

# Challenging the Idol Makers

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Lord Jesus, Lamb of God, takes away the sin of the world. We call on you in faith to strengthen now your people as we listen to and heed your word through scripture, knowing that your word will not return empty but will achieve all that you set for it to achieve in our lives.

We do this with faith and hope. Amen. Please be seated. Is Christianity good for the economy? Is Christianity good for the economy?

What do you think? We're in Federal Budget Week and so I'm an armchair economist. I think I know a lot about it. I don't really. But, you know, it's fun to conjecture.

What would happen if Christianity, if there was a large scale turning to Christ in Australian society or maybe turning back to Christ, what would happen to our economy?

Would it improve or would it actually deteriorate? What would happen if five million people, say, five million people came to grips with the identity of Jesus Christ as a son of God and with his work on the cross to redeem us from our sin and his resurrection from the dead?

[ 1 : 1 6 ]     What would happen if five million people came to grips with that and in doing so swept us all up who were already Christian and we became even more full on and more serious about our discipleship in the world?

What would the effect be on the economy? For example, imagine our Kevin Rudd tax bonus stimulation payments that the intended stated reason is to prop up the economy, get the economy moving, people spending money.

What if we five million people gave their \$900 to the third world, to the poor? What would happen? I mean, in terms of the Australian economy, that would be a black hole, that would be a waste, that wouldn't do anything for the Australian economy.

It would be good for the economies and the people starving in other countries, but it wouldn't help us. It would be more good for the economy if we'd all go and spend it on the pokies. At least then some goes back as tax and goes to the state government and such.

So that would be disastrous. And I'd imagine that if five million Australians did waste their Kevin Rudd bonus in that way, that we would be scorned.

[ 2 : 3 0 ]     There would be a backlash, wouldn't there? There would be people saying, you know, Christians, oh, they're so wasteful and so foolish. And they would even heap on us the insult, of all insults, that we would be called un-Australian for doing that.

Imagine Bunnings on a Sunday. If five million men became Christians in Australia, there'd be no one there. There'd be no men worshipping at Bunnings.

They'd be raising hands in prayer to the Lord Jesus. It'd be great. But you can imagine shopping centres are quiet, dusty, not very busy.

Imagine the effect as people started to serve each other. As Christians are called to service, imagine that, you know, less time of blokes tinkering in the shed and out there serving the community.

That'd be good for the community, maybe even good for the economy. Volunteer numbers up, but shoppers down. You know, the evidence is mixed. Christians are, as you know, you should know, Christians are called to work hard in the workplace.

[ 3 : 39 ] So I would hope to think there would be an increase in productivity as Christians work as if working for the Lord Jesus. You are working for Jesus in the workplace because he's Lord of your workplace.

So productivity should go up. But then again, a Christian should be giving less and less time to the temptations of consumerism and the collection of homes and boats and other trinkets.

And Christians should be giving more to their marriage and families and Christian service and fellowship and worship. So, you know, would it help productivity in the workplace? It might, but it may also impact negatively.

And finally, just another example. Just imagine if a large proportion of Australia took the Tenth Commandment seriously, that you should not covet your neighbour's wife and house and home and stuff.

I mean, the whole basis of consumer capitalism would be destroyed, wouldn't it? How could advertising work? If you become more resistant to the jealousy caused by coveting, then advertising wouldn't be as effective.

[ 4 : 56 ] And if we stopped lusting over what is not ours, why would you need to go and walk around a shopping centre all day looking at what you'd like to own? Westfield would have to close.

You can imagine Westfield and Centro, that all these competing companies would be having meetings going, what can we do about these Christians? How can we undermine this? Well, friends, that's exactly what happens today in the Book of Acts in the place of Ephesus in the early 50s.

And just to sort of set the scene a bit, later on in the same part of Western Turkey, a bit further north in the province of Bithynia, in the turn of the century, we actually have other historical evidence that Christians undermined the economy.

We have a letter, I've quoted from it before because I love the letter, I love the guy from Pliny the Younger, who's a kind of governor over the Roman area of Bithynia in northwest Turkey.

And he's written a very famous letter to the Emperor Trajan at the turn of the century, asking him what to do about all these Christians everywhere. And it's a great letter. And we like Pliny the Younger.

