

Opportunity in the Midst of Idolatry – The Unknown God of Mars Hill

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MAIN VERSES

[Acts 17](#) • [Proverbs 1](#) • [Proverbs 31](#) • [Galatians 5:22](#) • [Galatians 5:23](#)

Welcome to Founded in Truth Fellowship

Well, Shabbat Shalom, everybody. So excited to be with our family and community today. If this is your first time visiting or watching online, we are a community of families with diverse backgrounds and traditions who love the Sabbath. We find joy in the entirety of the Word of God. But most of all, we are a community that seeks to orbit the person of Jesus who we call Yeshua. So once again, we gather together today. Welcome to Founded in Truth Fellowship.

I know I don't do this often, but we may talk about some history today as it pertains to philosophy, and ancient philosophers and teachers. I want to give you a couple of quotes just so you can get an idea of where we're going. We're going to be landing or camping out, going to drive in and then prop a tent in Acts chapter 17. And Paul is going into a city, engaging with these critical thinking, learned individuals who love philosophy. They love to talk about new ideas. They love to dissect things. They're scientists. And so I wanted to give you guys a couple of quotes so you understand what Paul was walking into and the type of intellect that he was encountering. I'm a little bit of a nerd when it comes to Stoic philosophy, and so on and so forth. Because these are pretty good.

What's the first one we have? Jesus says something like that, right? Don't worry about tomorrow. Next one is, do not spoil what you have by desiring what you have not. Who sits around and thinks about how to articulate a reality, a real thing? These guys did. Remember that what you now have was once among the things you only hoped for. So a couple people got hit hard there.

These are from 2,000 years ago when men were sitting down and just meditating on life. Justice is a kind of pact not to harm or be harmed. Yeah, it is. Moving on to a more Stoic philosophy, a

different viewpoint and understanding. Marcus Aurelius, also known as the last great emperor of Rome. If you've seen the movie—very, very old—had Russell Crowe in it called *Gladiator*. Many of you probably have never heard of it. I saw it in theaters. I don't know what happened.

Marcus Aurelius and the Art of Meditation

And so at the beginning of the movie, if you've seen it, you have the emperor there and they're fighting the army and he's an older guy and then he ends up getting killed. But that was Marcus Aurelius being portrayed in the movie. And Marcus Aurelius is most known for his meditations. He sat down not to publish a book, but in his nighttime he pondered things and realities and wisdom. And it got out, and now it's available. And you read this stuff, and you're like, man, this guy was the emperor of the most powerful empire, at least at that time. And this is the stuff that he thought about privately. You get to read his mail. How ridiculous and how strange to be surprised at anything which happens in life. Depending on how much experience you have with things that surprise people, yeah, it doesn't surprise me anymore.

One morning he woke up and was pondering in his journal. He thought to himself, I don't want to get out of bed today. I want to lay in bed. Anybody relate to that? I don't want to get up. I don't want to work. I'm going to do nothing. And then he had this thought that he ended up writing down. Wait, have I been made for this? To lie under the blankets and keep myself warm? No. As my purpose? Is this what I was made to do? To lay here and snuggle up? No. No. He understood. I was made for great things just like everybody is. Will we take charge and value this life enough and the vocation enough that we believe God gave to us? But even this pagan understood the philosophy behind it. Get out of bed and do something with your life.

Ignorance, Fear, and the Courage of One Moment

Seneca said, Ignorance is the cause of fear. Let that one sit for just another few seconds. Ignorance. Not knowing. Not understanding. Not being familiar with. Ignorance is the cause of fear.

And another one by Seneca. Difficulty comes from our lack of confidence. I went to a pool yesterday and they had a big water slide. My son was super scared to go on this water slide. He'd never been on one before. And sometimes you say something and you impress yourself with the wisdom. Anybody? Has anyone ever? And I looked at him. I said, Ben, you only have to be brave once. You only have to be brave once. You just have to do it once to go down the slide. And then there's no doubt afterward. Either you didn't like it because it was scary, or you love it

because it's not scary. That question that was making you so scared is gone. You only have to be brave once.

