

human beings have disobeyed the law of God, what are we to understand by "all fall short of the glory of God"?

God's glory is the magnificence of God's nature, the splendor of the manifestation of His characteristics. Falling short of God's splendor cannot be a sinful thing (and whatever it means seems to be sinful in the context of verse 23), since human beings are created, and necessarily fall short of God's magnificence. So we can't understand falling short of God's glory as meaning that we are created and finite, since there is nothing wrong or bad about that! What then can the verse mean?

Perhaps it will help us to think of the first two meanings of the phrase "the righteousness of God" – God's characteristic of righteousness, and God's standard of righteousness, His law. God's glory is the splendor of His nature, *and one of the characteristics of His nature is His righteousness. This characteristic is reflected in His righteous standard, His law. Falling short of God's glory in the sense of falling short of God's righteous law, which in turn is a reflection of His characteristic of righteousness, which is one aspect of His glorious nature is wrong and bad. In fact, falling short of God's righteous standard in His law is sin and is blameworthy.*

Therefore I would suggest that we understand Romans 3:23 to be saying that all human beings have sinned (i.e., transgressed God's law), and that they all continue to sin (i.e., transgress God's law).

And yet, in verse 24 Paul states that these very sinners, these unrighteous human beings are justified (i.e., declared righteous) freely by God's grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus!

Think of it! GOD DECLARES RIGHTEOUS THE UNRIGHTEOUS!

Someone may be thinking, "How can God do that? Isn't that a contradiction, to say that God declares an unrighteous person righteous?"

Of course, we could respond by saying, "What do you mean, 'How can God do that?' God is God. He can do anything He pleases!

However, we cannot accept this response. Scripture teaches that God cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13), and since one of God's characteristics is truth, He can't contradict Himself; i.e., He can't say that something is so when it isn't! If God pronounces an unrighteous human being righteous, there must be some other basis for doing so than simply saying that God can do anything He pleases!