[ 6 : 06 ] We actually owe Pliny the Younger the best account of when the volcano Mount Vesuvius erupted at Pompeii. He gives us the best historical account of that event.

So he's a very well-respected man in history. And Pliny the Younger has written this letter to the Emperor, basically confirming many of the facts about Jesus from the New Testament, about our Christians gathering on the Lord's Day, worshipping Jesus as God.

It's a great letter. And among other things, Pliny writes at the turn of the century that Christians have killed business. He says, pagan temples are now deserted, and that's where people would spend their money.

And he says, the trade on sacrifices, on animals to be sacrificed in pagan rituals has all but dried up. And so he writes to the Emperor and says, this is not good.

This is not good for our area, that Christians have undermined our economy. But he also says a bit naively that he hopes that repentance will come and that people will come back to the temples and start spending their money again on the pagan stuff.

[ 7 : 14 ] But he couldn't be more wrong because in fact, the Roman Empire becomes more and more Christian as time goes on. And so at 112 AD, that's only the start of the real impact that Christians will make on Rome and on the Roman economy.

So as we approach today, we approach actually knowing that Christians do have an impact on the economy. And they did in Ephesus. And there's actually a kind of a vignette of a short economic incident earlier in chapter 19 of a book burning.

Now, I love books and I don't really support book burnings in principle, but this is a bit different. Early in Acts chapter 19, people are so moved by the teaching and ministry of Paul and by his spiritual power, they bring out all their secret pagan magic books.

So these are things that even they might be somewhat ashamed of, that they'd have books say of curses to curse people that they want to get back at and such things. Quite evil material.

So it's not like the book burning is a book burning of textbooks. These are really dodgy books. It's the same way men may all get together and decide to burn their secret stash of pornography, which you should do if you had such a thing, because that's an evil thing.

[ 8 : 31 ] You don't want to just sort of put it in the secondhand bookshop to tempt someone else. But Luke actually tells us that when they burn all this magic collection, the value of these books was calculated and it was found to come to 50,000 silver coins.

Now that is an economic impact, isn't it? 50,000 silver coins. So say, assuming Luke's talking about the drachma, that's one day's wage.

So 50,000 times one day's wage. You work that out. That's a lot of money to burn, isn't it? But that's the effect of Christianity. That is, as the gospel is taught, superstition, pagan superstition decreases and they stop all the businesses built around pagan superstition lose their business and the economy is affected for the worse, but people's lives are blessed for the better.

So that's a good event. And Luke tells us that as a result of the burning, the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. So wherever Christianity goes, the superstitions decrease.

And Christianity grows in this way by teaching. Christianity grows by teaching. The front door into Christian faith is just through the mind, through hearing what's taught about the identity of Jesus and the work of Jesus in history.

[ 9 : 57 ] As it is taught and heard and people are persuaded in their minds, the gospel takes effect. I'll give you another example of this because it's important to know the background of where we get to the riot today.

In chapter 19, verse 8, let's listen to Paul's ministry. Listen to how rational the apostle is. Paul entered the synagogue and for three months spoke out boldly and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God.

What is he doing? Boldly speaking, persuasively arguing. That is gospel ministry. That is Christianity through the front door, through the mind. When some stubbornly refused to believe and spoke evil of the way, and the way is Christianity, before the congregation, Paul left them, taking the disciples with him and argued daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus.

And so Paul, first to the Jew, then to the Gentile, goes to the Jew. Some people believe the word, but many stubbornly resist. So then he actually books a public space, a public intellectual space.

It would be like booking a lecture theatre at Deacon Uni to teach about Jesus, which is in fact what's happening there at the moment through the ministry of the APS.

[ 11 : 16 ] And that's what Paul does. And Luke says that he lectures in this lecture hall for two years. Where am I? I've lost my spot. Ah yes, so this continued for two years so that all the residents of Asia, and in the ancient world, that's the area of northwest Turkey, both Jews and Greeks, all the residents, Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.

Such was the impact of Paul's constant, faithful, daily teaching ministry that either everyone heard directly or just the message got out indirectly through word of mouth of Paul and what he taught.

And very interestingly, it would be a hard day for Paul because remember he was a tent maker and so he's working as a tent maker, say from very early in the morning. And then when the rest of Ephesus takes its midday siesta, which we know from the records they took, Paul rented the lecture hall during the siesta time and gave free lectures about Christianity, free talks, free debates about Christianity and then in the afternoon and night he'd be back at work.

