

Acts 17:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

Analysis

That they should seek the Lord (ζητέω τὸν κύριον, zeteo ton kyrion)—God's purpose in providentially ordering nations and their boundaries (v. 26) is soteriological: that humanity might seek Him. The verb implies earnest, diligent searching, not casual curiosity.

If haply they might feel after him (εἰ ἄρα γε ψηλαφήσειαν αὐτόν, ei ara ge pselaphaseian auton)—The rare verb pselaphao means to grope or feel about like one in darkness (cf. Job 12:25), capturing fallen humanity's spiritual blindness apart from revelation. Paul's conditional "if haply" (implying uncertainty) reflects the tentative, fumbling nature of natural theology—it can produce longing but not saving knowledge apart from special revelation.

Though he be not far from every one of us—The supreme irony: God's immanent nearness to all humanity (v. 28, "in him we live and move") makes their ignorance inexcusable (Romans 1:20). Divine transcendence does not mean distance; He sustains every breath even of idolaters who worship "unknown gods." This grounds Paul's call to repentance (v. 30).

Historical Context

Paul delivered this sermon at the Areopagus (Mars Hill) in Athens circa AD 50, addressing Epicurean and Stoic philosophers (v. 18). Athens was filled with idols—Petronius said it was easier to find a god than a man there. Paul's rhetoric adapts

to his cultured pagan audience, quoting their poets (v. 28) while building toward Christ's resurrection (v. 31).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does the truth that God is 'not far from every one of us' intensify human accountability for rejecting Him?
2. In what ways do modern people still 'feel after' God in darkness—and why is special revelation (Scripture, Christ) necessary for true knowledge of Him?

Interlinear Text

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|-----------------------|-------|-----------|----------|-------|--------|-----------------|-------|
| ζητεῖν | τὸν | Κύριον, | εἰ | ἄρα | γε | ψηλαφήσειαν | |
| That they should seek | G3588 | the Lord | if | haply | G1065 | they might feel | |
| G2212 | | G2962 | G1487 | G686 | | G5584 | |
| αὐτὸν | καὶ | εὔροιεν | καίτοιγε | οὐ | μακρὰν | ἀπὸ | ένος |
| after him | and | find him | though | not | far | from | one |
| G846 | G2532 | G2147 | G2544 | G3756 | G3112 | G575 | G1520 |
| ἐκάστου | ἡμῶν | ὑπάρχοντα | | | | | |
| every | of us | he be | | | | | |
| G1538 | G2257 | G5225 | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Acts 14:17 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

Deuteronomy 4:7 (References Lord): For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?

Romans 1:20 (Parallel theme): For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Romans 2:4 (Parallel theme): Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

Acts 15:17 (References Lord): That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.