

"The List"

Hebrews 9: 11-14

11 When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, He went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. 12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

This is a story about a man, we'll call him Jared. Jared was sitting at a stoplight this morning. The lady in front of him was going through papers on the seat of her car, and when the light changed to green she did not obey its command. A green light is a commandment—not a suggestion ... right?

When the light turned back to red and she still had not moved, Jared began (with his windows rolled up mind you) screaming epithets and beating on the steering wheel. His expressions of distress were interrupted by a policeman, gun drawn, tapping on his window.

Against his protestations of, "You can't arrest me for hollering in my car," the policeman ordered him into the back seat of his. After about two hours in a holding cell, the arresting officer advised him he was free to go. He said, "I knew you couldn't arrest me for what I was yelling in my own car. You haven't heard the last of this."

The officer replied, "I didn't arrest you for shouting in your car. I was directly behind you at the light. I saw you screaming and beating your steering wheel, and I said to myself, "What a jerk. But there is nothing I can do to him for throwing a fit in his own car. Then I noticed the cross hanging from your rear view mirror, the fish symbol on the trunk lid and the "My boss is a Jewish Carpenter," and the "Jesus is Coming Soon" bumper stickers, and I thought you must have stolen the car from a Christian.

This morning's sermon is entitled, "The List, so I want to give you a list of the top ten things NOT to say to a policeman when you get pulled over by the police, and NO, I do not know any of these from first-hand experience: #10) I can't reach my license without spilling my beer, would you hold this for me? #9) Sorry, Officer, I didn't realize my radar detector wasn't plugged in, #8) Hey, you must've been doin' over 125 to catch me, what kind of engine you got in that thing? #7) I thought you had to be in relatively good condition to be a police officer, #6) on the list of things NOT to say to the police officer who pulls you over when he gets to your window, "You're not going to check the trunk are you? #5) Gee, Officer, that's terrific. The last officer only gave me a warning too! #4) Do you know why you pulled me over? Okay, just so one of us does, #3) I was trying to keep up with traffic which often goes along with #2) Yes I

know there are no other cars around. That's how far ahead of me they are, ...and finally the number one thing NOT to say to a policeman when you get pulled over: When the officer says, "Your eyes look red. Have you been drinking? Please don't respond with, "Gee, officer, your eyes look glazed, have you been eating some doughnuts?" Okay, time to get more serious.

There were 496 names on the list. Names written on thin sheets of paper, in tight columns. 496 names that Johnny Johnson didn't want anyone to forget. The year was 1950 and Johnson was an Army private, just 18 years old, when his division was thrown into combat in what they called a "police action" in Korea. About two thirds of his comrades were killed, and many others were captured, including himself. While being held as a POW, American planes accidentally strafed Johnson's building and several more men were killed. Johnson began to worry that these brave men would be forgotten, and that their loved ones back home would never know where, when and how they had died.

So he started a list. Using a pencil stub, he wrote their names on anything he could get his hands on: discarded cigarette packages, strips of wallpaper, pieces of trash. He wrote their names, units, and date of their death. After three months, most of Johnson's fellow prisoners were sick and malnourished. Seventy were dead, including seven by execution. Johnson just kept writing his list.

Then a cruel North Korean army major took control of the remaining 758 POW's and forced them to march 120 miles across snowy mountain terrain. The idea of the list increased in importance in Johnson's mind, especially after the North Koreans took away all the remaining prisoners' dog tags. American soldiers were shot and left to die if they stumbled or fell and Johnson kept focusing on his list as he walked, in order to ignore his pain. He managed to jot down the names of more than 100 men who died along the way.

That winter, in camp alongside an ice choked river, almost 300 more prisoners died. Johnson kept writing, adding their names to his secret list, even risking his life at one point to steal paper from his captors.