That's a very long day and Paul does it for the sake of bringing people the truth for free, bringing people the truth without exploiting them financially.

Very unlike, I think, the artisans of Ephesus who exploit people and actually make money off their pagan superstition, as we'll see. So that is Paul's ministry.

[ 12 : 49 ] It is speaking out boldly, arguing persuasively, lecturing, reasoning, debating, all for free so that people can enter Christianity through the front door through being convicted about the truth, about who Jesus was and his work on the death, on his death on the cross and his resurrection.

That's very straightforward and in fact we'll see later that even the civic leaders of Ephesus knew of Paul the teacher and they're involved a little bit later.

There's one more financial element we need to consider before we look at the riot and the riot is really fun. It's a really exciting part of Acts. Just listen to these words from Luke in verses 21 and ongoing about what Paul wants to do.

After these things have been accomplished, Paul resolved in the Holy Spirit to go through Macedonia and Archaea and then to go on to Jerusalem. He said, after I've gone there, I must also see Rome.

So Paul wants Rome and the rest of Acts will be about Paul getting to Rome. But he says, I must go back where I've planted churches. Now why would Paul want to do that, do you think? Why would Paul want to go back on the path he's travelled?

[ 14 : 04 ] Well of course, he wants to strengthen the churches he's planted. But we know from the epistles he has another agenda, a financial one. Paul is collecting money because there's a famine in Jerusalem.

And we'll hear a bit more about that later in Acts. But Paul wants to travel back with a financial agenda, not to collect money for himself, but for those suffering because of the famine in Jerusalem, especially those in the church.

What it actually is, is the first ever historical act of international welfare, of international aid, here led by Christians motivated out of the love of Christ, I presume.

And so Paul preaches for free and when he collects money, he's collecting it for the poor in other places. But that's Christianity and money in the first century. Now compare the pagans and money.

verse 23. About that time, no little disturbance broke out concerning the way, that is, the way of Christ.

[ 15 : 12 ] Christians were considered so different they were called the way with a capital kind of W. A man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the artisans.

So Luke's idiom here is kind of cute. He says, Demetrius made no little business from making these golden idols and shrines and silver shrines and therefore no little business caused no little disturbance.

That is, a lot of money was made, therefore a lot of people were upset by Paul's teaching. And so he collects and makes a meeting of all the artisans.

These he gathered together with the workers of the same trade and said, Men, you know that we get our wealth from this business. You also see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost the whole of Asia, this Paul, this Christian teacher has persuaded and drawn away a considerable number of people by saying that, and here's the key thing, gods made with hands are not gods.

That is what Paul teaches, of course. And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be scorned and she will be deprived of her majesty that brought all Asia and the world to worship her.

[ 16 : 48 ] The temple of Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was a great, amazing thing. People did come and worship so that's sort of half right. But you suspect, don't you, that Demetrius is more concerned about the loss of money than he is about the honour of Artemis because that's the first thing he talks about is we make a lot of money from this.

What are we going to do about it? He's teaching that what we make isn't God's. What are we going to do about it? It's very easy to ignore Christians until it affects the bottom line, until it affects the economy and then people really get angry and take notice of us.

And I couldn't work out actually, maybe you might be able to help me, is Demetrius very shrewd or is he very simple? Is he shrewd or simple?

You might be tempted to think he's very shrewd and he's kind of playing the crowd and manipulating them for the sake of money but I actually think he's quite simple in that he doesn't engage with Paul's teaching.

Without blinking, he says, Paul teaches that man-made gods are not gods and then he keeps going. He doesn't even stop to think, what if Paul's right?

[ 18 : 02 ] What if the things that we make aren't gods? Now I've got a picture here of a couple of gold idols found at Ephesus among there. So these are idols to Artemis found at Ephesus so they'd be very expensive and they would sell for a lot, you could imagine.

And of course, only the very rich could afford the gold ones and silver shrines and such would be had by the more common people. Now, you are not tempted to worship that screen, are you?

You are not tempted to get one of those and think, that's a god. We know because we are affected by Christianity, in fact, all Westerners will be sceptical of that because of the effect of Christianity on the modern mind that man-made gods are not gods.

