

is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last." (italics added) Or perhaps "by faith" emphasizes the method by which God's righteousness is revealed, and "to faith" emphasizes the recipients to whom God's righteousness is revealed, i.e., those who believe. (as, for example, in 3:22, where Paul says, "even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe;")

In any case this is the theme of the epistle: the good news of deliverance from sin through the revelation of God's righteousness to everyone who trusts in Jesus Christ.

However, when we move from 1:17 to 1:18 we strike a tremendous contrast! In 1:16-17 we find the righteousness of God being revealed to all those who are believing the gospel. In 1:18 ff we find the wrath of God being revealed against all those who are continuing in their unrighteousness.

This brings us to the first major section of the epistle, 1:18-3:20, which deals with God's condemnation of all human beings for their unrighteousness.

I. GOD'S CONDEMNATION OF ALL HUMAN BEINGS FOR THEIR UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

A. The first major strand of thought in this section is that of mankind's unrighteousness.

Paul develops two lines of evidence to demonstrate that all unsaved human beings are unrighteousness.

1. In the first line of evidence he shows that all unregenerate human beings are opposers of the truth of God -- the revelation of the knowledge of God as divine, all-powerful Creator, righteous Lawgiver, and just Judge.

Instead of glorifying, worshipping, thanking, serving, and obeying God, unregenerate human beings reject Him and accept lies, create false gods, and worship and serve them instead of Him. (note 1:13-23, 25, 28).

2. In the second line of evidence Paul shows that all unregenerate human beings are transgressors of the Law of God -- the revelation of the righteous will of God addressed to man's obedience.

Instead of giving hearty obedience to God's righteous Law, they turn to various forms of unrighteousness and practice them, even though they know that their sin is wrong, and that a life of unrighteousness justly deserves divine retribution.

The Law of God reveals God's perfect standard of righteousness, which in turn reflects God's attribute of righteousness.

Whenever God's standard of righteousness confronts fallen human beings it reveals sin. Romans 3:20 tells us that "by the law is the knowledge of sin."

And what is sin? I John 3:4 tells us that "Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law."