

Romans 11:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

Analysis

Boast not against the branches—*mē katakauchō* (μὴ κατακαυχῶ) is a present imperative prohibition: "stop boasting" or "do not boast." Paul addresses Gentile arrogance toward unbelieving Jews (broken-off branches). The warning is sharp: **But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.** Gentiles did not produce the covenant; they are sustained by it. The root (patriarchs/covenant) bears the branches (believers), not vice versa.

This verse targets Gentile triumphalism—the attitude that "we replaced Israel; they failed." Paul demolishes this: Gentiles are dependents, grafted into Israel's tree. Covenant blessing flows from Israel to the nations, not the reverse. The verb *bastazō* (βαστάζω, "bear/support") emphasizes the root's sustaining role. Gentiles owe everything to the Abrahamic covenant, which is Jewish in origin. Arrogance toward Israel is therefore absurd and ungrateful.

Historical Context

By the late 50s AD, Gentile Christians in Rome may have developed superiority attitudes toward the Jewish minority, especially after Claudius's expulsion. Paul corrects this with force: you are the guests, grafted into their covenant. Humility, not boasting, is appropriate.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What forms does Gentile 'boasting' against Jews take, both historically and today?
2. How does understanding that 'the root bears you' cultivate humility in Gentile believers?
3. What does this verse teach about the church's debt to Israel and Jewish heritage?

Interlinear Text

μὴ	κατακαυχᾶσαι	τῶν	κλάδων·	εἰ	δὲ	κατακαυχᾶσαι		
not	Boast		the branches	if	But	Boast		
G3361	G2620	G3588	G2798	G1487	G1161	G2620		
οὐ	σὺ	τὴν	ρίζα	βαστάζεις	ἀλλ'	ἡ	ρίζα	σέ
not	thou		the root	bearest	but		the root	thee
G3756	G4771	G3588	G4491	G941	G235	G3588	G4491	G4571

Additional Cross-References

Romans 11:20 (Parallel theme): Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

1 Corinthians 10:12 (Parallel theme): Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Romans 3:27 (Parallel theme): Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

John 10:16 (Parallel theme): And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

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