And then I read this this morning. Love it. Difficulty comes from our lack of confidence. Man. I got carried away this morning with this because I love this stuff. Because it's true. These are people that have come before us, other human beings. And just because we're on the edge of humanity, it doesn't mean that people weren't the same, didn't think about the same things, didn't struggle with the same things. Didn't struggle with life and family time balance. Didn't struggle with trying to be entertained by stuff that was fruitless. Didn't struggle with being educated or going to work because I have to feed my family. Didn't struggle with new things that were popping up—oh my gosh, these are climates, these are plagues coming, this is all kinds of stuff happening.

People Never Change

A very wise friend of mine once said, people never change. Throughout history, people are the same; only technology changes. And the more I look into history, the more I realize that. During the first century, the age of philosophy dominated Greek culture at the time of Yeshua and Paul. It was a core part, the motivating part, the fuel for Greek Hellenization, among many other aspects. Their new way of looking at the world that went outward, seeking knowledge, appreciating critical thinking and discussion of topics, working out ideas, debating. This is all rooted in Greek philosophy. It was a scientific approach to questions like whys and whats.

Teachers were placed in extremely high regard when they were found to have this wisdom. And for good reason. They spent their lives working out this pursuit for their students. Schools were set up with a lead teacher, and this teacher would have disciples. The rabbi-disciple paradigm in Judaism came from Greek Hellenization because it worked and it was efficient. It is what it is.

The Greek language that could express more than Hebrew came over and dominated Judea to the point where I think even in the first century, no one really spoke Hebrew. It was a holy language. You read the Torah in Hebrew, but you talked about it maybe in Aramaic or Greek. Greek was so popular among first century Judaism that in the synagogues in Caesarea, when they said the Shema as part of their Shabbat services, it wasn't in Hebrew. It was in Greek. Not good, not bad. It's just history. It's interesting how Greek society had influenced and many things of Greek society were accepted because they were advanced. Not all of it.

Athens: A City of Philosophy

In the Lucan account of Paul's travels, he comes to a city. And this city is esteemed as a university city. The people that dwelled there were critical thinkers—logic, discussion, understanding diverse views amongst themselves, debate. And the city, of course, had an origin myth, right? Whenever we don't have a backstory, we want to give it one. We just make up something, and that's what happened. That's what they did in Greek mythology. And they had an origin myth of this city where two Greek gods had a contest to see who would take claim as the patron over the city. And it was between Poseidon, the god of the sea and the oceans and even earthquakes, and Athena, the goddess of strategic warfare, wisdom, and handicrafts—like trinkets, earrings and stuff, right? She was an artist. She liked to make stuff on the side, apparently. That's her story.

And so the myth goes—and this is through understanding what Paul's walking into. Okay, they're standing on top of the hill, and Poseidon goes first. He says, "I'm going to give the city something." And he takes his trident and throws it in the ground. It erupts, bubbles up a fountain of water, streams coming down. Waters of life. Yes, this is totally something that would benefit. What a gift to the city. Poseidon is not the god of fresh water, though, see? So the water, the fountain was beautiful, but it was salty. Well, this is worthless, right? Okay. And then Athena comes in and she kneels down and digs in the dirt and she plants something and steps back. A rose bush begins to bloom up and it turns into a beautiful big olive tree that has many different uses, that can actually benefit the city, right? And so her gift was accepted. She became the patroness. And so as the prize, the city took her name of Athens. And that's the story behind that.

And this is where Paul finds himself in all of his tumultuous journeys through the book of Acts. And it was a city that was devoted to thought over commerce. It was even criticized by many in the empire.

All they want to do is sit around and think and talk. We've got work to do. We've got stuff to do. You just want to go to school and get an education? Some things never change.

But it also housed, along with the schools, statues and dedicated idols of Greek gods lined everywhere. One historical source says it wasn't a primary source, but it was an assertion that there were tens of thousands of idols in this itty-bitty city. So walk in—a statue here, a statue there, an incense altar here, little statues, big statues, everywhere. Everybody had an idol. It's all over the place. There's a lot, tons. So many you don't even know.

Paul Distressed by the Idolatry

And so when Paul finds himself in the city of Athens, he's overwhelmed by the idolatry. It says he's distressed. He's like, look at this. This is uncomfortable. I don't know what to do with this. And he's overwhelmed.

