

Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while. And about that time, there arose no little disturbance concerning the way, that is, Christians. And a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who had, who was made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. These he gathered together with the workmen in similar trade and said, Men, you know that from this business, we have our wealth. And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people saying that the gods made with hands are not gods. And there is danger, not only that this trade of ours may come to disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be disposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship. And when they heard this, they were enraged and were crying out, Great is Artemis of the Ephesians. Let's pray together.

Lord, help me tonight to teach your word. You know exactly what you want your people to hear, so I pray, God, that you'd speak through me tonight. Lord, I pray that you would open our eyes to see what we need to see, to understand just like these Ephesians that we cling to the things of this world. Help us understand tonight clearly in our lives that the gods made with hands are not gods at all. Do your work on us and in us right now, Holy Spirit, I pray for the glory of Jesus. And it's in His name I ask it. And God's people said, Amen. Amen. You can be seated.

Well, as the police lights flashed all around him, all Don could think about was how soon he could have a cigarette. Don was an absolute nervous wreck. He'd never had the police called on him before, and that was certainly not how he envisioned starting his Christian life. Don was a brand new Christian.

Don had been saved out of a very difficult background. He'd had a very difficult life. Don was a traveling musician. He'd been from town to town and from bar to bar. He'd been on drugs. He'd had numerous relationships with women and was even to the point of suicide when someone shared with him the good news of the gospel of Jesus. And Don believed the gospel. Don was baptized in the name of Christ. And Don just immediately had this urge, this desire, this passion to want to tell anybody and everybody the hope that he now had in Jesus Christ. The only problem was Don didn't know how to share the gospel. This was new to him, and he wanted some way to be able to have these kind of conversations.

So, he noticed that his church was offering an evangelism training, an evangelism training called evangelism explosion. Some of you will remember that old training course. Anybody, show of hands, been through that? Okay. Anybody remember what I'm talking about? Wonderful. All right. Take my word for it. It was a training program that a lot of churches did. And one of the things that was central to that training program is they would teach you how to start a gospel conversation with a specific question.

[8 : 38] So, Don goes through the training. He's now ready to go out and tell people about the good news of Jesus. Don walks up to his first home and knocks.

Don walks up to his first home and walks up to his first home and walks up to his first home. A middle-aged woman nervously opens the door. What Don does not know is that this woman has just gone through a terrible divorce.

In fact, this lady's ex-husband was currently serving time in prison and had been sending her death threats that he was going to send someone to her home to kill her.

Don looks at the woman, this man on her front step that she's never seen before in her life, and the first words out of his mouth were the first words he'd been trained to say.

Don. And so, you can imagine that woman's response when Don looked at her in the face and said, Ma'am, if you were to die tonight, where would you spend eternity?

[9 : 58] Needless to say, Don's first evangelistic opportunity caused quite the crisis, quite the commotion. That lady screamed. She called the cops.

And Don is standing there outside as a brand-new Christian thinking, What in the world did I get myself into? Faith family, let me ask you, have you ever said something to someone that created a crisis, that created a controversy?

Maybe you had one of those, like, open-mouth insert foot moments where you said something really stupid and it caused a problem. Or maybe you were in a situation where you had to deliver bad news to someone.

And even though you had really good motives, it caused a crisis. Maybe you had to stand up and say something that you knew was not going to be very popular, but you had to stand up and say

that anyway.

Or maybe you had to have a difficult conversation with a friend. But whatever it might be, most of us can relate to a situation where, at some level, where what we had to say, the words that we needed to deliver, whether intentionally or unintentionally, caused a crisis.

[11:15] I say all that because I wonder, faith family, if sometimes we forget that that is exactly what happens when we share the good news of Jesus.

That at the core of the gospel message is an offense. Or to say it a different way, the gospel is offensive. Now, let me be clear.

The messenger of the gospel is not offensive. Can I get an amen? We're not jerks for Jesus. The gospel itself, the very message of the good news is offensive.

It causes crisis. Listen to what Paul says in Galatians 5, verse 11. But I, brothers, if I still preach circumcision, well, why am I being persecuted?

In that case, the offense of the cross has been removed. 1 Corinthians 1, verse 23. We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews, and folly to the Gentiles.

[12:25] Here's my point, faith family. Lean in. The gospel comforts, but it also cuts. The gospel uplifts, but it also upends.

