



## Paul's Letter to The Romans

### Too Many Notes... Romans 5:1-11

Sometimes, the best literature or the best films are those that have a series of interwoven plots or themes. Such books or movies can be quite complex. Their complexity may be seen in the number of themes, the number of characters or even the number of conflicts that are introduced or developed. Or their complexity may be contained in the way the characters are made to interact or the themes or conflicts or are woven together. Of course, whenever we come across such novels or such movies we may come away with an unflagging feeling that we probably missed something or probably failed to appreciate some character or conflict or subplot in the story. Now when that happens, it seems to me that there are really only two possible ways we can respond. Either we can admit that we are overmatched and walk away mumbling to ourselves or we can reapply ourselves to go through it again, to try to ferret out what is being said, what is being addressed. Of course, therein lies the dilemma. There are some movies and novels, probably most of them,

that are not worth going through twice. Some movies and some novels have no plot, have no character development, have no redeemable value and simply try to disguise that fact by being complex. Such movies...such novels ought to be laid aside. They are not worth our time or our energy. Of course, the problem is that if we walk away too quickly we may not realize that what we are reading or what we are watching is actually a treasure. We may fail to understand that what is being said, what is being portrayed is truly profound. By walking away too soon we may simply be showing our own ignorance or lack of sophistication. I have in mind the Austrian Emperor, Joseph II, who once told Mozart after listening to one of his very complex operas,

My dear, young man, your work is ingenious. It's quality work...the only problem is that there are just too many notes, that's all. Simply cut a few and it will be perfect.<sup>1</sup>

You see the Emperor Joseph II was just overwhelmed. There was so much to process in listening to Mozart's music that he simply could not keep up. He had neither the ear nor the musical sophistication to recognize the grandeur of what he was hearing. Of course, history has born out just how idiotic his response was and how his response betrayed a complete lack of appreciation for Mozart's genius and

passion. But it is easy to be too hard on him. It is especially easy for me to be too hard on him.

Part of the reason for that is that I was not raised in an environment where there was a lot of culture. I was raised in a home where Earnest Tubbs and Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys were held in much higher esteem than say William Faulkner or even William Shakespeare. You see I was raised, and I know this will be a complete shock to you all, as a hick. Now I am not bitter about it. My parents were wonderful, godly people who did the best they could and loved me as much as any parent anywhere ever loved their child. But they were not very sophisticated. They were good and kind and wise but unsophisticated. As a result, the moment I gained a bit of education I became ashamed of the fact that I was actually a hick and tried to pass myself off as an intellectual. I wasn't really an intellectual, of course. I was and to a large degree still am a bit of a pseudo-intellectual. It was nothing for me to spend hours reading something like **"Much Ado About Nothing"** all the while wishing Shakespeare had written it in English.

I bring that up because that is the way Romans 5:1-11 makes me feel. It is so complex, so interwoven, and so wonderful that it makes me want to cry out, **"Paul that's too much. Just stop. There are too many**

**notes, I can't take it all in...just stop."** But, of course, that is the very nature of God's wonderful, multi-faceted salvation. It is like a complex movie that can be reviewed on the basis of cinematography, or sound, or screenplay, or musical score, or plot, or performances, or direction. There are just so many different ways, so many different aspects in which to study it. That's why, of course, there are so many different terms to learn in the study of God's wondrous work of salvation. That's why the terms justification, satisfaction, substitution, imputation, reconciliation, redemption, propitiation and adoption are all needed. No doubt there are ten thousand other words we could use to contemplate the richness of what God has done for us in Christ. But we tend sometimes to get lazy in our study of theology. I don't mean it as a criticism and certainly it is just as true of my own life as it is yours but we tend to put effort and serious reflection into what we treasure. I mean you ask any young woman that is engaged, **"Tell me about your ring"** and she will launch into a discussion of color, cut, clarity, carat size and so on until you will know more about her ring than you ever hoped. You ask a golfer about his latest driver and he will be able to tell you the shaft length and composition, the head loft, the alloy used to construct the head, what kind of grip his club has and how many yards or how much accuracy its added to his game. But oftentimes you can ask a Christian to expound on what God has done for them in saving them and about as

far as they can go is that God has set things right and that they are on their way to heaven. You know brothers and sisters, such things ought not be.

