

Romans 2:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,

Analysis

And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness—πέποιθάς τε σεαυτὸν ὁδηγὸν εῖναι τυφλῶν, φῶς τῶν ἐν σκότει (pepoithas te seauton hodēgon einai typhlōn, phōs tōn en skotei). Πέποιθα (pepoitha, "confident/persuaded") indicates settled conviction. Ὁδηγός (hodēgos, "guide") describes one leading another on a path; τυφλός (typhlos, "blind") was Jewish metaphor for Gentiles in spiritual darkness. Φῶς (phōs, "light") versus σκότος (skotos, "darkness") contrasts Israel's enlightenment with Gentile ignorance.

Jews viewed themselves as divinely appointed missionaries to benighted Gentiles, spreading monotheism and ethical monotheism. Isaiah 42:6-7 and 49:6 spoke of Israel as "light to the Gentiles." Jesus claimed this role (John 8:12, 9:5), ultimately commissioning the church (Matthew 5:14-16, Acts 13:47). Paul acknowledges legitimate Jewish calling but will show (v. 21-24) that blind guides and darkened lights are worse than useless—they blaspheme God's name.

The confidence pepoitha carries tragic irony: settled conviction in superiority while practicing identical sins. Jesus used "blind guides" language in Matthew 15:14 and 23:16, 24, condemning Pharisees who claimed spiritual sight while stumbling in darkness. When the guide is blind, both guide and follower fall into the pit (Luke 6:39).

Historical Context

Second Temple Judaism developed robust missionary impulses, making proselytes (Matthew 23:15) and attracting "God-fearers" (Gentiles who attended synagogues). Jews saw themselves as preserving pure monotheism and ethical standards in a pagan world. This was noble calling, but many corrupted it into ethnic supremacy. Rabbinic literature describes Gentiles as "walking in darkness" and needing Jewish instruction. Paul himself was trained to be such a guide (Acts 22:3, Galatians 1:14) until Christ revealed him as the blind one.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. In what areas do I presume to be a 'guide'—teaching, mentoring, leading—while my personal life contradicts my message?
2. How does my confidence in spiritual knowledge create blindness to my own sin and need for ongoing transformation?
3. Am I genuinely reflecting Christ as 'light of the world,' or does my hypocrisy cast darkness instead?

Interlinear Text

πέποιθάς	τε	σεαυτὸν	όδηγὸν	εἰναί	τυφλῶν	φῶς
art confident	And	that thou thyself	a guide	art	of the blind	a light
G3982	G5037	G4572	G3595	G1511	G5185	G5457

τῶν	ἐν	σκότει
G3588	G1722	G4655
of them which are in	darkness	

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 4:10 (Parallel theme): We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.

Matthew 6:23 (Light): But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

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