

In the first major strand of thought in this section, he has amply demonstrated that all unsaved human beings are unrighteous.

In the second major strand of thought he has shown us that unrighteous human beings deserve condemnation for their sins, that they are standing under God's wrath, and that in the day of God's righteous judgment they will not be declared righteous, but rather will be declared guilty and treated accordingly. Paul says that there will be wrath and anger, trouble and distress for every human being who does evil.

The apostle has painted a very dark picture of mankind in this first section of the epistle. Man's past and his present disclose the great fact of SIN. Man's future discloses the great fact of JUDGMENT. Is there no hope for mankind?

Paul gives the answer to this question in the second major section of the epistle, found in 3:21-5:21.

II. GOD'S JUSTIFICATION OF SOME UNRIGHTEOUS HUMAN BEINGS THROUGH CHRIST

This section divides into four segments.

The first segment (3:29-31) is the heart of the gospel -- how God can declare righteous those who are unrighteous, but who nevertheless come to trust in Christ and His redemptive work for salvation from their sin and its consequences. This is the doctrine of justification by faith.

The second segment (4:1-25) provides us with an example (not merely an illustration) of justification by faith -- Abraham, who was declared righteous, not on the basis of a righteousness that came from himself, through the keeping of the Law of God, but on the basis of a righteousness that came from God, through faith in God and His salvation.

The third segment (5:1-11) details a number of the blessings that accompany justification by faith.

The fourth segment (5:12-21) presents a sustained parallel, comparing and contrasting the condemnation which comes to those who are in Adam and the justification which comes to those who are in Christ.

Let us look at each of these segments, some in detail and some briefly, and let us attempt to answer the question, How can unrighteous human beings become righteous before God?

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

Having stated in 3:20 that "no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the Law," Paul 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.

First, he says that the Old Testament witnesses to this righteousness apart