

11/07/04 THE FORCE OF MINISTRY (outline and questions)

II Cor. 3:1-8

INTRO: We have been recognizing from the past weeks that we are *always* being led in a victory parade regardless of our circumstances. That is because we do not judge our success on exit polling, projections with 1 or 2% of the vote in, nor by pollsters. We judge it by the prophetic book of the almighty God called the Bible. Our relationship with Him manifests, (appears) in the world around us. It literally changes our world for us to be in it, if He is resident in our life. NOT a guest, a resident. To some we are life, and to some we are death. It is incredible the way the election has been analyzed with reference to “born again” believers or evangelical Christians who have a personal relationship with Christ. We really are life to some and death to others if you watch the news. There comes a **huge** responsibility with this. We cannot and must not go around peddling the word of God cheap. This life of Christ is *not something* we are producing on our own, but as from sincerity (Greek-“judged by sunlight”), of the *stuff* of God and in the sight (*presence*) of God we speak *IN* Christ. Paul is going to follow up II Cor. 2: 14-17, with more evidence of how we can and must live.

OUR CREDENTIALS

Corinthians 3:1-2 *1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you? 2 You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men;* Paul is aware that teachers have come to Corinth with credentials not of the apostles. There were false teachers trying to undermine Paul’s work. These false teachers would leave with more letters of recommendations from the churches they went to. In verse (1) Paul is wanting to know if he needs to prove himself all over again. Then he gets down to the real deal in verse (2). *Paul is saying your life is the resume, the proof, the visibility of God, the manifestation of Christ. Your life should be the evidence.* That sobers me but excites me greatly. My life can be stronger than any credentials, votes of confidence by others, past awards, rewards or commendation medals. It is again, not my proving myself, it’s His proving in me. My life becomes an **epistle, or message** to others. What is the message that comes out of me to my world? Every where there are messages. Signs everywhere for us to read. I am a “sign” that others read all the time. Commercials are everywhere. People are forever being sold something. It really makes a difference to us when we find out something is real and it works. Is what others believe about God accurate, if it is based on the message that is spilling out of me onto them?

THE FORMAT OF OUR CREDENTIALS

We are a written “message”. This is more than a letter, this is a message. You can write a letter that is “Hi, how’s the weather?”, or you can *really, really* have a message to deliver. The scripture says you are “known and read by all men.” Let’s look at some different translations of this verse 2 of Chapter 3. The Analytical Literal Translation : “*You are our letter, having been written in our hearts, being known and being read by all people*” .

The King James: Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

The Message: “*You yourselves are all the endorsement we need. Your very lives are a letter that anyone can read by just looking at you.*”

Now there’s some fascinating language in verse 2. Besides being a *living message (Epistle)*, this word written is where we get our word engraved. It means literally inscribed into. We have been doing a lot of study in Sunday School class on Revelation and end times. The mark of the “beast” is part of that

discussion. See you can do almost anything to the outside to make me or break, but when it gets inscribed in the heart, well that's a different matter. Before I get too far into that, I would like to point out two other words. "known", and "read". The word says that's what people are doing to us. *Knowing and reading us*. Well can you guess what this word "know" is? That's right! It's "ginosko". Knowing by relationship. Even more exciting is the meaning of "read". It's..., that's right "ginosko". Actually, "anaginosko" - from two Greek words meaning know, and again. There is a play on words here that says you are really going to be known by others by what's in your heart.

The Real Proof of God

Keith Robinson, in *The Encourager*, writes:

"When God wanted to authenticate Himself to the ancient world, He called His nation Israel as witness. 'You are my witnesses,' He said, testimony that 'I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me. I, even I, am the Lord' (Isa 48:10). The people of God served as the undeniable proof of God.

"God's people still offer the most basic and best proof of God. A changed life is still the best testimony of God's power. Divine love reflected in a Christian heart which accepts, forgives and loves the unlovable is still the best witness of the nature of God. Hope that will not die is still the best proof of eternal life. Faith which cannot be shaken even in the face of death is still the best demonstration of the immutability of God's promises.

"We who have been granted the imponderable privilege of partaking in the divine nature (2Pe 1:4), are the witnesses, the demonstration, the proof of the divine presence in the world. Books and lessons and sermons and reason may have their place, but the real test is in the lives of God's chosen people. If that proof is not clear and constant, everything else is just hearsay."

CONCLUSION: Earlier, I said we would come back to the mark of the beast discussion. Now I am hearing a lot about this lately. Most of what I hear talks about "chips" and other devices that can be implanted in some part of my body to identify me. Would like to think that was a long way away, but given global positioning satellites and pictures from outer space, it probably isn't. It makes me wonder. Shouldn't the idea of an identification mark that is done on the heart, really interest people? I wonder how many believe I am in a victory parade in my life? I believe our lives can be so full of Him, so written on by Him. How would it really change me if all that I do was **IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD?** I am of God, in the light of God, and in the presence of God. Can we live any other way, than with His Presence? I would encourage you to read Exodus 33:13-15. Can you get in His Face, and be so consumed with Him that His Face and your face begin to show you are related?

- 1). What do people in my family see in me that they like to read?
- 2). If I were to ask someone I see a lot (non-family), what they see in me, what would they say?
- 3). How do I cultivate the presence of the Father in my Life?
- 4). What is the difference between being a really nice person who people like to be around, and having the presence of God in your life?