That's patently obvious to us that of course they're not. It would be stupid to say that. Thanks, Martin. But, if you are Demetrius, that's not as obvious. Your whole world is built around the assumption that these man-made gods are valid and your whole business is built around that and your whole way of life and people come to you and they enjoy what you make and they enjoy it spiritually and so actually I don't think Demetrius realises that that contradiction that man-made gods are not gods.

I think he just thinks they are. Therefore, what he does notice is we're losing money and that we need to do something about but he doesn't actually engage with Paul the teacher that Paul might be right.

[ 19 : 37 ] He has an unquestioned assumption. He has an ingrained belief that these are gods and from that he gets his negative response.

Now, this is the principle I think. Pagans at heart always have beliefs that they hold desperately to that they do not realise are false, that they do not realise are contradictory and that there may even be presuppositions, beliefs that they don't even realise they have which control the things they do and live and worship.

Demetrius is blind to the obvious fact that his man-made gods are not gods but he doesn't even realise that Paul has questioned it.

Think about our own culture. What are our ingrained beliefs that people have that make them resistant to Christianity that they do not even realise they have that are just presuppositions that are assumed and they're ingrained that people never question.

One of these I think and I'll give a couple of other later one of these I think is this sort of thing about the relativity of truth or the resistance to absolute truth.

[ 21 : 02 ] So people today have this ingrained belief that there's no such thing as absolute truth and that you know what's true for you can be true for you and what's true for me and there's no such thing as an absolute right and wrong.

That belief makes people very resistant to the truth claims of Jesus Christ because he makes absolute truth claims and that ingrained belief is just as much as Demetrius is just as stupid.

It's just as contradictory. I mean how can you believe that? How can you believe absolutely that there's no such thing as absolute truth? That's contradictory isn't it? If that statement is true then it can't be true.

Most people don't realise that they have these ingrained beliefs. We need to help people get in the front door of Christianity. The front door is Paul's door.

Teaching, persuading. That's why we have such excellent courses like Introducing God so that you actually get to spend seven, eight weeks thinking hard about Christianity to sort of flush out your ingrained beliefs that actually aren't true.

[ 22 : 14 ] But when people don't listen, when they hold to their ingrained beliefs that are wrong more than what they're hearing and being taught, they will resist very negatively.

They will resist with anger and they'll be very hateful and stirred against the Christian gospel. That's exactly what happens. A riot is caused by Demetrius and his friends.

I'll read from verse 28. When they heard this, they were enraged and shouted, Great is Artemis of the Ephesians. That's like their creed.

That's their mantra. Great is Artemis of the Ephesians. The city was filled with the confusion and people rushed together to the theatre, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who are Paul's travel companions.

So the crowd is stirred up shouting, Great is Artemis of the Ephesians and they go to the great theatre of Ephesus. We've got a picture of this. You can go there today if you go on one of those Bible study tours.

[ 23 : 24 ] It's pretty big, isn't it? It's been very well preserved. It's very well made and you could seat 20,000 people quite easily. And as great acoustics, somebody was telling me the 8 o'clock service, everyone rushes to this theatre of Ephesus shouting, Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.

Great is Artemis of the Ephesians. So it's a huge riot in this theatre of Ephesus which you can still see today. And they drag into the theatre Paul's companions.

Maybe they can't find Paul or maybe it's easier to get his friends rather than Paul and they drag them into the theatre. Now here is the gutsiness of Paul, the teacher.

Here's what he wants to do. He wants to go in there. So, where are we? Paul wished, verse 30, Paul wished to go into the crowd but the disciples would not let him.

Paul's response to this crowd of crazy people, really stubborn people saying, Great is Artemis is to go in and teach, to go in and debate, to go and reason, is to try and appeal to their minds but they will not accept it.

[ 24 : 42 ] Now, this theatre, it's not just like the state theatre or something like that. People die here. Gladiators fight here as well as dramas are performed here and so, in recent years, archaeologists have found a gladiator graveyard near this site so, blood is easily spilled here and Paul's companions do not want him to be killed at the hands of this angry, blind, stubborn mob and even it seems the civic officials, knowing of Paul's reputation as a debater and a teacher, can sort of second guess what Paul will want to do and so they send warning as well.

Even some officials of the province of Asia who were friendly to him sent a message urging him not to venture into the theatre. So, the civic officials, they're not even Christians but they're friendly to Paul, they know he's a lecturer, teacher, preacher, they know their own people are stubborn and irrational, say, don't go in there because they'll kill you.