The credit of creation, the credit of nature, the credit of life, your life, the life-giving Ruach and everything that does within you and animates you with creativity, all of it—the blessing, fertility—all of that credit is being given to this diverse collection of gods. When he himself knows the one true God, he knows that there's one source of all of this. That's how big his God is. His God doesn't need a temple. His God does not need anything from us. What are we going to do for him? Not that big if he's dependent on us. And so he's distressed, and he finds himself speaking to a panel of Athenian elite, and he has a dialogue with them about the gospel.

Finding Common Ground

And I want you to notice something as we read this section of Scripture, of the Word of God. Paul finds common ground. He even goes so far as to quote pagan philosophers. The Word of God contains pagan philosophers. It's [Acts 17](#). [Proverbs 1](#) is written by a king that we believe was a king over Massa, like Italy, if you will. Pagan king. [Proverbs 1](#) starts out with the king Lemuel. He's like, "The sayings of my mother, of the mother of king Lemuel." It wasn't even his wisdom. It goes through [Proverbs 31](#). It could have been an Israelite king. It could have been Hezekiah and just a name change. There's lots of theories. But he chooses to find common ground. And I find that so incredible—that's how he approaches this group of critical thinkers that make it a habit of knowing what's up and what's down and what's all around. That even Paul would dare to be a critical thinker when approaching people.

Paul would have empathy for someone who is an idolater. Paul would find a way to have empathy and understanding and ask questions—not so he could deal with a pagan worshiper, but so he could deal with a human being who is on some kind of a journey.

The Mars Hill Sermon

And here's what Paul says in Acts chapter 17, starting in verse 22. Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus. So he found an altar with an inscription that said, "To an unknown God. This I'm going to proclaim to you." You can imagine him putting his hand across the city. From one man he has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live. He did this so that they might seek God and perhaps they might reach out and find him. A Greek word there is "to grasp." They're

reaching out to grasp him—God—that they may seek him. And perhaps they might reach out and find him. Though he is not far from each one of us.

Others were curious. They said, "Man, we'd like to hear more about this." So Paul left their presence. However, some people joined him and believed, including Dionysius. This is also known as the sermon preached on Mars Hill. The King James Version said Mars Hill because they believed that the word there that he was preaching from meant it was an actual hill. And it could be a hill. It could just be the group of this council that he met with. Either way, he's in this city and he's preaching.

Preaching the Gospel

Did you notice how he preached the gospel? He didn't even say Jesus. I'm not saying we shouldn't say Jesus—I could feel that trigger coming on. But that's fascinating. He understood that it would be of no benefit to them to hear this name right now. He understood their line of thinking, where they were at, and he was going to meet them there and say, "Listen, you want to talk about where we come from, where we're going? You want to talk about what this force is that you're trying to chase is doing? I know because I know you're chasing the same thing I was and I found it and I want to tell you about it. I want to tell you why it's so important because God is right beside you right now. You're reaching in darkness trying to feel around for something with all these idols and everything, and you're not getting it—or else you wouldn't have all these idols. God is near to you. You're so close to grasping it. Let me tell you about him. Let me tell you why there are so many nations. Let me tell you about the rescue mission. Let me tell you that he is calling you back right now, which is why I'm here, which is why we're all here. Let me tell you about a day that's already been set in time where judgment will occur in righteousness."

Now, we can read that verse and think, "Oh, man, that's negative. Hellfire from heaven?" Sure, but there's a flip side to it. Righteousness. Everything is going to be set right. You wouldn't have this religious pursuit if that's not something that you were after. If you were not after peace, if you were not after contentment, if you were not after this moment of just understanding what your purpose and vocation is, you're chasing all of this around. And so was I, and I have found the source of it, and you can have it too. And one day, one day, everything is going to be set right. True justice is going to go out.

Repent. Make a change. Repentance means to confess your sin. He's telling them to confess their sins. Repentance and confessing your sins are one part of the word teshuva. It means to

turn around. It means to change. It means to put on new viewpoints and new lenses to see the reality of what's going on and not the world that you've created and you want to see. That is where your sin propagates from. Confess your sin. They don't even know what their sin is. Paul's sitting here saying there has to be a change. Because you're not embracing the change. You don't experience the reality right now that I am experiencing. There is a whole other dimension that you can step into right now. And it's from the creator that has given you and me the same spirit of life.

