

## II. God's Justification of Unrighteous Human Beings Through Christ

### Romans 3: 21-5:21

A. The first segment begins in Romans 3: 21 with a sharp contrast to which has preceded it. In fact, it picks up the key ideas of the theme, back in Romans 1: 16-17, and develops them.

Paul having stated in 3:20 "that no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law," asserts in 3:21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known; and he begins to explain how this can be.

1. First, he says that the Old Testament witnesses to this righteousness apart from the law. In the next segment (chapter 4) he is going to provide us with instances of this witness.

Let us pause and affirm a very important principle: The Old Testament does not teach "salvation by human works." Salvation has always been by grace through faith, and has always rested upon the atonement of Christ, whether viewed in prospect or in retrospect. Righteousness from Adam to Christ was always "apart from law."

2. Second, Paul says that this righteousness of God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, without distinction between Jews and Gentiles. Romans 3: 22  
In our first message we noted two means of the term "the righteousness of God:"

- (a) first, God's attribute or characteristic of righteousness;
- (b) and second God's standard of righteousness addressed to man's obedience. His perfect Law.

Neither of these meanings fits here, since God's attribute of righteousness does not come through faith, nor does God's Law come through faith. What then, can "the righteousness of God" mean in verse 22?