So, what happens? Well, there's chaos. Some were shouting one thing, some another, the assembly was in confusion, most of them did not know why they had come together. Some of the crowd gave instructions to Alexander whom the Jews had pushed forward and Alexander motioned for silence to make a defence before the people.

So, someone's trying to reason with the crowd, a Jewish person it seems, I don't think a Christian but actually, not a Christian Jew but just a Jewish person but when they recognised that he was a Jew, that is, he's a monotheist, he does not worship at the temple of Artemis, he does not buy these things they buy, when they realised he was a Jew for about two hours all of them shouted in unison, great is Artemis of the Ephesians.

Can you imagine that two hours yelling, it'd become like a mantra, great is Artemis of the Ephesians, great is Artemis of the Ephesians and you can kind of picture them with their hands on their ears, great is Artemis of the Ephesians, great is Artemis of the Ephesians, this is raw paganism.

[ 26 : 56 ] The Ephesians don't even consider the Gospel, they're just stubborn, they're just superstitious and I think what in effect they're doing is what Paul Aswear describes in this way, they've exchanged the truth of God for a lie, they've exchanged the truth of God for a lie, turned away from worshipping the Creator and now they worship man-made things which are a lie and how do you prop up a lie?

How do you persuade people of a lie? You can't. The more you think about it, the more you realise how stupid it is, the only way to prop up the lie is to keep repeating it, the only way to prop up the lie is just to keep shouting it and then try and self-convince that by sheer virtue of say having 20,000 people saying the same thing, it must be true.

People do the same thing today. Pagans are everywhere today. People who worship created things, that's what a pagan is. We have secular pagans today, we have secular atheistic pagans today.

Yes, they don't have gold statues and such but they have a lot of shouting, a lot of mantras that they spew forth. I'll give one example. Often with trying to persuade atheists about the truth of Christianity, people just sort of push like a button, they just say, science has disproved God.

Science has disproved God in Christianity so therefore it's not going to listen. It's like people just believe this mantra, science has disproved Christianity, science has disproved Christianity, great is Artemis of the Ephesians, great is Artemis of the Ephesians.

[ 28 : 42 ] Would you like to read the Bible? No, science has disproved Christianity. It's absolutely ludicrous because I've done a science degree, there was never anything there where they showed me the proof that God doesn't exist.

How can science ever disprove God? How can something you do in a lab or some scientific theory ever prove that God doesn't exist? Science is just a tiny little field and yet God has invaded history and revealed himself over thousands of years through history and scripture and mostly through Jesus.

So that statement, that mantra just doesn't even make sense and there are so many Christian scientists. There are so many Christians with PhDs in biochemistry and such things and yet so science can't have disproved God and yet people use that as an excuse to not even listen to the claims of Christ, to not even listen to you, to not even read the Bible or read the Christian book that explains and engages the scientific mind.

They have the mantra, science has disproved Christianity and they apply it unthinkingly. Great is Artemis of the Ephesians. Science has disproved Christianity and it just becomes like a pagan mantra that people spew out.

at the heart of nearly every rejection of Christ is something like that, some kind of ingrained belief that people are tricked by and maybe don't even realise they hold that makes them resistant to the claims of Christ.

[ 30 : 21 ] Paul's ministry is teaching. Paul's ministry is word ministry, persuasion, debate, reason. Who was Jesus? When did he come?

Why did he come? What did he do? Ephesian ministry is shouting. Great is Artemis of the Ephesians. Fingers in ear, repeating mantras again and again and again.

So that leaves us, how are we actually going to silence this riot? If they're like this, what's actually going to quell such a mob? What could you do? They won't let Paul try and I think probably for good reason.

Alexander's tried. Well, the town clerk gets up and he finds a way to quell the mob and it's very sad actually. Read it with me. It's very disappointing.

Verse 35. When the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, imagine the grand speech here, citizens of Ephesus, who is there that does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the temple keeper of the great Artemis and of the statue that fell from heaven.

[ 31 : 34 ] Since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. Kind of, see how he's sort of sucking up to them, telling them what they want to hear?

You have brought these men here who are neither temple robbers nor blasphemers of our goddess. That's actually not quite true. I mean, they're not temple robbers, but they are blasphemers of Artemis because they do teach man-made gods are not gods.