The Judge and The Offer

And the judge that is coming—he didn't say it. The judge that is coming is a man that he raised up and that will judge. And as proof, he raised him from the dead, which he knew would be a trigger for them. But that is the proof. Will you join me? Will you join me? Because—and listen to this—I love this: you are the offspring of God as much as I am. You are his offspring. You are his daughters and his sons.

Matt, they're pagans. You can take that up with the apostle Paul because he has an agenda here. And a lot of people have an issue with even reading this section because they think, "If you say that Paul found common ground with sinners, then you're preaching that we should compromise." We love our religious ambiguous words, vague words, don't we? Especially when we can sharpen them. You're preaching that we should compromise. That's compromise. Compromise what? What do you compromise?

Understanding Paul's Engagement

This relative attitude that I have because I'm uncomfortable with the fact that Paul would enter the city. That he wouldn't recognize that there's paganism everywhere. That he wouldn't recognize that there is wickedness and evil everywhere. That he would recognize there are people that have already chosen what they want to believe. And he should just maintain his standard of holiness, retreat back to his private property with a fence around it and his hoarded up food underneath his house, and say, "I'm just going to pray for y'all and never actually pray for him." He was distressed when he walked in the city because, "Oh my gosh, I don't like any of this. I'm a monotheistic Orthodox Jewish man," but there's a bigger priority at stake here than my comfort, right? And I don't know how to apply that to today or our children's generation or their generation or the generation past us because our generations are always changing. But there's wisdom in what Paul understood: if he removes the label of pagans and sinners and

wicked people and all this stuff, and he begins to ask questions and he gets closer to people, he will see actual human beings like himself on the same journey that he's been on.

The Power of Seeing People Clearly

I was talking to Pete earlier this week. He made a comment about a situation in my life, and he says, like, that's the thing. When you get closer to people, they become more human. And it's hard to hate people when you're right up in their face, when you know them, when you see them like that. It's much easier when you can strip someone of their human identity. And I know I'm on my soapbox. You can stick a label on them, which we do so well in this country on everything, especially every four years—stick a label on it. And they're subhuman, so therefore they're beneath me. And I don't have to find a way to show them that their journey can be complete in the peace of God. Love it.

He saw the idols and he kept walking. He went and he stood in the market where they were probably selling pork, selling pagan stuff, where they had idols of false gods, and none of this deterred him despite his discomfort. Why? Because despite seeing all these things he disagreed with and didn't understand—things that caused him distress—he also saw the human beings. And these specific human beings were critical thinkers.

Critical Thinkers Scare Us

Woo, critical thinkers scare us as Christians. Can I say it? We're scared of critical thinkers. Scared us. Because as if critical thinkers get a hold of the story of the Bible, they're going to somehow prove it wrong. And so we can't encourage our children to be scientific or teach our children to be critical thinkers or to have questions about things as if God never created them to be that way or to pursue that. No, I will teach my children to be critical thinkers and have empathy first before judgment. And I like to believe that through their critical thinking, they will see something in the story of the Bible that will be so profound that they won't be able to run away from. That's me. But yeah, we have a problem with critical thinkers. We're intimidated by them.

And Paul here faces them. See, they were not satisfied with just being told to believe. That's why this city existed. These critical thinkers were not satisfied with just doing what you're told, accept it. Just spout something that makes no sense to you, like all these Greek myths and all this stuff. They didn't believe that, but whatever, it's our tradition, it's our culture, it's fine. But let's actually talk about the universe and how things, numbers, mathematics. These critical

thinkers felt compelled to understand, to work things out, to dissect ideas. These were students of philosophy. Some of them were Epicurean, others were Stoic.

Paul Before the Athenians

And Paul was teaching something, an idea, that they had never heard. So they brought him in to this council, and Paul has the spotlight. "People of Athens, I see you're very religious with these traditions that you have, and I know a lot of you don't even think it really has substance." Was that a compliment he just made to these pagans? "Man, I see you guys are doing this religious thing. I don't know... whatever you're doing, you're doing good." It was definitely an acknowledgement of where they were in their life.

And as we see in their journey, Paul does not label these people lost from God. Paul does not say, "Y'all are hell-bound. I'm just going to go pray for you and walk away." No. Paul sees them. And he says, I passed all kinds of religious statues. It looked like I went to Oprah and got an idol. And he even found an altar with an inscription on it that said, "To an unknown God."

