

Acts 14:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

Analysis

Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways—Paul's sermon introduces the biblical theology of divine forbearance toward Gentile ignorance. The Greek *eiasen* (suffered/allowed) doesn't imply approval but judicial patience, echoing Romans 3:25's 'passing over' of sins. **All nations** (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) contrasts with Israel's covenantal privilege, yet God's restraint wasn't abandonment but measured delay before gospel proclamation to Gentiles.

This **times past** (γενεαῖς ταῖς παρωχημέναις, 'generations gone by') refers to the pre-gospel era when God primarily worked through Israel while allowing pagan nations relative autonomy. Now, Paul's presence announces the 'times of ignorance' (Acts 17:30) have ended.

Historical Context

This theology of Gentile history echoes Romans 1:18-32's description of humanity's willful turn to idolatry. Paul's argument meets Lycaonians where they are: acknowledging their ancestral paganism while declaring God's patience has brought them to this moment of truth.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's past forbearance toward ignorance shape evangelistic approach to those outside the faith?
2. What does divine 'suffering' of Gentile ways teach about God's sovereignty over human history?

Interlinear Text

ὅς	ἐν	ταῖς	παρωχημέναις	γενεαῖς	εἴασεν	πάντα	τὰ
Who	in	G3588	past	times	suffered	all	G3588
G3739	G1722		G3944	G1074	G1439	G3956	
ἔθνη	πορεύεσθαι	ταῖς	ὁδοῖς	αὐτῶν·			
nations	to walk	G3588	ways	G846			
G1484	G4198		G3598				

Additional Cross-References

Acts 17:30 (Parallel theme): And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

Psalms 81:12 (Parallel theme): So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.

1 Peter 4:3 (Parallel theme): For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

Psalms 147:20 (Parallel theme): He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD.

Micah 4:5 (Parallel theme): For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.

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