Now I am the first to admit that the failure of laypeople to spend time contemplating God's great work of salvation is really the fault of those of us charged with expounding the Word of God. We ought to spend some time, I think, regularly trying to plumb the depths of God's love, regularly trying to explore the vast richness of all that God has done for us and you can't do that without working hard. In fact, I think a systematic applied study of these great truths of salvation would just do a whole world of good in promoting our gratitude for what God has actually done. Listen to what C.S. Lewis wrote:

Now the layman or amateur needs to be instructed as well as to be exhorted. In this age his need for knowledge is particularly pressing. Nor would I admit any sharp division between the two kinds of book. For my own part I tend to find the doctrinal books often more helpful in devotion than the devotional books, and I rather suspect that the same experience may await many others. I believe that many who find that "nothing happens" when they sit down, or kneel down, to a book of devotion, would find that the heart sings unbidden while they are working their way through a tough bit of theology with a pipe in their teeth and a pencil in their hand.<sup>2</sup>

Now I wanted to take the time to say these things to you this morning because we have come at last to chapter of Romans and it is a bit of a turning point in Paul's argument. You see Paul starting off by telling the Romans in 1:16-17 that a "**righteousness from God**" had been revealed in the gospel, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last. Then in Romans 1:18-3:20 just when we expected Paul to flesh out what that righteousness is and how it is obtained he slips instead into a discussion of why we need such a righteousness in the first place. You will remember, I hope, the vile picture Paul painted of fallen humanity's lack of righteousness. You will remember, I hope, how he traced man's sinful suppression of the truth of God. You will remember how he related man's sinful self-will and self-worship and idolatry to God's abiding wrath and judgment. You will remember how in a steady downward drumbeat he pushed us toward his conclusion in Romans 3:19-20 where he finally put it all together and gasped...

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 3:19**...Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. <sup>20</sup> For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

You see Paul's design was to get us to see, to get us to believe that we really are hopeless and helpless in our sin. He wanted us to understand that we have no righteousness of our own, that spiritually we are destitute and naked like homeless beggars longing for shelter under the withering blast of God's holy, relentless righteousness.

Of course, Paul did not leave us there groaning under the weight and condemnation of our own sinful actions. He got us there but he did not leave us there. That's when he turned to tell us of God wonderfully kind intention to save us through Christ's work on the cross. Do you remember how he started verse 3:21?

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 3:21**...But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it-- <sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:

I love that. You see what Paul has done has been to say this, **"There is a righteousness from God. Of course, sinful fallen men do not have it. Even good and moral men do not have it. In fact, no one in the world possesses this righteousness of God inherently but God provides it to all who cast their hope in Christ to all who lay hold of His atoning work through faith."**

That then is the theme that Paul expounds and expands in the rest of chapter three and chapter four. There he fleshes out how God has provided this righteousness through the justifying work of Christ and how He applies it to sinful men and women, boys and girls through faith and through faith alone. Now I have talked about all these things at length over the last few weeks but you will forgive me, I know, for going over it again. I just cannot help but get giddy when I contemplate such things...things like the fact that my sin and all its guilt, and not just in part but the whole, is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more...praise the Lord, praise the Lord oh my soul.

Now I said when I started that Paul hits a bit of a turning point here in chapter five and I want to tell what it is. He is going to stop talking about justification. That is he is going to stop talking about what justification is and how Christ's death secured it and how we can lay hold of it by faith apart from the works of the law and he is going to start talking about...about...about the implications of justification.<sup>3</sup> Now I make that point because there are those that think that Paul moves on to talk about the doctrine of sanctification in chapters 5-8 but I can assure you that that is not right.<sup>4</sup> In fact, Paul doesn't really ever really talk about sanctification in Romans, at least not directly. When he does issue imperatives or exhortations it is always in light of our having been justified. You see, in Romans, Paul is like that girl