So they actually are blasphemers, so that's a lie. If therefore Demetrius and the artisans with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, there are pro-consuls, let them bring charges against one another.

If there is anything further you want to know, it must be settled in the regular assembly, for we are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that can, that we can give to justify this commotion.

Well, that's not true either, because there is a cause that's causing this commotion, it's called Jesus Christ, it's called God entering our world, and knowing your maker, and not worshipping the created thing.

[ 32 : 41 ] That's a strong cause for commotion. But when he said this, he dismissed the whole assembly. See clearly, friends, how the crowd is won, not by logic, not by truth, not by reason, it's won by propping up the lie, propping up the pretension, propping up the superstition that the statue fell from heaven.

And with such a compromise, Paul must have been so frustrated, if only I'd been able to teach and speak and argue with them. with such a compromise, harmony is restored in the ancient city of Ephesus.



So let me conclude what I think are the challenges to us. The God who created the world, the God who sustained the world, he's made the world such that he needs to be known as the creator and sustainer, and that he needs to be central in his own universe.

That is how God has made the universe. And he's given us a son, through whom, through his entry into that world, he has died to redeem us from our sin, take our punishment, and he's risen to be the world's true lord, or the world's true centre.

Therefore, in God's world, the only social harmony that you can have, apart from Jesus Christ and worshipping him, the only social harmony you can have in such a world is that which is built on a facade, that which is built on a pretension, on a lie.

[ 34 : 31 ] In God's world, which is that, and think of our world now, think of Australia, in God's world, secularism, secular humanism, is another stubborn belief in a lie, a lie that puts man at the centre of society and of the universe, and not God and not Jesus.

Modern secularism has a lot in common with ancient paganism, less gold, but more shouting. Just think of the inviolable beliefs that our secular society has that you are not allowed to question.

Think of all the rules that we have, like the cynicism that people have towards absolute truth. Think of the resistance that people have to, they don't want any resistance on personal sexual expression.

It's like that's an absolute thing that is inviolable, that you must go with, that you can do whatever you want with your body as long as it's consensual. Think of the clamouring that people shout about personal fulfilment and personal choice.

everything is my choice. If I choose it's my right to do whatever I want, my choice. And think about the chest thumping that you often hear about only kind of secular democracy will bring harmony to the world when actually Australia's not going that well.

[ 36 : 05 ] Australia's very divided and falling apart and hurtful and hateful place under the reign of secular humanism. this leaves us with a very strong challenge.

Are you ready to speak in the absolutes that God's word gives? Are you ready to speak boldly like Paul did for the God who has granted the Lord Jesus central place in the world, in our universe and I think in our society?

That's where God wants him to be. Are you ready to be unpopular? That's really the question now isn't it? Are you ready to be unpopular?

Are you ready for the backlash that will come when we don't nod our heads, when they spew forward their mantras that all truth is relative and that people can do what they want with their bodies, when we don't concede their ingrained beliefs that are wrong, that are lies?

Are you ready for the backlash that will come against us, for how unpopular we will be? Are you willing to live such generous, Christ-like lives that people are offended that you don't spend your money the way you're supposed to spend your money on yourself and on toys and on the stuff of this world?

[ 37 : 30 ] Are you ready for the backlash that will come when we don't follow them with our money? Are you ready to live such Christ-like lives, patiently teaching people, persuading, arguing, inviting, showing people the Bible, trying to help them see their own ingrained beliefs?

Are you ready to do that difficult work? Are you ready to be insulted? Are you ready to be reviled for the name of Christ? Friends, there was a backlash in Ephesus, there was a backlash in Pliny's time, 50 years later, there will be a backlash today, but I just encourage you, stand firm for Christ and don't give in to the mantras of our society that are lies.

Let's pray to him. Our dear Lord Jesus, we praise you and we thank you for being the world's true Lord.

We pray that we may be known as the early church was known as followers of the way. We pray that we may live such radical lives in your name, that we may use with all our minds our best capacity to teach and to persuade and to reason and that those who are closed, those who through the exchange of the truth for a lie reject us, we pray that we will be both patient and bold in sharing your word with them and in seeking your honour and glory in our society.

So help us Lord Jesus and protect us we pray in your name. God God God God God Did God his God God him