



February 04, 2022

God, Powerful or Lifeless?

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from here on the rainy Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

Last Friday evening we discussed Paul's example of using tact, wisdom and speaking the truth in love when interacting with others.

Let's continue to review Acts 17. We ended with verse 26 last time. Continuing, *"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."* (v.27) Adam Clarke's Commentary states: "That they might grope after him, as a person does his way who is blind or blindfolded. The Gentiles, who had not a revelation, must grope after God, as the principle of spiritual life, that they might find him to be a Spirit, and the source of all intellectual happiness."

It appears that Paul's statement in Romans 1 is fitting to quote here. *"because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse."* (vv.19-20)

You and I live in a world that many voice opinions as fact when it comes to God. I don't spend a lot of time watching TV, partly because it's discouraging to see so many, especially those who you'd think should know better, blasting away and any consideration of the God we worship. They focus so much on protecting the earth, but forget God Himself told mankind to worship Him, not the earth. Confusion abounds!

Humans can understand that an all-powerful creator God exists who upholds the universe *if, and only if*, they are willing to look at the evidence. Of course, to have a special relationship with God as a result of His calling is something that God Himself must orchestrate. (John 6:44 and John 14:6).

Paul continues his discourse to the Athenian philosophers. *"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.'"* (Acts 17:28) Adam Clarke's Commentary observes: "Probably he means not only Aratus, in whose

poem, entitled Phaenomena, the words quoted by Paul are to be found literatim, *tou gar kai genov esmen*; but also Cleanthus, in whose Hymn to Jupiter the same words (*ek sou gar genov esmen*) occur. But the sentiment is found in several others, being very common among the more enlightened philosophers. By saying your own poets, he does not mean poets born at Athens, but merely Grecian poets, Aratus and Clean thus being chief."

This shows just how knowledgeable Paul was of a wide variety of subjects. This also came into play when Paul was able to indeed be "all things to all men".

V.28 *Albert Barnes' NT Commentary*: "This denotes that our continued existence is owing to him. That we live at all is his gift; that we have power to move is his gift; and our continued and prolonged existence is his gift also. Thus Paul traces our dependence on Him from the lowest pulsation of life to the highest powers of action and of continued existence. It would be impossible to express in more emphatic language our entire dependence on God."

The apostle Paul makes a similar observation in Hebrews 1 about the role of Christ as God. *"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."* (vv.1-3)

Paul goes on in Acts 17:29 to contrast the power and attributes of the true God with the lifeless idols and statutes that were found in abundance in Athens. *"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."* (v.29) *Albert Barnes' NT Commentary* on v.29: "The argument of the apostle is this: "Since we are formed by God; since we are like him, living and intelligent beings; since we are more excellent in our nature than the most precious and ingenious works of art, it is absurd to suppose that the original Source of our existence can be like gold, and silver, and stone. Man himself is far more excellent than an image of wood or stone; how much more excellent still must be the great Fountain and Source of all our wisdom and intelligence!"

v.29 *JFB Commentary*: "One can hardly doubt that the apostle would here point to those matchless monuments of the plastic art, in gold and silver and costliest stone, which lay so profusely beneath and around him."

We will examine Paul's continued presentation and the reactions of the assembled philosophers and students next time. Paul builds toward the climatic punch line in a clever and methodical way...stay tuned as they say.

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Hoefker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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