Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'"*

-> Of Course, They Were Not Going to Stop With Circumcision; Dr. Luke Goes on Tell Us That These Were Some so Called *"Converted Pharisees"*; He Said,

"But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.'"
(Acts 15:5)

-> Paul, of Course, Did Not Agree With This, and Neither Did the Other Apostles Who Settled This Matter at the Jerusalem Council

-> And in Ephesians Chapter 3, Paul Tells Us That God Had Called Him to Reveal a Mystery

Q.n = And What Was This Mystery?

Ans = Paul Tells Us in *Verse 6*

-> He Said, *"to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel"*

-> One of the Points Paul is Making in *Eph 3:6* is That All of These Gentiles Became *"Fellow Heirs"* and *"Partakers of the Promise"* w/o Having to Become Jews First

-> And the Problem With Judaism at This Time is That Judaism Had Become a Religious System Based on Works

-> And Satan Uses a Religious System of Works to Rob People of the Joy That Grace Has to Offer and to Give People a False Sense of Security (E...Deceived)

St = Now, Just so That I am Not Misunderstood, I Need to Point Out That the New Covenant is Not Opposed to the Moral Law of God

-> The Difference With the New Covenant is That the Law of God Has Now Been Written on Our Hearts

-> In Reference to the New Covenant, the Prophet Jeremiah Said, *"'But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the LORD, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'"* (Jer 31:33)

- > **The Dietary Laws and the Ceremonial Laws Have Been Set Aside, Because These Were Only Types and Symbols, and Now, the Substance Has Come (Repeat)**
- > **The Moral Law, However, Has Remained Valid Even Though No One is Able to Keep It Perfectly**
- > **AND the Desire to Keep the Moral Law Has Been Placed in Every Christian's Heart, and the Power to Keep It Has Been Given to Us by the Holy Spirit**
- > **Nevertheless, All of Us Who are Christians Fall Short, and We Will Continue to Fall Short Until We Get to Heaven**
- > **But the Good News is That God's Grace is Sufficient to Cover All of Our Shortcomings**
- > **That is Why Paul Said This in *Rom 5:20*; He Said, "...but where sin increased, (What?) *grace abounded all the more*"**
- > **And as I Pointed Out This Past Wednesday, We Cannot Exhaust God's Grace Any More Than a Mud Minnow Can Drink All of the Water That is in the Gulf of Mexico (Oops, I Mean America)**

Q.n = Now, Listen to Me, are You Listening?

- > **The Problem is That We Need far More Than What a Works Based System of Religion Can Provide for Us**
 - > **For You See, Our God Requires "*Perfect Righteousness*", and Any Good Works That We Can do in Our Own Strength Will Never Satisfy That Standard**
 - > **And This is Why the New Covenant is Vastly Superior to the Old One; for You See, Under the New Covenant, God Imputes His Own Righteousness to Us (E..)**
- III: A Popular Christian Author Named Paul Little Illustrated Salvation and Grace in an Interesting Way**
- > **First, He Described a Works Based System of Religion as Being Like Someone Trying to Swim Across the Pacific Ocean From California to Hawaii**
 - > **Of Course, No One is Able to do This; Some May Only be Able to Swim 100 Yards, Some as far as 10 Miles, But It Makes No Difference (E...All Drown)**
 - > **Then, Along Comes an Ocean Liner Called "Grace", and We are Invited to Come on Board Free of Charge**

- > Those Who are Not Swimming Very Well are More Likely to Take Advantage of This Offer Very Quickly
 - > The Better Swimmers Might be Hesitant, and They Might Even be Duped Into Thinking That They Can Actually Make It All the Way to Hawaii
 - > Along the Way, the Captain of This Ocean Liner Called “*Grace*” Might Ask Us to Run a Few Errands for Him
 - > And We are Not Going to Hesitate to do These, NOT TO EARN THE TRIP, But Because We are so Appreciative for What He is Doing for Us
 - > Likewise, Our Good Deeds as Christians are Just Expressions of Our Gratitude to Jesus Christ for Providing Us With Eternal Salvation by His Grace
 - > We Rejoice and We Enjoy the Freedom We Have in Christ, Because We Know That We Have Been Given All of the Righteousness That We Need
-

Invitation:

- > These Were the Apostle Paul’s Irrefutable Credentials, and These are the Right Credentials for Any Preacher
- > He Will Have an Established Reputation, Verifiable References, a God-Given Resolve, a Humble Reliance on God and an Imputed Righteousness From God
- > And This Means That He Will Preach the Unadulterated Gospel Which is Based on Grace and Faith Not Works (E...)