An Opportunity in Darkness

And this is what he capitalizes on. This is like, oh my goodness, you guys are so close. You guys are on the journey to an unknown God. And he says, I even found this altar. Therefore, what you worship without even knowing it, I'm going to tell you about it today. Paul appropriates this anonymous altar and tells them about the God that they worship today—a God they have no idea about.

The God who made the world and everything in it. He is the Lord of heaven and earth. And guess what? He is so big he doesn't need to live in any of these temples or shrines. He's not served. You can't bring him a sandwich like you do the other gods. He doesn't play like that. He doesn't need that from you. He gives everything. He animates you all. The breath of life is within you all. Every aspect of creation and blessing and fertility comes from him. I got a big, big God. He gives life to all things.

And guess what, guys? God has always had a plan for every one of you critical thinkers. And his plan is that you would seek him and perhaps you will grope and grasp in the darkness that you find yourself in, even now in your pursuit of seeking something that you know is real despite your doubt. And you will find and you will grab hold of God, the God that truly gives the peace that you're looking for. The grace that you're looking for, the joy that you're looking for, and the

love that you are all doing this for in your pursuit. Guess what, guys? This God is not far from you.

Paul Saw an Opportunity

Where many would see disunity between them and them, us and them, Paul saw an opportunity in this group of critical thinkers. And some saw Paul and his teaching as beneath them. They mocked him.

Paul opens his speech by acknowledging where they're at. Idolaters they may be, but at least they're searching. They're not there. But Paul validates their impulse to worship, even if they're worshiping the wrong thing. He at least validates that because he had that same impulse. I think deep down everyone does. He sees the people that want the thing that he has found. And these displays of statues and offering incense—at every turn he goes, that's evidence of it. He even finds this altar. Scandalous, Paul, scandalous. Monotheistic Jew, scandalous. Stop it, Paul. You have compromised your faith and your commitment to holiness. That's one of those baseball bat words, like I said.

Their religious yearning, even though a bit of a scandal to a monotheistic faithful Jewish man, is the inarticulate, uninformed yearning of the pagan for the God whom only the scriptures can disclose to them.

The Hypocrisy in All of Us

Sometimes as believers, especially those who have found our own idolatry in politics, look with scorn upon the cultured despisers of Christianity. People that look at us and say, "Yours is so basic. You Christians just believe all this myth. Christianity is pre-scientific and ancient. You guys just need to stop because you look so elementary." And sometimes we feel like, oh, I'm justified in hitting them back. Yes, because they labeled you as something beneath them. You justify labeling them as not a human being just like you. And then some of those same despisers of Christianity will turn around and look up tabloid horoscopes and stuff.

I love laughing at us as human beings because we all seek comfort. We all seek comfort. We all seek peace. And the older I get—and I can't imagine this for the generation before me—the more I see that people are just trying to seek some kind of peace. And I'm very blessed to be able to have those older than me that have found that peace in Yeshua.

Yet Paul Held His Judgment Back

Yet Paul, here at this council, seemed to hold back his judgment toward them because at least they're searching. They're trying. They have started the journey. They were not content in a place where they weren't searching for the something deep inside of them that they knew was out there. They at least know something else is needed to make sense out of all of this life that they're in, to have a purpose, a mission, a cosmic vocation. And Paul ministers to their searching.

Paul chooses to empathize with their pursuits of an unknown God instead of pointing fingers in righteous indignation. He chooses to tell them who they are in his eyes. You are God's offspring, of the one true God. Therefore, you've been walking around in darkness, not being able to see. Long enough, long enough. That time has passed now. God is calling you back. Repent. Confess that you've been living in a reality of your own making. Turn and enter new creation. Leave your sin behind and enter the place of peace and love.

Paul is calling these elite critical thinkers to think critically about what they feel within them and it's causing them to do all this in the first place. And he's not threatened one bit about their paganism or their statues or their pork or whatever. And you should not be either. Because you found what they were looking for, right? Amen. We have found it. I hope, I hope, I hope. And you should see an opportunity when engaging with other offspring of God in this world. To show the love and the joy and the peace and the forbearance and the kindness and the goodness and the faithfulness and gentleness and the self-control that we allegedly have been given. We found what you're searching for.

