

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."

And in Romans 3:23 we are told that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." This cannot mean that we all fall short of the splendor of God's magnificence, for that would simply mean that we are not God but are finite, a condition that is not blameworthy.

The "glory of God" here must mean God's glorious attribute of righteousness (because this "falling short" is related to sin) as reflected in His perfect standard of righteousness -- His Law -- and the verse must therefore mean that all human beings have sinned (i.e., have transgressed the Law of God, since sin is transgression of the law) and continue to sin (i.e., fall short of God's standard of righteousness, which reflects God's glorious attribute of righteousness).

Paul provides a good deal of evidence to show that unsaved human beings are unrighteous. He does this by pointing out various ways in which human beings transgress the Law of God, especially by violating the Ten Commandments.

MAN'S UNRIGHTEOUSNESS AS REVEALED BY THE
RIGHTEOUS LAW OF GOD SUMMARIZED IN THE
TEN COMMANDMENTS, AS DEVELOPED BY PAUL IN ROMANS 1:1.8-3:20

God's righteous law defines righteousness and unrighteousness for human beings. Sin as unrighteousness is transgression of the law of God. In Romans 3:20 Paul tells us that "by the law is the knowledge of sin." And in I John 3:4 John tells us that "whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law." The following references to violations of the Ten Commandments leave no doubt that Paul views sin as transgression of the law of God.

First Commandment -- "You shall have no other gods."

1:18-21 -- "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities -- his eternal power and divine nature -- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."

1:30 -- "God-haters"