

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 55

I. Exposition of Chapter Seventeen (Continued).

A. Verses 26 – “And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,”

1. “...He has made from one blood every nation of men...” – This, indirectly is referring to the fact that all of humanity came from one original man, namely Adam. Remember, in dealing with these Gentile pagans, Paul doesn’t use Scripture but, with God’s wisdom, he is able to convey Biblical truth. Dr. Stanley Horton writes:

“God also has made ‘from one man’ (Gk. *ex henos*, ‘out of one’), that is, from Adam, ‘every nation’ of humankind to dwell on the whole face of the earth. We are all part of Adam’s race and no one has room for any special pride of ancestry or of race. (Athenians believed they were a separate race specially created from the soil of Greece.)”¹

2. “...and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,” – This seems to be saying, first of all, that God is the One Who oversees history. This doesn’t mean He causes everything that has ever happened in history, to happen, but there are certain things that God has ordained throughout history. For example, He ordained that Israel would be used to bring forth the Savior of the world. He ordained that Jesus Christ would die for our sins. He also has ordained Christ’s second coming. The idea of “...the boundaries of their dwellings” suggests that God has determined the boundaries of nations. Stanley Horton adds:

“God also ‘determined,’ or fixed, both ‘the times’ (appointed seasons, occasions, opportunities) and ‘exact places’ (boundaries of habitation) of humankind, that is, by separating the dry land from the waters (Gen. 1:9–10). This also implies He regulates the rise and fall of nations (Dan. 4:34–35; 5:18–21).”²

B. Verse 27 – “...so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;” – The word “seek” here means; “to seek after, look for, strive to find.”³ This is telling us that God’s plan and desire is for mankind to want to know Him – to desire to seek Him. The word “grope” means; “to make an effort, despite difficulties, to come to know something, when the chances of success in such an enterprise are not particularly great.”⁴ This was contrary to the way the Greeks thought. Grant Osborne states:

“The next verse (17:27) is also a distinctly Christian (and Jewish) point, that God’s providence does all this ‘so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him.’ The gods of the Greeks were not social beings in terms of seeking fellowship with their creation. They were capricious, often aloof and overall indifferent to humanity. The progress of thought here is significant, moving from seeking to reaching and then finding God. This is the gospel message, picturing God reaching out and humankind finding him.”⁵

1. “...though He is not far from each one of us...” – This is a wonderful statement which is contrary to many philosophies but is true concerning the nature of God. Dr. Bob Utley asserts:

What a wonderful truth. God created us, God is for us, God is with us (cf. Ps. 139)! Paul is forcibly asserting God’s love, care, and presence with all humans. This is the truth of the gospel (cf. Eph. 2:11–3:13).

Paul may be alluding to Deut. 4:7, but extrapolating it to all humans. This is the hidden secret of the New Covenant!⁶

C. Verses 28-29 – “...for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising.” In this verse, Paul quotes from two Greek poets. Again, this is an attempt to use things from their own culture in order to help them be open to the Gospel. Finding things in common with those we minister to sometimes

¹Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 299-300.

²Ibid.

³Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, (AMG Publishers; Revised edition, 1993)

⁴Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 330.

⁵Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 320.

⁶Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 208.

helps them to receive. Stanley Toussaint writes:

“...Paul apparently quoted from Epimenides, the Cretan poet (whom Paul also quoted later in Titus 1:12): ‘For in Him we live, and move, and have our being.’ Also Paul quoted the poet Aratus, from Paul’s homeland Cilicia: ‘We are His offspring.’...All people—Athenians along with all others—are God’s offspring, not in the sense that they are all His redeemed children or in the sense that they all possess an element of deity, but in the sense that they are created by God and receive their very life and breath from Him (v. 25). The Athenians’ very creation and continued existence depended on this one God whom they did not know! No such claim could ever be made of any of the scores of false gods worshiped by the Greeks.”⁷

D. Verse 30 – “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,” – Now Paul gets to the challenge! He’s talked about the **“Unknown God” (v. 23)** and mentioned that He is the Creator of heaven and earth and gives life and breath to all mankind (v. 25). He further mentions that God is not far away and cares about people and desires them to seek the Lord (v. 27). Regarding this verse, Dr. Horton writes:

“All of this idolatry showed humankind’s ‘ignorance’ of what God is really like. This ignorance, God in mercy and long-suffering overlooked “in the past.” “But now” He (through the gospel) was commanding “all people everywhere to repent,” that is, change their minds and attitudes toward God by turning to Him through Christ and the gospel.”⁸

E. Verses 31-32 – “...because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.’ And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, ‘We will hear you again on this matter.” – After preaching the need for repentance, Paul goes into the subject of judgment. Dr. Utley writes:

“Paul’s message has clearly and repeatedly asserted God’s mercy and provision. But this is only half the message. The God of love and compassion is also the God of justice who desires righteousness. Humans made in His image will give an account of their stewardship of the gift of life. The NT theme that God will judge the world is recurrent (ex. Matt. 10:15; 11:22, 24; 16:27; 22:36; 25:31–46; Rev. 20:11–15).⁹

1. “...by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” – Paul states that the One who will judge the world in righteousness is **“...the Man whom He (God) has ordained.”** – He now begins to introduce Jesus. It doesn’t record here that Paul mentions Jesus by name, however. It seems that when Paul mentions the resurrection, that the crowd interrupted him before he could preach further. Dr. Craig Keener gives insight concerning this:

“Despite philosophic detractors...many Greeks believed in divine wrath and judgment. Most did not, however, envision a future day of universal judgment. That God would ‘judge the world in Righteousness’ reflects biblical language (Ps 9:8; 96:13; 98:9), as does the concept of a ‘day’ of judgment. Least intelligible to Paul’s audience, however, was raising him from the dead...Some thinkers even regarded long-term bodily existence as undesirable. God has granted humanity assurance or ‘proof’ of history’s future resolution (17:31); Jesus’s resurrection is the basis for faith. After Paul reaches this climax (24:21; 26:23), his audience interrupts him (17:32; cf. 2:37; 10:44; 22:22; 26:24).”¹⁰

2. Verse 32 – “...some mocked...” – The word **“mocked”** means; **“to make fun of someone by joking or jesting—‘to scoff, to jeer, to joke at.’”¹¹** Others wanted to hear more at another time.

F. Verses 33-34 – “So Paul departed from among them. However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.” – In spite of what could be considered a tough audience, the message was received by some.

“There are three possible responses to the gospel: (1) rejection, ‘some began to sneer’ (v. 32); (2) delayed decision, ‘we shall hear you again concerning this (v. 32); and (3) belief, ‘some joined Paul and believed’ (v. 34; 1 Thess. 1:9–10). This parallels the parable of the sower (cf. Matt. 13).”¹²

⁷Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 403–404.

⁸Horton, 301.

⁹Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, 209.

¹⁰Craig S. Keener, *Acts: New Cambridge Bible Commentary*, (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2020), 448.

¹¹Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 434.

¹²Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, 209.