And look how Paul says this. Notice something like, again, he... We always look at judgment as this negative thing because our worldview and how I believe we're taught, specifically in this society and this culture, is that we're always in the right and everyone else is in the wrong.

And so when we see something about judgment, it's like, oh, I'm going to burn. I'm going to be right. But judgment and righteousness through Yeshua, I like to think Paul is not simply warning them. There is a warning there. But I like to think because of the words used, he's also inviting them into a blessing. The thing you're working for and the world that you want to live in is going to happen, repent, change.

The Message: A Reading Paraphrase

So there is a heresy translation of the Bible by Eugene Peterson called The Message. And I used to tear this thing apart. Speaking of ignorance, it was my ignorance. Oh, this is just a message. It's just this big compromise of the Bible. That is until I read the very first page in the

introduction on why he wrote it, and it changed me forever. Like, I love this, not translation, paraphrase of the Bible. He did the translation himself. He's well equipped to do that, and he had two different teams of translators to vet what he was doing. But it was never meant to be a study Bible. It was meant to be a reading paraphrase because his issue was in Greek and Hebrew, there are words, and they are not literary languages. He says that they're storytelling languages. They're meant to convey emotions, but they're being told, not written. They're hard to write things. And so the things that you see in the Hebrew and the Greek can't expound. And so as a pastor and a scholar, he wrote it.

So I wanted to see how he paraphrased this section of what Paul says. And so indulge me in this. God overlooks it, your blindness, as long as you don't know any better. But that time has passed. The unknown is now known. And he's calling for a radical life change. He has set a day when the entire human race will be judged and everything will be set right. And he has already appointed the judge, confirming him before everyone by raising him from the dead. Everything will be set right. Who wants everything to be set right in their life, in the world? There will be justice. There will be judgment, but in righteousness. He will not judge the way that we judge, which was a huge thorn in the side of the philosophers because they realized how they judge is never fair. And there's always bias that elevates them.

The Philosopher's Observation

This is something that Epicurus said. So there's a philosopher, Epicurus, and here's what he says. And he's not talking about believers or Christians or Jews. He's talking about his own people, peers. He's talking about the gods that they pray to. He says, if God listened to the prayers of men, all the pagan guys, all men would quickly have perished, for they are forever praying for evil against one another. And I read that, and I'm like, oh, man, that must have been bad for all those pagans. Oh, no. Anybody ever prayed to smite somebody? Okay, you didn't say those words. It was like, God, give me the victory over them. We'll pull back on some of those violent psalms. David prayed it. And that was the observation of a critical thinker. I see all these people praying to these gods and every human being has a bias on how they judge one another. And so they petition their God to exploit the God's strength so that they can slaughter everybody that they don't like. And that's not how God's going to judge. Praise him for that. That's how people of the human condition judge. But one day true righteousness will be the lens of judgment. And it is proven of the man that we know is Yeshua or Jesus was raised from the dead.

I don't know what you guys can do with that, but I hope you can do something with that.

Recognizing the Human in Others

What I would like to see everybody do with that is not compromise in the very real sense. No, you don't have to indulge evil and all this stuff. Go to pagan festivals and stuff. No, no. What Paul is getting at and what the example is, is Paul saw human beings where his peers saw hell-bound sinners. Paul saw human beings. Paul saw human beings that were yearning for something. And he understood that because he himself has that yearning and had that yearning, and he's found it. And every single one of us wouldn't be here today if we didn't have that yearning for something greater than us that we know is out there that gives us reason, that gives us purpose, that gives us a vocation. And he understood that they are the children of God too, and they have the breath of life. And so he met them where they're at because he was familiar with it. Didn't endorse their objects of worship. Hey, y'all doing what you're doing, you're doing great. But he endorsed their pursuit and where he knew they were at.

Hypatia of Alexandria

Let's wrap up with a little history lesson. In the late 4th century and early 5th century, 415 I guess is when the event took place, there was a brilliant philosopher named Hypatia. She was amazing. She was an expert mathematician, wise philosopher, critical thinker, pretty savage to be perfectly honest. When her students would see a woman of power, they would try to make advances toward her, and she would just cut them down in the most philosophical, sharp, just amazing to read the accounts. And she was an advisor to the leaders of Alexandria. She was the advisor to the governor. This woman. Now, we no longer have her own writings here. Unfortunately, we do have the writings and the accounts from her students and stuff. And she was a renowned philosopher, a beloved teacher, exhibited true leadership in Alexandria.