with an engagement ring. He can't think of anything else. Everything he sees is through the filter of our justification, through the filter of this imputed righteousness we now have in Christ and he keeps turning it over and over looking at first from this angle and then from that angle marveling at its brilliance and clarity and color. You can see that, I think, as we finally look at Romans 5:1.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 5:1**...Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup> Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Now you can see Paul wants to consider some of the implications of our having been justified and his first conclusion is that **“having been justified we have peace with God.”** Now brothers and sisters let me ask you here not to read that this way, **“Therefore having been justified, we have peace in all our circumstances.”** That may or may not be true. I certainly hope it is true and the elders and deacons in this church are constantly praying for you that it will come to be true but I doubt it is true and I know it is most assuredly not what Paul is saying.

You see what he is saying rather is this and I want you to listen carefully to me regarding this. He is saying, **“Now that we are**

**justified, we are no longer under God's wrath." He is saying, "We are no longer God's enemies but are now instead God's friends."**

Now doesn't that really better address the point that he has been making all along? In Romans 1:18, Paul told us that the wrath of God was being revealed by God from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth of God in wickedness.<sup>5</sup> In Romans 2:5, Paul told us that those that who continue on stubbornly with unrepentant hearts are storing up wrath for themselves, just as if they were going to the bank week after week making deposits. In Romans 2:8, Paul warns us that all those who are self-seeking and reject the truth will most assuredly have to face God's righteous indignation.

You see Paul hasn't been concerned with the Romans temporal welfare. It's not that he doesn't care about their well-being. Rather, it is a matter of perspective. What's a little tribulation in light of being on the outs with God? For that matter what is poverty or riches, health or sickness, happiness or even sadness in comparison to being under the abiding, withering wrath of almighty God? You see those things are important but only secondarily.<sup>6</sup> The issue is, really is, do you have peace with God. If you have peace with God, the burdens of this world suddenly become bearable. Disappointments are less disappointing. Poverty is less burdensome. Cancer is less frightening.

Loneliness and depression are less debilitating. Oh that I could get you to appreciate the reality of that great truth. When I think of the ten thousand temporal problems that Christians face in their lives, I wonder if ninety percent of those problems might not disappear altogether if Christians were to really and truly appropriate the fact that they are no longer on the outs with God, that they no longer under God's abiding wrath, that they do not have to perform in order to win God's approval. Whenever I think of those great truths I cannot help but think back to that wonderful little line at the beginning of chapter two in *Knowing God* by J.I. Packer where he writes:

I walked in the sunshine with a scholar who had effectively forfeited his prospects of academic advancement by clashing with church dignitaries over the gospel of grace. **"But it doesn't matter,"** he said at length, **"for I've known God and they haven't."** The remark was a mere parenthesis, a passing comment on something I had said, but it has stuck with me and set me thinking.<sup>7</sup>

You see Packer's point and the Apostle Paul's point two thousand years ago are all the same. The problem, the ultimate problem, man faces is not poverty or ignorance or sickness. It is not cancer, or heart failure or AIDS. It's not even loneliness or mental well-being. Really and truly man's ultimate problem is God Himself. That is why Paul focuses on the implications of justification. When we are

justified...when we are clothed with the righteousness of God that is based upon Christ's redeeming work and comes to us through faith alone...we are at peace with God. We do not have to come to the bargaining table. There is no need to strike a bargain at all. The bargain has been made. Christ's precious blood has bought and paid for and eternally secured our peace with God. You know invariably when I think of that I almost cannot help but think of young William Cowper.

Young William was a sensitive boy. Looking at his life, that is not particularly surprising. His father, a respected minister, was always too busy for William. And when he did take time out for him, they were both so uncomfortable neither one of them knew how to act. But that was all right with young William drew his comfort from his mother.

And that was fitting for William's mother loved him; she doted on him. He was so small and frail that she could not help herself. She read to him and pampered him. And then suddenly, when William was only six years old, she died. William was inconsolable. Desperate to help him get control of himself, his nurse told William that his mother had gone on a trip and that she would return tomorrow. Pitifully, William waited at the window the next day, and the next,

and the next but she did not return. William began to withdraw inside himself.

