

Growing up, I was once watching tv with one of my sister's friends. She was a real chatterbox. At some point, she told me that the girls preferred my brother over me. Outwardly, I frowned and rolled my eyes. Inwardly, I said to myself, how can this be? I'm better looking than my brother. Granted, nobody mistook either one of us for a Cuomo brother 😊. She answered my question without my having to ask it. She said my brother was a bit of a jerk and women like a little attitude. I was too nice. I imagine an evolutionary psychologist would say that some women prefer a man with a bit of an edge to him. Some women want to be protected. Also, a bit of an edge is needed to go out into the world and earn a living that can support a family. I learned a hard truth that day. Some women love "bad boys."

Here is another hard truth. God loves "bad boys" too. The Bible is littered with examples. God chose the deceitful Jacob over his brother Esau. He chose Moses to lead His people out of Israel, despite the fact that Moses had killed a man in a fight. God chose David, despite the fact that David was going to sleep with Bathsheba and order her husband Uriah killed. Jesus predisposed humanity for the last two thousand years to feel badly for "bad boys" everywhere by the telling of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Furthermore, two of Jesus' last acts on the Cross were to: (1) forgive those who put Him to death and (2) to assure the good thief that on that very day, he would be with Him in Paradise.



Jesus' love for "bad boys" didn't end with His Death on the Cross. Today's first reading recounts one of the most famous stories in the Bible. It describes Paul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus and his subsequent conversion. God designates the most ruthless persecutor of the infant Church to lead His mission to the Gentiles.

Why did God choose Paul over a "nice" guy? My guess is because Paul was a man with an iron will. Paul was willing to pay any price for a cause he believed in. History proves that God made a wise choice. Paul was thrown out of synagogues for proclaiming Christ. His presence alone instigated riots among adversaries. Paul withstood beatings, whippings, a stoning, being double-crossed by false brethren. At times, he lacked food, drink and adequate sleep. Plus, he survived being shipwrecked. He suffered all this to propagate the Gospel. We, "the Gentiles," are the beneficiaries of his sacrifices.

Furthermore, Paul's edge could be softened by God's Grace. For example, the love of the right woman sometimes can soften the edge of the right rough and tough guy. If you were to read through the *Acts of the Apostles* and Paul's letters, you would find a fiery guy with a big heart.

Attention all bad boys and bad girls! God wants you! He wants to use your toughness and fiery personalities to spread the Gospel. It's never been easy to live out the Gospel. It always involves an internal battle with our fallen natures. It also involves an external battle with the world. Aristotle once wrote that trying to be a virtuous person in this world is like being a general of an army, who wakes up everyday surrounded by an enemy force larger and better equipped than his own force. Aristotle's "Ideal Man" simply buckles the chin strap of his helmet, rallies his forces and begins the battle. For these reasons, we need bad boys and bad girls to come to Christ. In the process of doing battle their hearts will be softened. Saint Paul, pray for us! Saint Joseph, the Worker, pray for us!*

*Today is the memorial of Saint Joseph, the Worker. Please pray that we all return to work soon. Many people are going through a financial crisis.