The gospel converts, but it also creates crisis. Why is that? Because what is at the heart of the gospel call?

What has been taking place throughout the book of Acts as the gospel is going forward? Well, first of all, the gospel calls us to turn away from ourselves.

That's called repentance. And to put all, and I mean all, I mean every ounce of our trust in Christ alone. We must turn from ourselves and everything else and put our faith and trust alone in Jesus. Look at, for instance, verse 3 of chapter 19. It says, You see, the followers of John, we've seen this a little bit in the book of Acts, didn't have the full story.

[13:49] The followers of John, they knew about repentance. They knew they couldn't save themselves. They knew they must turn to God. But notice this on the screen. Salvation is more than just turning from self.

It's actually turning to the Savior. It is more than just repentance. It's also faith. That's why true repentance and faith are never separated.

When you're turning from something, you're always turning to something, and that something better be the right thing. That's what the gospel calls us to do is, listen, you've understood that you've got to turn away, but you need to understand who you must turn to, and His name is Jesus.

And upon hearing that, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. So the gospel calls each and every one of us to turn from ourselves and to turn to Jesus.

Secondly is the gospel calls us into brand new life. A brand new life. Look at verse 2. In other words, Paul is saying, when you heard what you heard, did you receive the Spirit?

[15:07] That is, did you receive new life? We must, somebody just say preach preacher, we must never separate the Holy Spirit with new life in Jesus Christ.

That's what the Spirit does. Jesus says you must be born not just of water, but of the Spirit. The New Testament calls the Spirit the Spirit of life.

Paul says the letter, I can feel it boiling up. Paul says the Spirit, the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

In other words, put all this together, notice it on the screen. The gospel is a call away from yourself, that is repent, and to Jesus, that is faith, and to a new life in God.

That is a work of the Spirit. Can I get an amen on that? That is what the gospel is doing in the book of Acts. Everywhere it goes, I don't care who it is, it is a call.

[16:10] Turn from yourself, believe only in Jesus, and receive the Spirit that is the new life that is found in God. Faith family, that is a message that will change your life.

And that is a message that will cause a crisis in your life. Why is that? Why does that message always create a crisis?

Here it is, notice on the screen. Because your idols always fight back. Because there are things in your life that refuse to be second place.

There are things in this world that refuse to be second place. And so, what you see in the book of Acts is when the gospel is proclaimed, idols fight back, and it creates crisis.

And that is exactly what's happening here in Acts chapter 19. Here in Ephesus, a riot breaks out because of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[17 : 22] There is a man by the name of Demetrius. He's a craftsman in the temple. And he is so furious about what the gospel is doing in Ephesus that he has gathered all the local businessmen for a protest and a riot in the street.

Look at what's happening in verse 26. And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people saying that the gods made with hands are not gods.

There's a crisis in Ephesus. Why is there a crisis in Ephesus? Well, first of all, it's the message of the gospel, which I just briefly outlined a few moments ago. But it's specifically what Paul is preaching.

And we don't hear, as in other places, we don't get the full message that Paul is preaching. We get his main point. And his main point is this, that gods made with hands, that is idols, are not gods at all.

This has been a consistent message for Paul everywhere he's gone, has it not? Look back at Acts chapter 17. This is when Paul was in Athens and in verse 22.

[18 : 35] It says that Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said, Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you're very religious, not a compliment. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, all these idols, I found also an altar with this inscription, To the unknown God, what therefore you worship is unknown, this I proclaim to you.

So what Paul has done, his whole mission, he's been going into all these different cities, and he's calling out against their idols. He's calling out against their gods. So whether or not it was in Athens and Athenia, the goddess of wisdom, whether it was Corinth and Epaphrodite, or now here in Ephesus, Paul is calling out against and calling people to turn from the granddaddy of them all. For before these people in Ephesus would have been this massive, and I do mean massive, temple. It's the temple of Artemis.

It was one of the seven wonders of the world, four times larger than the Parthenon in Athens. It was one of the two, three times larger than the other ones, and it was one of the three times larger than the other ones.

It covered, like, almost think of, like, the Manhattan skyline. The entire skyline, we could, no matter where you were in Ephesus, you could see this massive temple to Artemis.

[20 : 03] This idol worship was at the heart of the Ephesian life. Ephesus was probably, on my sabbatical last year, one of my favorite places to visit.

