

Romans 2:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?

Analysis

Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?—ὁς ἐν νόμῳ καυχᾶσαι, διὰ τῆς παραβάσεως τοῦ νόμου τὸν θεὸν ἀτιμάζεις (hos en nomō kauchasai, dia tēs parabaseōs tou nomou ton theon atimazeis). Καυχάομαι (kauchomai, "boast") recalls verse 17—Jews legitimately celebrated possessing God's law. But παράβασις (parabasis, "transgression/violation") means crossing boundaries God established. Ἀτιμάζω (atimazō, "dishonor/dishonor") is the opposite of glorifying God.

The fifth and final question drives the dagger home: the very law Jews boasted in becomes instrument of God's dishonor when violated by those who possess it. This fulfills verse 24's quotation of Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:20-23: God's name is blasphemed among Gentiles because His people misrepresent Him through hypocrisy. Every sin by God's covenant people brings reproach on His character, as if He condones or cannot transform those who bear His name.

Boasting in Torah without obeying it is exponentially worse than never having it. James 4:17 states: "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Light increases responsibility; privilege intensifies accountability. The tragic irony: the law meant to bring glory to God (Deuteronomy 4:6-8) becomes vehicle for His dishonor when its guardians violate it while proclaiming it.

Historical Context

Jewish boasting in Torah was pervasive in Second Temple Judaism. Psalms 19, 119 celebrate God's law as perfect, pure, precious. Deuteronomy 4:6-8 taught that Israel's law-keeping would demonstrate God's wisdom to nations. However, prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel condemned Israel's hypocrisy—professing covenant loyalty while practicing injustice, oppression, and idolatry. Ezekiel 36:20-23 specifically mentions Israel profaning God's name among Gentiles, the text Paul quotes in verse 24.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. In what areas do I 'boast in the law'—biblical knowledge, doctrinal orthodoxy, moral standards—while violating it through disobedience?
2. How does my hypocrisy 'dishonor God'—cause unbelievers to blaspheme, discredit the gospel, bring reproach on Christ's name?
3. What sins in my life might cause others to conclude that Christianity doesn't transform, or that God is powerless or indifferent?

Interlinear Text

ὅς	ἐν	νόμου	καυχᾶσαι	διὰ	τῆς	παραβάσεως
Thou	of	the law	that makest thy boast	through	G3588	breaking
G3739	G1722	G3551	G2744	G1223		G3847
τοῦ	νόμου	τὸν	θεὸν	ἀτιμάζεις·		
G3588	the law	G3588	God	dishonourest thou		
	G3551		G2316	G818		

Additional Cross-References

Romans 2:17 (Word): Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

Romans 3:2 (References God): Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Romans 9:4 (Word): Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

John 5:45 (Parallel theme): Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.