His father, not knowing what do so with so small and frail a child, decided to send him off to boarding school. It was a terrible decision. By the time William arrived at school he was almost catatonic. And the older boys sensing his weakness started in on him almost immediately. They beat him and savaged him both mentally and physically. William withdrew even further into himself but somehow he survived. He consoled himself with his books. The same obsessive traits that plagued him late at night in his loneliness served him well in his studies. William it seemed had a gift with words. By the time he was a teenager he was a noteworthy scholar. It was the first happy time in his life. It didn't last very long.

In his thirties, William's life and sanity fell completely apart. His best friend drowned. His father died. His fiancé, at the insistence of her parents, broke off their engagement. He was penniless and isolated, drifting in and out of sanity. In one of his few moments of clarity, William decided to kill himself. In a period of two days, he tried three different times to kill himself. In his last attempt, he attempted to hang himself only to have the fabric cord he used break at the last moment. When he was discovered, he was still lying on the floor of

his flat with the broken cord still twisted about his neck. Because he was incoherent, because he had tried to kill himself, he was promptly placed in an insane asylum.

Now it was in that insane asylum that William found his truest friend. You see while he was there in that terrible place William found a kindly old doctor that talked to him plainly of sin and of redemption. In due time, William found that it was not the ignoring of his sin that brought him relief. He found that relief came only when he recognized his need and sought refuge in God's own provision for his sin.

Over time, William began to console himself in the gospel and in writing poetry and hymns. He met a godly pastor, a man named John Newton, who agreed to spend time with him, encouraging him in his Christian growth. They even wrote a few hymns together. Before long, William began to come out of his depression. Not all of his problems went away. He still battled depression but he was never the same. You see William began to face his own demons in the light of Christ's justifying work. When he meditated on his own unworthiness, he found peace in the blood of the cross. He wrote many hymns. The one you are certain to know goes like this:

*There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stain.  
Lose all their guilty stain; lose all their guilty stain.  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stain.*

And that is of course speaks to the very heart of Paul's point. Since we have been justified, we are at peace with God. All our guilty stain is washed away. God is not angry with us. In fact, we are God's friends. In fact, later on Paul will say we are more than just friends; he will say we are His dear adopted children.

Now when I started this lesson I spoke at length about the fact that there are interwoven themes here in Romans 5:1-11 and I want to take the remaining time that I have to show you Paul's two major themes woven through the rest of these wonderful verses. Both of his themes flow out of the fact that we have been justified through Christ's atoning work and have peace with God. One looks backward to where we came from and one looks to the present reality of what we possess.

Now, Paul's first theme, the one that looks back, concerns the idea of God's having dealt with us graciously when we were altogether

unlovely. I think you can say that woven through Romans 5:1-11 is the theme that God delivered us when we were in complete disarray. He loved us when we were just a mess. He justified us and brought us to a state of peace when we were dead to any form of godliness whatsoever. You can see that particular theme, I think, in verses 6, 8 and 10. Now the thing I want you to notice in these verses is Paul's downward assessment of man's righteousness. What I mean by that is this, **"Each time he describes man's condition he seems to paint the picture a bit bleaker."** Look first at verse 6.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 5:6**...For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die--

Now do you see his point? By **"right time"** he means the time of our greatest need.<sup>8</sup> And that time was when we were powerless. That is, we had no positive strength, no wherewithal to make ourselves righteous before God. But it wasn't just that we were weak and powerless, we were without hint of godliness. And what was it that Christ did during the point of our greatest need? He died for us. I think Paul could never really get over the miracle of forgiveness. In fact, that seems to be his point as he draws his conclusion, **"Oh sometimes a person might die for a righteous man. It's rare, of**

course but it might happen. In fact, some person out of love and affection might be willing to die for a good man, not a perfect man but a good man.<sup>9</sup> But that is not what Christ did. He didn't die for the righteous. He didn't die for the godly. He died for us when we were helpless and hopeless, when we were without any godliness at all." And as if to emphasize that point he presses on in verse 8. But as he does he turns downward.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 5:8**...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

You see Paul's point is that Christ didn't just die for us when we were spiritually powerless or without any positive righteousness. No, He died for us when we were positively wicked. That's what he means by "**sinners**". And his conclusion here is that if it is true Christ justified us by His blood we will be saved from God's wrath, which is exactly parallel to what he said in verses one and two when he said we were at peace with God.

