

Romans 3:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Analysis

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. The most famous verse in Paul's theodicy: *pantes gar hēmarton kai hysterountai tēs doxēs tou theou* (πάντες γὰρ ἤμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ Θεοῦ, "for all sinned and fall short of the glory of God"). *Hamartanō* (ἀμαρτάνω, "to sin")—aorist tense, likely referring to Adam's sin in which all sinned (5:12) as well as personal sins.

Hysterountai (ὑστεροῦνται, "fall short")—present tense: continuously lacking. *Tēs doxēs tou theou* (τῆς δόξης τοῦ Θεοῦ, "the glory of God") is the divine image, the reflected glory humanity was created to bear (Genesis 1:26-27). We were made as glory-bearers but have become glory-deficients. Every human, without exception, fails to reflect God's character and fulfill our created purpose. This explains "no distinction" (v. 22)—all are equal in their failure.

Historical Context

Jewish theology emphasized that Israel possessed God's glory (shekinah) through the temple and Torah. Paul's declaration that Jews also lack God's glory was shocking. The glory departed (Ezekiel 10), and only Messiah can restore it (2 Corinthians 3:18, 4:6).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How do you "fall short of God's glory" in ways beyond mere moral failure— failing to reflect His image?
2. Why is the universal fact of sin (all have sinned) essential to the universal offer of grace?
3. What would it mean to live as a glory-bearer restored through Christ's righteousness?

Interlinear Text

πάντες γὰρ ἤμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ
all For have sinned and come short of the glory G3588 G1391 G3588

G3956 G1063 G264 G2532 G5302

θεοῦ
of God
G2316

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 7:20 (Sin): For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

Romans 3:9 (Sin): What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

Galatians 3:22 (Sin): But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Romans 11:32 (References God): For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

Romans 3:19 (References God): Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

1 Thessalonians 2:12 (Glory): That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

2 Thessalonians 2:14 (Glory): Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 4:13 (Glory): But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

Romans 5:2 (Glory): By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

1 Peter 5:10 (Glory): But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.