

## INSTRUCTIONS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

ENTRY 21-7

# ALL THINGS

The Apostle Paul was a genius in knowing how to connect with different people groups. On one missionary journey he traveled to Athens. He discovered idols and shrines lining the streets for the purpose of worship. All roads, shrines and scores of temples led to the Acropolis, the fortress at the top of the mountain. On the highest point stood the Parthenon, the supreme house of demonic, cult worship, celebrating the Greek goddess, Athena Parthenos. She was the patron goddess of Athens, and Zeus' favorite daughter. For a Messianic Jew like Paul, this all-consuming indulgence in demonic idol worship and witchcraft was absolutely disgusting, yet he pressed on asking the Holy Spirit to help him present the gospel. On the way up the mountain there was a place called the Areopagus. Crowds gathered there for court judgments, philosophical and intellectual presentations, and religious debates. There, Paul addressed the crowd in order to share the gospel. He connected with them in a creative way without compromising his faith.

## GREATLY DISTRESSED

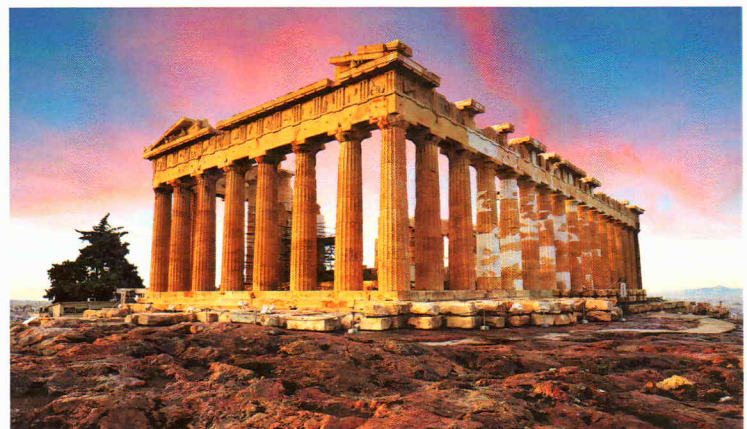
*"While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols"*  
Acts 17:16.

Athens was the global hotspot for two evil strongholds: humanism and witchcraft. The philosophy of humanism rejected the God of the Bible and put mankind on the throne of divinity in God's place. With humanism, there were no absolute morals. Humans could commit any sin they liked, as long as it was popular and acceptable in society. This is still the primary philosophy of non-believers in the world today.

The other evil stronghold in Athens was witchcraft; the worship of other gods and their idols became the center for every corner of society. These gods are in fact, demon spirits. The entire Roman Empire adopted the gods of Greek mythology and they built temples to them in every town and city throughout the known world. They were dedicated to Zeus, Pan, Jupiter, Apollo, Saturn, Athena and dozens of others. It is interesting to note that the most intellectually, philosophical people on the planet were also the ones that embraced and worshipped idol demons excessively.

With such demonic activity, their moral perversions were open-ended and pervasive.

These evil strongholds continue in western society today. Our days of the week and months of the year are named after these Greek gods and some of our political buildings such as the US Supreme Court building and others throughout the western world are designed after the Greek Parthenon. That design is embraced due to the celebration and belief in global humanism. There is a battle on the earth between two kingdoms: the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of God's dear Son. Paul had just entered the heart of darkness, but he had the glorious light of Christ within him.





## ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN

Against the backdrop of overwhelming evil, Paul knew that he possessed the truth and the power of the gospel, and he pressed forward to boldly proclaim Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. He looked for a way to identify and reach these people. He later said, *"I have become **all things to all men** so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I might share in its blessings"* 1Cor. 9:22-23.

Paul was courageous. He found a creative way to get the leaders of Athens to listen to his message. We read, *"Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: 'Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you'"* Acts 17:22-23.

## THE UNKNOWN GOD

Paul knew that these people were living in gross darkness, but they were people made in God's image, and they needed to hear of Christ's redeeming love. He got their attention by using one of their own idols dedicated to the unknown God. He then proceeded to boldly proclaim the message of Christ, and he referenced his message to all peoples, to temples, idols, the command of God to repent and even judgment day. Most rejected his message that day but, praise God, a good number received his words and were saved. He then left Athens to minister in Corinth where the people were not as philosophical and much more open to receive the gospel. He became all things to all men that he might win some, and he did save many souls, even in Athens. Here is Luke's report of the encounter and the powerful words that Paul preached to the crowds at the Areopagus.

He said, *"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that*



*men would seek him, though he is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own prophets have said, 'We are his offspring.' Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone - an image made by man's design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but...A few men became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others. After this Paul left Athens."* Acts 17:24-34, 18:1.

## GO FORTH

Paul is such a great example for us. 1. He loved all people, even his enemies. 2. He became all things to all men, without compromising, that he might save some. 3. He identified with people and met them where they were. 4. Once he connected, he was bold to proclaim the truth. 5. He saw amazing fruit of souls being saved through his ministry.

My encouragement is that you go and do likewise. May the Lord go with you and may He empower you.

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*Instructions in Righteousness* is produced by Christians for Messiah Ministries (CFM). Dr. Peter Wynn is the President of CFM and the Head Pastor of Antioch International Church. He has served as a pastor for 54 years and traveled to more than 45 nations.

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