Greek Word Studies:

Grope (touch, feel) (5584) pselaphao

Grope (5584) (pselaphao from psáo = to rub or touch lightly, cp psallo = to play a stringed instrument) means to handle, to touch or to feel for or after an object, groping as would a blind person (Here in Acts 17:27 the ones groping are "spiritually blind"). To touch lightly, especially touching the surface of something (contrast haptomai, Strong's 680 = to handle an object in such a way as to exert a modifying influence upon it as in 1Jn 5:18). To touch by feeling and handling. Pselaphao means to make an effort, despite difficulties, to come to know something when chances of success are not particularly great. To manipulate, verify by contact as when Isaac tried to feel for his son Esau (Ge 27:21,22) and was deceived by Jacob having put on the "skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck." (Ge 27:16). To grope about expressing motion of hands over someone as when Jesus told His doubting disciples to "touch Me and see." (Lk 24:39). A related word is psocho derived from psao and used of rubbing the heads of grain in order to loosen some kernels to eat (Lk 6:1)

Pselaphao is used by the Greek writers to mean the "blind feeling around" (cp similar use in the Lxx translation of Dt 28:29)

Luke uses pselaphao here in Acts 17:27 in the optative mood within a conditional clause, which would point to the possibility (but not certainty) of men finding God through general revelation (but even then, they would need the special revelation of the Gospel for salvation - Ro 1:16-note). This picture reminds me of the popular telephone ad of past years "Reach out and touch someone." (in this case God!) However, on the other hand the idea of groping is more of a negative picture, like a blind person walking down a hall, feeling the wall or like someone stumbling in the dark. Indeed, men in their natural state are in the dark, but God in His great mercy has provided general revelation and specific revelation (the Gospel), for He desires that none perish eternally, but that all come to genuine eternal life giving repentance (2Pe 3:9-note). The Dictionary of Paul and His Letter (IVP) adds that "It seems safe to conclude that while the speaker believes that knowledge of God is theoretically possible from nature, yet in practical terms there is little or no hope that this hypothetical possibility will be or has been translated into an acceptable relationship with God. It is hard to imagine a stronger contrast between the God Who is in control of all (Acts 17:24-26) and the ironic pathetic state of the human predicament as here described (Acts 17:27): blindly and unsuccessfully groping for someone who stands so close and desires to be found."

Grope (Webster) - feel about or search blindly or uncertainly with the hands; to search for something by reaching or touching usually with your fingers in an awkward way; to move forward carefully by putting your hands in front of you so that you can feel anything that blocks you

Pselaphao - 4x in 4v - NAS Usage: grope(1), touch(1), touched(2).

Luke 24:39 â€œSee My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me (in order to prove the existence of Jesus' resurrection body) and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.â€

 Heb 12:18 For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind,

1John 1:1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life

Pselaphao - 13 uses in the Lxx - some are relatively well known and very interesting...

Genesis 27:12 "Perhaps my father will feel me, then I will be as a deceiver in his sight, and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing."
21 Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come close, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not."
22 So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau."

Deuteronomy 28:29 and you will grope at noon, as the blind man gropes in darkness, and you will not prosper in your ways; but you shall only be oppressed and robbed continually, with none to save you.

Judges 16:26 Then Samson said to the boy who was holding his hand, "Let me feel the pillars on which the
“By day they meet with darkness, And grope at noon as in the night.”

Job 12:25 “They grope in darkness with no light, And He makes them stagger like a drunken man.

Psalm 115:7 They have hands, but they cannot feel; They have feet, but they cannot walk; They cannot make a sound with their throat.

Psalm 135:17 They have ears, but they do not hear, Nor is there any breath at all in their mouths.

Isaiah 59:10 We grope along the wall like blind men, We grope like those who have no eyes; We stumble at midday as in the twilight, Among those who are vigorous we are like dead men.

The other uses in Lxx = Nahum 3:1 Zechariah 3:9 Zechariah 9:13

Acts 17:28
for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’

1Samuel 25:29; Job 12:10; Psalms 36:9; 66:9; Luke 20:38; John 5:26; 11:25; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3 as

Titus 1:12
we are

Luke 3:38; Hebrews 12:9

Robertson notes that Paul’s "three verbs (live...move...exist) form an ascending scale and reach a climax in God (life, movement, existence).

As even some of your own poets - As also some of the poets among you. Aratus of Soli in Cilicia (ab. b.c. 270) has these very words in his Ta Phainomena and Cleanthes, Stoic philosopher (300-220 b.c.) in his Hymn to Zeus has Eκ σου γαρ γενός εσσέναν In 1Corinthians 15:32 Paul quotes from Menander and in Titus 1:12 from Epimenides. J. Rendel Harris claims that he finds allusions in Paul’s Epistles to Pindar, Aristophanes, and other Greek writers. There is no reason in the world why Paul should not have acquaintance with Greek literature, though one need not strain a point to prove it. Paul, of course, knew that the words were written of Zeus (Jupiter), not of Jehovah, but he applies the idea in them to his point just made that all men are the offspring of God. (Robertson)

Acts 17:29
Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.

we ought

Psalms 94:7-9; 106:20; 115:4-8; Isaiah 40:12-18; 44:9-20; Habakkuk 2:19,20; Romans 1:20-23

graven

Exodus 20:4; 32:4; Isaiah 46:5,6; Jeremiah 10:4-10

An image formed by the art and thought of man - Graven work of art or external craft, and of thought or device or internal conception of man.

Acts 17:30
Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent

the times

Acts 14:16; Psalms 50:21; Romans 1:28; 3:23,25

but

Therefore - Always take note of this strategic term of conclusion and ask at least one question "What is the writer concluding?"

Overlooked (5237)(hupereido 2d aorist of huperorÂ¡o from hupÂ©r = over + eÂ­don = to see, perceive) means to overlook, act as if one did not see, wink at, bear with. Robertson adds that hupereido is an "old verb to see beyond, not to see, to overlook, not â€œto wink atâ€ of the Authorized Version with the notion of condoning. Here only in the NT. It occurs in the Lxx in the sense of overlooking or neglecting (Ps 55:1-note). But it has here only a negative force. God has all the time objected to the polytheism of the heathen, and now he has made it plain.

The times of ignorance - The times before full knowledge of God came in Jesus Christ. Paul uses the very word for their ignorance (agnoountes) employed in Acts 17:23.

Though people are under His wrath (Ro 1:18-note) and are without excuse because of natural revelation (Ro 1:19, 20-see notes Ro 1:19; 20), God â€œin His forbearance (anoche Â·holding back, delay - Ro 2:4-note) left the sins committed beforehand unpunishedâ€ (Ro 3:25-note). This parallels Acts 14:16, All through time the Gentiles were responsible for the general revelation given to them; now with the worldwide proclamation of the gospel, the Gentiles (WHO HEAR IT) are also responsible to special revelation. That response is to obey Godâ€™s command to repent of their sins. Even the Gentiles who do not hear the gospel are still under God's wrath. In short, Acts 17:30 says nothing about the guilt or innocence of pagans as some misinterpret, but deals only with God's delaying punishment on those who reject Him.

God is now declaring - "All is changed now that Christ has come with the full knowledge of God. See also Acts 27:22." (Robertson)

Everywhere - No exceptions anywhere!