Johnson made two identical lists and hid one in the mud-hut wall, the other in the dirt floor. When guards discovered the list in the wall, Johnson was made to eat the bread of pain and drink the water of tribulation. He was tortured and accused of maintaining "criminal propaganda" for his government. But it wasn't propoganda he was writing. It was a gift, a gift for the families of his buddies.

The list he buried in the dirt floor was never discovered, and so at the end of the war Johnson dug it up. He sealed the list inside a toothpaste tube and didn't take it out until he was safely on an American troop ship, on the way home.

On the ship, an officer asked him, "What you got there?" Johnson said, "It's my list, sir," and he showed it to him. 496 names. A list he had risked his life to complete. But the military showed no immediate interest in the list, aside from a not in Johnson's debriefing report. It took many years for people to discover its value, and it remained largely hidden until it appeared in a Reader's Digest article and a History Channel

documentary. But now, at Korean War Veteran's reunions, Johnson is overwhelmed by relatives who want to hug and thank him. Those who have lost loved ones are anxious to see the list, which Johnson has in a scrapbook and when they find their loved one's name, you can sense their relief and gratitude. As long as a man is on the list, he is not truly lost. [NOTE 1]

Johnny Johnson risked his life to complete his list—a piece of paper that has brought true peace to the families of his fallen comrades. It is a record that cost him considerable pain and suffering, but in the end he has no regrets about putting it together. Johnny's list is a righteous roster, no doubt about it. But it pales in size or significance to God's list. To get on Johnny's list, you just had to die; to get on God's list, someone had to die for you. (pause)

This divine directory is called "the Book of Life" in Revelation chapter 20 and verse 12. Admission to the eternal city of God will be limited to "only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (chapter 21 and verse 27). In Luke, Jesus invites His disciples to "rejoice that their names are written in heaven" (10:20). Hebrews speaks of "the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven" (12:23). And in His letter to the Philippians, the apostle Paul speaks of colleagues who have struggled beside him in the work of the gospel, people "whose names are in the book of life" (Phil 4:3).

[NOTE 2] What a list, huh? And what a price Jesus has paid to put it together! Jesus didn't just risk His life He willingly gave His life. Like Johnny Johnson, Jesus was a man on a mission, a mission that would cost Him significant bodily pain and emotional hardship. Jesus played the role of THE HIGH PRIEST, a person who had the job of performing temple sacrifices to bring people forgiveness of their sins. But unlike an earthly priest, Jesus offered His own blood—not the blood of some calf or goat or lamb. Killed on the cross, Jesus was slaughtered in an unbelievably humiliating, excruciating and bloody sacrifice designed to bring us back to a right relationship with God for all time. He "offered Himself without blemish to God," says the Bible in verse 14, in a sacrifice designed to "purify our consciences from dead works to worship the living God!" (Heb 9:14). So you can see why it is so important to worship God! It is vitally important to our spiritual life that we affirm God's worth, give Him glory, honor and praise! Because He deserves it, calls for it, yes even commands it.

Jesus' death on the cross gives us a place on the list. Remember the video I showed called "One Drop of Blood"? Each one of the people that called on the mercy of Jesus, claimed Him as their Savior and claimed the blood of Christ on the cross as their payment for debt was taken up to heaven. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross offers us an opportunity to join the roll call of the redeemed, the sanctuary of the saints—all the saints, those who are forgiven, purified, renewed and restored. When you are on this list, you can never be lost! [NOTE 3]

We all know that the thing about elite lists is that they are just about impossible to get on. Consider the list of the top 50 richest people in the world you would have to make \$3 billion dollars in net worth. Not an easy task, yay even somewhere on the scale from very unlikely to impossible. Same for getting on the list of Most Powerful Women,

the list of All-Pro football players, cutting a Platinum album, or getting into the Boone and Crocket record book or Guinness Book of World Records.

But the list I am talking about, “The Book of Life” isn’t like those lists. THE LIST is for everyone. John chapter 3 and verse 16 reads, “For God so loved just the perfect people, NO, For God so loved the WORLD that He gave His only Son, so that EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES in Him may not perish but have eternal life.” This gift, getting on “The LIST” is for all who believe and follow Jesus! It is not just for the elite, the ones with the best looks, the favorites, but for ALL!

