

Acts 13:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.

Analysis

And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness—Paul recounts Israel's wilderness period from Deuteronomy 1:31, where God 'bare' (ἵψη, nasa) Israel like a father carries a child. The KJV 'suffered he their manners' translates Greek τροποφορέω (tropophoreō), better rendered 'bore with their ways' or 'endured their conduct'—emphasizing divine patience with Israel's chronic rebellion.

Some manuscripts read ἐτροφοφόρησεν (etrophophorēsen, 'nourished them as a nurse'), yielding opposite meanings. The textual debate aside, Paul's point is clear: Israel's forty-year wilderness experience demonstrated both God's forbearance with sin and His covenant faithfulness despite persistent rebellion—the same grace now offered to Gentiles through Christ (v. 38-39). The number forty consistently signifies testing and divine patience throughout Scripture (Moses, Elijah, Jesus).

Historical Context

Paul preached this sermon in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch around AD 47-48 during his first missionary journey. He addresses both Jews and God-fearing Gentiles (v. 16), grounding the gospel in Israel's salvation history from the Exodus through David to Christ. The forty-year period (Numbers 14:33-34) was God's judgment for the generation that refused to enter Canaan at Kadesh Barnea.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's patience with Israel's wilderness rebellion inform your understanding of His forbearance with your own repeated failures?
2. What does Paul's emphasis on Israel's wilderness experience teach about the necessity of both divine judgment and sustaining grace in the believer's journey?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ὥς	τεσσαρακονταετῇ	χρόνον	ἐτροποφόρησεν	αὐτοὺς
And	about	of forty years	the time	manners	their
G2532	G5613	G5063	G5550	G5159	G846
ἐν	τῇ	ἐρήμῳ			
in	G3588	the wilderness			
G1722		G2048			

Additional Cross-References

Acts 7:36 (Parallel theme): He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

Exodus 16:35 (Parallel theme): And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.