Then finally in verse 10, Paul finishes his downward assessment of the condition we were in when we were justified by Christ's death.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 5:10**...For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

And his point there is that we were justified not just when we were powerless or even ungodly or even sinners. We were justified when we were bitter enemies. God reconciled us to Himself. The term that Paul uses is one often used to describe bitter military enemies. It was when we were in that condition that He blotted out our alienation. He propitiated His own wrath and Paul says here, **“If all that is true because of Christ’s death isn’t it even more true now that Christ has risen from the dead? If he accomplished that in dying isn’t our salvation even more secure in light of His resurrected, exalted position to the right hand of God?”**

Now, that sums up Paul’s assessment of the condition we were in when we were justified and you can see how meditating on the state we were in will certainly give us a new appreciation of His kindness to us in Christ. Of course, Paul doesn’t sugarcoat the depth of his sin. He had a genuine understanding of the depth of sin and because he did he had genuine understanding of how remarkable our salvation truly is. I think you can see that throughout the New Testament but especially in the book of Acts as Paul gives his testimony. You see Paul’s conversion on the Road to Damascus comes up three times in

Acts. It comes up in chapter nine, in chapter 22 in his defense before the mob and in chapter 26 in his defense before Agrippa. In fact, I think it can be argued that it comes up in 1 Corinthians 15:9, Galatians 1:13 and 1:23, and even 1 Timothy 1:15.<sup>10</sup> If that is the case, Paul either mentions directly or by allusion some seven times in the New Testament that God turned him around when he was an enemy. And you know what, brothers and sisters that is our story too. That is why I love this wonderful quote by Chrysostom so much.

You know the fact of His saving us, and saving us when we were in such plight, and doing it by means of His Only begotten, and not merely by His Only begotten, but by the Blood of His only begotten, weaves for us endless crowns to glory in. For there is nothing in this world that counts so much in the way of glory and confidence, as being treated as the friends of God, and finding a Friend in Him that loveth us.<sup>11</sup>

Now finally in the few remaining minutes we have, let me quickly cover Paul's analysis of what our peace with God means now here in the present. Look at verse 2.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 5:2**...Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

The grace into which we now stand is this wonderful state of justification that Paul has been talking about and you can see that being in that state means that we rejoice. Not that we ought to rejoice but that we do rejoice. But notice what it is that we rejoice in. We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. That means that rejoice in the fact that one day we will fully see His glory and even be change into the likeness of His glory.

Of course, you may be thinking, **“Yes I do rejoice in the hope of the glory of God but that is my future expectation, Right now life is hard and there are disappointments.”** Brothers and sisters look at how Paul addresses that very issue in the verse 3.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 5:3**...More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup> and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Do you see his point? His point is that because we have peace with God, because we recognize and rejoice in our future hope, we cannot help but rejoice even in our suffering. Now it is not that we rejoice about the suffering itself. We are not like those ancient ascetics who bless the maggots cleaning out their wounds. We are not masochistic. Still, we rejoice *in* our suffering because we know that that it

produces this wonderful chain of graces culminating in hope. You see suffering exercises our hope like weightlifting exercises our muscles. And the hope that God gives us in it does not disappoint because God has poured out His love in our hearts through the abiding presence of His Holy Spirit.

And then skipping all the way down to verse eleven, we see that we cannot help but rejoice in our God Himself because of the reconciliation we have now received.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 5:11**...More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

You know every time I read that verse I cannot help but think Sir Thomas Moore's famous quote and complaint against the English Reformers. He said they were men too frivolous, too giddy, too joyful in their salvation. They were men drunk with the doctrine of justification. Oh that our culture might come to view us that same way and they will brothers and sisters as we come to meditate and ponder and learn to fully appreciate and comprehend the wondrously complex and interwoven richness of all that God has given us in this great justifying work of Christ.