[NOTE 4] THE LIST is for Life. “I am the resurrection and the life,” says Jesus to Martha. “those who believe in me, even though they die, will live” (John 11:25). This gift brings life to those who die—not just peace to those who have lost loved ones.

[NOTE 5] THE LIST lasts forever! Christ “entered once for all into the Holy Place,” says the letter to the Hebrews, “not with the blood of goats, calves, or lambs, but with His own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption” (9:12), for you and me, for all of us. Jesus gave His life, and the result is eternal redemption!! Jesus Christ’s list is never going to change or diminish or disappear ... ever! It will never diminish or disappear.

[NOTE 6] Jesus has suffered once, for all, so that we might make His “List of Life”. And we can respond as so many have before us, with faith and with gratitude, with wonder and with worship. What a list! You are on the most important list ever created. And the cool thing is, you can not deserve it or lose it. Jesus deserved it for you. You are on THE LIST! **[NOTE 7]** You are in “The Book of Life”, your name is written there. All you need to do to assure yourself of that, is accept the gift Jesus gave you of Himself. Receive Him in your heart as Lord and Savior in prayer. Then live like Jesus is in control of your life, like Jesus is really your Lord and not just an insurance policy against hell. There are no minimum standards for you to follow just in case. Just do your best to live Jesus’ way, follow Jesus. To do that means you read the Bible. To follow Christ is to let the Holy Spirit work in you so that you start to produce the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. If the police arrested you tomorrow for being a Christ-follower, if they examined your life, your words, your thoughts, your actions ... would there be enough evidence to convict you?

[NOTE 8] As you go through this next week remember that you are on “THE LIST”, even though you don’t deserve it. I don’t deserve it, you don’t deserve it. Let us seek to be worthy of that gift, let us live out of gratitude for the gift of eternal life. Let’s show our gratitude for being able to know that our names are written in The BOOK OF LIFE. Let’s provide evidence to those around us that we are Christ-followers in the way we act, talk, and make decisions!

Sermon Notes for "The List" based on Hebrews 9: 11-14
Given at Doster Community Church February 5, 2023

- I. Private Johnson's list gave comfort to the families of the dead soldiers because if their loved one's name was on the list he was not "truly lost." If you get on "God's List", "The Book of Life," then you are truly saved, you have eternal life, certainly NOT lost.
- II. Jesus offered Himself as the sacrificial Lamb without blemish to God "to purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!" Hebrews 9:14. That is why it is so important to worship (Give God praise, honor, and glory).
- III. Unlike most elite lists, THE LIST (Book of Life) is not hard to get on, it is for everyone. God desires that everyone would come to belief and faith in Him and have eternal life. See John 3:16.
- IV. The LIST is for life. "I am the Resurrection and the Life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live" John 11:25
- V. The LIST lasts forever. Jesus Christ "entered once for all into the Most Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption." Hebrews 9:12.
- VI. This is a list you want to be on. Please do what you need to do to make sure your name is in "The Book of Life", THE LIST of all lists. It is simple. Accept Jesus Christ as your LORD and your SAVIOR through prayer. Then seek to live HIS way, do your best to grow closer to Jesus, live more like He lived, every day.
- VII. None of us can ever deserve to be on THE LIST, but God offers access to us. RECEIVE HIM and live like Jesus is both LORD (meaning He is in control) and Savior (meaning He gives you eternal life -meaning you go to Heaven when you die).
- VIII. NOW, what do we do about this? First, make sure that you are on THE LIST, officially, once for all time, receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior (Pray). Second, live in such a way that if you were accused of being a Christ-follower, there would be enough evidence to convict you. Think about that this week. Pray and ask God what evidence HE wants you to provide this week. Make that your "I will _____" statement.