

In the context faith is connected with salvation; and thus this faith would seem to mean "trust in Christ and His redemptive work as revealed in the gospel."

The phrase "from (or by) faith to faith" is difficult, but the meaning in context of the quotation from Habakkuk 2:4 may help us. The quotation says that "the righteous shall live by faith."

In Habakkuk 2:4 the unrighteous man lives by self-sufficient pride, whereas the righteous man lives by faith. The righteous man lives a life of righteousness by faith. He begins this life by faith, and he continues to live this life by faith. Perhaps the NIV translation captures this idea when it translates Romans 1:17 "for in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last. (emphasis 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 1:18ff 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.