Her father was an astronomer and a mathematician, and he laid the foundation for her. And by the time she became an adult, she had already surpassed him in mathematics and astronomy and understanding of how numbers have a lot to do with how things work. Always asking questions, always searching. And she was never content in her pursuit of discovering the amazing things of the cosmos and the universe, which I think no one should be. By adulthood, as I said, she was already an expert. And she became the city's foremost scholar, taking her father's place at the head of the Platonic School, which was the most cutting-edge university there in Alexandria. She wrote math books. She refined scientific instruments and discovered a more efficient method for long division. Thank you. Who knows what it would have been? Because we got a whole page now, right? That was her. She loved it, and she was respected for it.

Her greatest achievement was her philosophy teaching, which was a combination of philosophical thought of several different viewpoints that when combined together was a new type of philosophy called Neoplatonism. And basically she taught that math was spiritual. I don't like that religion at all, algebra. She had four pillars. It was divided into four branches, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. She believed math was a core part of all of them and they were all a family. Some genius little stuff, right? All of these were not studied just for intellectual purposes. They were studied because it was believed that these numbers were the sacred language of the cosmos because they were everywhere in the universe. And we don't even disagree with that. We accept that. Pi, right? Fibonacci sequence, golden ratio. She saw this and she taught it. It's pretty neat. She was the one that really noticed this. The Neoplatonist.

She saw a rational cosmic force out there somewhere that was keeping everything together somehow. And everything had a pattern. There's a force out there. She didn't know what it is. Something is out there. And she looked up at the sky and she knew something was up. And they recognized it as a monism, the force. There's only one. And you know what they called it? The one. The one. They called the principle the one.

Now, Hypatia would have been considered pagan, which is a term used to indicate she had a tradition of Roman belief that was pre-Christian. But she didn't worship any particular god or gods. But her methods and her ideas that she taught could be applied alongside many different religious viewpoints. So guess what? She had both Jewish and Christian students that would travel across the empire just to be part of her classes, and they enjoyed learning, and their viewpoint was, God is so much even bigger than I ever realized. This is incredible. And they would go on and explore the amazing things in creation. And she fostered an environment that was nonpartisan. And so sitting in a room in the late 4th century, early 5th century, where people from all different backgrounds and all different religions, and instead of fighting about how different they were, they were focused on one pursuit, and that was just how amazing creation is. Searching together. Matt, are you endorsing? I'm not endorsing anything. I'm just saying. She was an incredible human, despite her never getting to the place of finding that peace, that force, and giving it a name that we know.

Now, this was also a time of incredible religious and political turmoil, which I know that we can never understand. It's 415 A.D., and Christianity had become the imperial religion. Different opinions about that. I wasn't a fan of it, but whatever. The bishop that was appointed to Alexandria was at odds with the governor there. The governor was also a Christian. The only difference is the bishop was malicious, if you will. The bishop fueled his monks to destroy, go

out and destroy pagan temples, pagan statues for the purpose of using intimidation. To force people, to pressure them to convert, if you will. The governor, not knowing what to do, because this is, he's a Christian, but he understands that you have to connect with people. You can't just swing an axe at them, anyway. It doesn't work. Not knowing what to do, he goes to his top trusted advisor, which was Hypatia. He says, what do I do? I know you're neutral. I know you're thinking. You're not going to be biased with religion. What do I do? How do I handle this?

A Warning Example

And it's recorded as her saying, always act in fairness and in restraint because you're a leader. You're a leader and you set the example. Well, he did that until the monks incited a riot that injured him. Then he tortured the bishop to death. Well, the monks—this little radicalized group of Christians—they blamed the easiest target that they could put a pin on, and that was, of course, the advisor of the king. Obviously, she told him to do this, and she does all these number stuff, so she's a witch too. And so they waited for her when she was strolling, I think, to school through the marketplace, and they grabbed her. And in the name of Jesus, they skinned her alive and dismembered her. This is how a Christian acts when they still sacrifice on the altar to an unknown god.

Meeting People Where They Are

Paul saw people on the same journey that he has been on. Paul saw an opportunity in their paganism, which is worthless. It's not going to lead them anywhere. It's worthless. But he saw an opportunity to meet them. Paul saw broken people struggling, grasping for peace. So he did not run away. He did not shield himself. He did not demean them, make arrogant judgments, or indulge in bigotry.