*Man of sorrows, what a name  
For the Son of God who came  
Ruined sinners to reclaim  
Hallelujah, what a Savior.*

Let's pray.

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<sup>1</sup> This quote is modified from the movie *Amadeus*. The actual quote as far as I can tell was something closer to, "My dear boy...too many notes...much, much too busy."

<sup>2</sup> C.S. Lewis, "Introduction" to *Athanasius' On the Incarnation* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1944; reprinted 1998), 8.

<sup>3</sup> C.K. Barrett, *Romans: The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1957), 101. "For three and a half chapters Paul has dealt with righteousness, judgment, and justification. He can now presuppose justification, the result of God's gracious act of redemption in Jesus Christ, and proceed to consider some of its consequences. He presupposes it not as a human experience on which men may build, but as an act of God, a stage in God's dealings with his people."

<sup>4</sup> C.H. Dodd, *The Epistle to the Romans* in the Moffatt NT Commentary Series (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932; reprinted 1947), 71. Dodd sees the transition in vv. 1-11 as being from justification to salvation or sanctification.

<sup>5</sup> C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans: Volume 1, Introduction and Commentary on Romans 1-8* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975; reprint, 1992), 256.

<sup>6</sup> S. Lewis Johnson, "Peace!" *Emmaus Journal* 4:1 (Summer 1995): 24-5. "S. Lewis Johnson relates the following story told by H.A. Ironsides: At the close of the war between the States, we are told that a troop of Federal Cavalry were riding along a road between Richmond and Washington. Suddenly they saw a poor wretch, clothed in the ragged remnants of a Confederate uniform come out of the bush. He hailed the Captain who drew rein and waited for him. He gasped out, **"I am starving to death. Can you help me? Can you give me some food?"** The Captain said, **"Starving to death! Why don't you go into Richmond and get what you need?"** The other answered, **"I dare not, for if I did I would be arrested. Three weeks ago I became utterly disheartened and I deserted from the Confederate army, and I have been hiding in the woods ever since waiting for an opportunity to get through the lines to the north, for I knew if I were arrested I would be shot for deserting in time of war."** The Captain looked at him in amazement and said, **"Haven't you heard the news?"** **"What news?"** the poor fellow gasped. **"Why, the war is over. Peace has been made. General Lee surrendered to General Grant at Appomattox two weeks ago. The Confederacy is ended."** **"What?"** he said, **"peace has been made for two weeks, and I have been starving in the woods because I did not know it?"** Oh, that was the gospel of peace to him."

<sup>7</sup> J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1973; reprinted 1993), 24.

<sup>8</sup> F.F. Bruce, *Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Tyndale Press, 1963), 123.

<sup>9</sup> John Stott, *Romans: God's Good News For the World*, (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 145. Stott distinguishes between "righteous" and "good." Most commentators do not. "Paul's fourth descriptive epithet is that we were still powerless (6a), meaning that we were helpless to rescue ourselves. 'Sinners', 'ungodly', enemies' and 'powerless'. This is the apostle's ugly fourfold portrayal of us. Yet it is for us that God's Son died. Why, he adds, very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man (probably referring to somebody whose uprightness is rather cold, clinical and unattractive), though for a good man (whose goodness is warm, generous and appealing) someone might possibly dare to die (7). But God (the stark contrast is underlined) 'commendeth' (AV), demonstrates (NIV), even 'proves' (REB) his own love for us (a love distinct from every other love, a love uniquely God's own) in this: While we were still sinners (neither good nor righteous, but ungodly, enemies and powerless), Christ died for us (8)."

<sup>10</sup> <sup>NIV</sup> **1 Corinthians 15:9**...For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>NIV</sup> **Galatians 1:13**...For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. <sup>NIV</sup> **Galatians 1:23**...They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." <sup>NIV</sup> **1 Timothy 1:15**...Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the worst.

<sup>11</sup> John Chrysostom, "Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans" trans. by J.R. Morris and W.H. Simcox from the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Vol. 11* edited by Philip Schaff (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1889; reprint 1994), 334.