Of all the places I got to go, whether that was Corinth or Athens or the island of Patmos or places like that, Ephesus is one of the most still kept together. I mean, you can really see a lot of the ruins that are still there today.

Now, the temple of Artemis is not there, but at its time, it was one of the seven wonders of the world. This was at the core of the Ephesian life.

It was, Artemis was the goddess Diana. Anybody want to take a guess at what superhero Artemis was created after?

Actually, she was created after Artemis. Wonder Woman, that's exactly right. I've taught that before. But anyways, you may have known that anyways. Artemis or Wonder Woman was created after Artemis.

[21 : 04] She was the goddess of fertility, which included the fertility of the ground. So really, what the way Artemis was manifested in terms of the fertility was business and commerce.

Think like Wall Street. She was the goddess that would help the land be fruitful and the crops grow and really was central to economic prosperity.

So Paul goes into Ephesus and he calls people to turn from Artemis to realize that goddess isn't a god at all.

You're wasting your time worshiping false gods. And I have come to proclaim to you the one true and living God. This was the central message of what Paul is preaching.

Why? Because it's a central message in the Bible. Exodus 20. There are to be no other gods before me. Leviticus 19.

[22 : 02] Do not turn to idols or make gods for yourselves. Isaiah 42. Those who trust in idols will be put to shame. Psalm 115. Their idols are silver and gold made by hands of men.

1 John 5. 21. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Romans chapter 1. They worshiped creation rather than the creator.

From cover to cover, throughout the Bible, is a central message, which is turn from yourself, turn from your idols, and worship the one true and living God.

Now, these are things we've talked about before as a faith family, but they're always worth going back over. Let me give you just a couple of practical applications. And the first is this.

Anything can be an idol. We've talked about this, right? Anything can be an idol. It could be your education. It might be a specific relationship that you have or desire.

[23 : 06] It could be your family. It could be your money. It might be your reputation or success. I mean, the way I see it with a lot of people, I think their idol is their dog.

There are people that take better care of their dogs and pets than they do anything else. Like, they idolize and worship little Fifi, right? Listen, anything in your life can be an idol.

Anything. It's whatever you find ultimate, whatever you look to for meaning and purpose in life. It's the thing you want most, the thing that you can't live without, the thing that you fear losing.

And so listen to me, faith family, zone in. Anything in your life, including your life, can be an idol.

Here's the second thing, is that whether we want to admit it or not, we're all idol worshippers.

We're no different than the Athenians. We're no different than the Corinthians. We're no different than the Ephesians. We don't have a statue of Artemis, but we have Wall Street and portfolios and workaholic and 24-hour business channels so that we can all live the American dream.

[24 : 13] We may not have little statues of Epaphrodite, but we have pornography and the romantic illusion that love will solve everything, an identity that's found in appearance and fulfillment that's found in beauty.

I mean, we are all the time taking good things and making them ultimate things. They become the obsession of our lives.

As Calvin said, our heart is a idol factory. We turn good things into gods and we worship them with our lives.

The problem is we become numb to them. We don't see them as idols. I don't know if some of you remember way back when Saturday Night Live used to be good.

You got to go back a ways to get there, but when Saturday Night used to be good, they had a little skit called Deep Thoughts. Anybody remember Deep Thoughts by Jack Handy? Wasn't it the best?

[25 : 11] One of my favorite Deep Thoughts by Jack Handy was this quote. He said, I don't think I can be hypnotized. This hypnotist tried to hypnotize me one time, but it didn't work.

And I remind him of that every Wednesday when I go to his house to wash his car. That's just good, right? So the point is like, listen, I'm not an idol worshiper, right?

I don't worship idols. And that's because you've become so numb. You've become so hypnotized by the thing that you love the most or idolize the most that you don't even realize the hold it has on your life.

You see, that's the truth for the Ephesians, and that's the truth for us. We all have gods made with hands, and what the Bible wants to make very, very clear to us this evening is this.

Gods made with hands are not gods at all. And nothing is to be worshipped above God alone. And so whatever God you've created with your hands, turn from that and turn to Jesus only.

[26 : 27] But when you do that, your idol fights back. It's not just the message that Paul is preaching that is controversial and creates a crisis in Ephesus.

It's the movement itself. Look, for instance, in verse 23. Verse 23 says, About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the way that is concerning Christianity.

And look at verse 26 again. And you see in here that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people saying that gods made with hands are not gods.