You're searching for an unknown God, and I found him, and I want to tell you this: the peace and the love and the mercy and the grace that is over abounding in my life. Isn't that good news? Would you be able to have empathy? Would you be able to ask questions, find some type of common ground where you can get a foothold to engage with people about the good news? Fellowship with sons and daughters of God, fellow sojourners, yearning for hope, freedom, shalom, mercy, and grace, yearning to take part in heaven.

Would you dare have the courage that Paul had? Or would you enjoy taking on a farce identity as the gatekeeper of the arms of God?

The Warriors of God

And so I want to encourage you today, as I encourage myself through this very hard journey of life, of balancing existence in this reality, but also living in another. If you want to be a warrior of God, this is the boldness that it takes, and this is the wisdom that it takes, and it does take critical thinking, and it takes empathy, and it takes humility, and it takes sacrifice for the sake of others, and it takes a willingness to be embarrassed and mocked, and it takes a willingness to not get mad at those who do it, and it takes a willingness to not get offended or triggered every single time someone is not you and does not agree or believe the same thing you do.

It takes persistence to show that the Spirit of God really does give self-control, really does give gentleness, that the Spirit of God that we claim to have really does give goodness, really does give kindness, really does give forbearance, really does give peace and is the birthplace of love. That's our religion, guys. That's our belief system, that we have that because we found it, right? If it's real, like we claim it is.

The World Is Watching

Because the world is watching. That's the point. The world is watching, every single one of us. The world watches us whenever things happen on TV. They watch how we respond. They watch how we react. They watch the things we say. They watch the things that we do. They're watching you. They're watching you. They're watching you to see if we truly are a new type of humanity or if we're just like them that are worshiping on the altar to an unknown God.

And this story is convicting for that reason. Be bold and know that the Spirit of God does have the power to change you and through you impact other people for good. Don't doubt that and have the boldness to display it.

So please stand as we are reminded through praise and worship that we have found what all of these critical thinkers were looking for in Paul's day, that we are safe in the arms of God and we know who that is.

Prayer and Blessing

Alvino Mocciano, our Father, our King, Father, we thank you for this time that we've come together to learn about you, to understand that we've been given a vocation, a job to do, and a mission to embark on, that you would give us the wisdom through the Holy Spirit that raised Christ from the dead that now resides in us, that we would be able to display the wonderful

things of Yeshua through ourselves, that we would have the wisdom to navigate the pitfalls of this world, to navigate how to show others the peace that we hold true. We thank you, Father, in the name of Yeshua, we pray. We thank you for your blessing. We thank you for your peace. We thank you for your forgiveness. We thank you for the opportunity to repent, to leave sin behind, and to move forward in a totally new and complete reality where you reign over everything. In the name of Yeshua, we proclaim as his people and the offspring of God. Amen.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God. The Lord is one. Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all of eternity. And may the God of patience and encouragement grant you to be like-minded with one another in the manner of Messiah, so that together with one voice you glorify the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua, the Messiah. And may the Lord bless you and may He keep you. And may the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. And may the Lord lift up His countenance toward you and give you His peace, His shalom. Amen? Amen. Shabbat shalom. Shalom.

Partnering with the Ministry

We pray this message has blessed and encouraged you and your relationship with God. And we hope that it has made the Bible more beautiful and more powerful in its impact in your life. Founded in Truth Fellowship exists to build a community that bears the image of God and lives the redeemed life only Yeshua gives. If this message has blessed you, or if you see God working in and through this ministry, we invite you to prayerfully consider partnering with us so that the message of Yeshua and the truth of God's word continues to reach all nations. If you would like to take part in this mission, then you can do so at [Foundedintruth.com slash give](https://foundedintruth.com/give), or you can scan the QR code on the screen. These offerings go toward providing resources for both our local fellowship as well as our online ministry, but also our many outreach ministries, including our foster care and adoption ministry, local charity outreach ministry, our international online children's ministry, and any future ministries that the Lord would allow us to walk through and walk in to impact the world around us with His love and grace and the bold proclamation of the gospel of King Yeshua. We thank you for your continued support and we look forward to seeing you next time. Shalom.

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