

Bible Heroes Who Made Their Way From the 'Naughty to Nice' List

We all know the song lyrics, "He's making a list; he's checking it twice! He's going to find out who's naughty or nice. Santa Claus is coming to town!"

Making Santa's list is one thing, but what about God's list? Let's change the lyrics: "He's making a list. He paid a great price! He can transform the naughty to nice. Jesus Christ is coming again!"

Hebrews 11, also known as God's Hall of Fame, provides a nice list of 16 names (14 heroes and 2 heroines of faith). If you carefully study the names, you wonder how some of them made it on the nice list. There's a simple answer—faith and grace.

Jesus told the 70 disciples to "rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). If you are born again and your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life, then you have been put on the nice list too. It doesn't mean you're perfect or always act nicely. It means you're saved, delivered, forgiven, redeemed and a new creature in Christ who is striving to please God.

If we're honest, we all belong on the naughty list: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). "As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one ... there is no one who does good, no, not one'" (Rom. 3:10, 12). Even the great apostle Paul admitted, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing" (Rom. 7:18a). Our best attempts at being righteous are as filthy rags. The only good in us is Jesus! The truth is none of us deserve heaven. "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) and that's what we deserve—death, hell and eternal separation from God. So how in

the world did we end up on the nice list? Faith and grace. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). You be the jury as we examine the Hebrews 11 list. Are they naughty or nice? Notice how many of them have chinks in their armor:

Abel: He offered a lamb as a blood sacrifice. God testified of his gifts and accepted his offering, but He rejected Cain's crops. Cain represents a religion of works while Abel points to a religion of grace.

Enoch: He pleased God so much that he was translated to heaven without facing the fearsome foe of death.

Noah: He found favor with God and built an ark to save his family and humanity. Then, his naughty side manifested when he got drunk and laid in his tent naked. In a drunken stupor, he cursed his own grandson, Canaan (Ham's son), whose offspring became enemies of Israel.

Abraham: The father of the faith forsook his homeland and family to follow God and sired a son at 100 years of age. However, he repeatedly lied about Sarah being his wife.

Sarah: This mother of nations doubted when an angel told her she would have a son. She laughed and then denied it. Plus, she got ahead of God and tried to help Him by having a son (Ishmael) with a surrogate mother (Hagar).

Isaac: This Patriarch also lied about his wife, Rebekah, claiming she was his sister. Like father, like son—lying really ran in this family.

Jacob: This tricky twin swindled his brother, Esau, out of his birthright and lied to his blind, dying father, Isaac. Then, he had an encounter with God who changed his name and nature. Jacob, the deceiver, became Israel—a prince of God.

Joseph: This slave saved the world after God took him from pit to pinnacle. A man of high character, his only flaw was bragging to his brothers about his dreams which made them resent him.

Moses: One of the greatest leaders and prophets in history had murder on his rap sheet. Plus, he had anger issues. He literally broke the Ten Commandments in a fit of rage and struck the rock with his staff instead of speaking to it, costing him a trip to Canaan land.

Rahab: Her life was a moral train wreck. She belonged on the naughty list for sure, but God turned this harlot into a heroine of faith and moved her to the nice list. She hid the spies and heeded their warning (faith without works is dead). She later married one of them (Salmon) and they had a son named Boaz. His son, Obed, had a son, Jesse, whose son was David. In a remarkable miracle of grace, Rahab became the great, great grandmother of King David and an ancestor of Christ (Matt. 1:5-6).

Gideon: God's reluctant general defeated the massive Midianite army with just 300 men. They were vastly outnumbered, but if God be for you, who can be against you? Gideon overcame fear and insecurity, and God turned this wimp into a mighty warrior.

Barak: This captain, recruited by Deborah, raised a militia of 10,000 men to defeat Jabin, a Canaanite king who oppressed Israel (Judg. 4).

Samson: This hippie judge had serious anger management problems. He slept with a harlot, was seduced by Delilah and broke His covenant with God. In prison, he repented, and God moved on him one last time and used him to deliver Israel from the Philistines.

Jephthah: God used this son of a harlot to deliver Israel from the Ammonites (Judg. 11).

David: This anointed shepherd, psalmist, prophet and king, committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband, Uriah the Hittite, murdered.

Samuel: This faithful judge, priest and prophet anointed the first two kings of Israel.

Over half of the people on the list did some naughty things that should have disqualified them. What does that tell us?

It doesn't justify any bad behavior, but God's grace is bigger than our failures. So repent and believe, and let grace rewrite your story. Maybe you've been naughty too, but God can still put you on His nice list. {eoa}

Ben Godwin *is the author of five books and pastors the Goodsprings Full Gospel Church. You can read more articles or order his books at .*