In other words, what's going on is as the message is being proclaimed, lives are being changed. Listen, and when lives are being changed, the culture gets changed with it.

I need you to listen closely. It's one thing for Paul to preach that gods made with hands are no gods at all, but it goes to a very different level when people stop buying the gods made with hands.

[27 : 39] Go ahead and preach your message, Paul. That's fine. As long as it doesn't impact the economy, as long as people keep buying the things of Artemis, I don't really care what you say about Artemis, but the moment they don't want to buy the little statue, the moment that threatens

my life, then I've got a problem here.

And that's what's going on in Ephesus. Listen, when evangelism starts impacting the economy, that is when crisis really breaks out. Verse 27, And there is a danger, not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may have even be disposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.

In other words, we can't, this is bad for business what Paul is doing. This whole preaching the gospel thing is affecting our livelihoods.

Are you with me tonight? Your idols always fight back. They don't want to be second. They don't want to be third. They want to remain your God.

They want to remain the primary thing in your life. And what makes me think, as I look at a passage like this, is something like, what businesses would have to shut down if revival broke out in America?

[29 : 08] How does the gospel impact your personal economy? What are the things you spend on idol worship that would change if Jesus became your true worship?

Oh, this will preach. This will preach. See, what's happening is businesses are having to close the doors because people are no longer turning to Artemis.

And that causes a crisis. That causes a serious response from those who follow Artemis. And what's the response to this crisis?

And I think this helps us even evaluate our own souls. That is, how did the Ephesians respond when their idol got exposed? It's the same response we have when our idols get poked at and exposed.

Let me give you three quickly from the text. Here's the first response that they give when their idol is called out. Verse 28. When they heard this, they were what?

[30 : 15] Enraged and crying out, great is Artemis of the Ephesians. So the first response is this, it's anger. They were enraged and cried, how dare you do that to Artemis?

How dare you say that to Artemis? How dare you turn people away from our business? You see, one of the ways you discover what your idol is, are you listening?

Is you answer this question. What do you most of the time get mad at? Follow the thread of your anger and you'll probably find an idol attached to it.

Let me give you a few examples. Try telling people who idolize their bodies that they don't have the right to do whatever they want with their bodies.

And how do they respond? Watch people who idolize politicians when their politicians lose. Watch people who always have to be right respond when they're told they're wrong or just preach a sermon on giving.

[31 : 30] More people will walk out of your church if you preach a sermon on money than anything else in the Bible. Why? Because idols always fight back.

You're not going to tell me how to spend my money. You're not going to tell me what to do with my body. You're not going to tell me how to spend my time. Your idol is showing.

What are you angry about? What enrages you? Could it be the reason you get so angry at times is because somebody stopped buying your idol?

That your idol is not getting the tension it wants. Anger is a common way that idols fight back. That'll preach, amen? Follow the thread of your anger and you'll likely find your idol.

Here's the second response when Artemis gets exposed. It's in verse 29. So the city was filled with confusion.

[32 : 35] They were filled with confusion and they rushed together into the theater. So the second response they had was not just anger. It was confusion. There was confusion in the streets.

Not only were people angry, they were confused. In other words, there were people in the crowd that were kind of like, what are we here for? What are we fighting about? What's going on? We don't understand.

In other words, sometimes having your idol exposed will make you angry. Sometimes it'll just make you lost. Listen, listen, listen. Without that person in my life, without that thing, without that job, without that paycheck, you drift, you feel purposeless because life doesn't make sense without your idol.

Life doesn't make sense without that job. Like, it got poked at and now life's just confused. Like, you're just like in some big fog.

Well, follow the thread of your confusion or lostness and you'll likely find your idol. Here's why. Notice it on the screen. Because when the meaning of your life is living for your idol and your idol gets removed, you lose your reason for living.

[33 : 54] You feel confused and lost and purposeless in life. Here's the third response that the Ephesians had when their idol got exposed, verse 33.

And some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward, and Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd. But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours, they all cried out with one voice, great is Artemis of the Ephesians. The third is closed-mindedness. Some in the crowd wanted Alexander to calm things down, but others refused to listen to him because he was a Jew.

I mean, after all, what does he know? He's not an Ephesian. See, sometimes it's not anger. Sometimes it's not confusion. Nobody here is going to struggle with this, but I have to say it anyways.

Stubbornness and pride. You can play along. It's, I'm not going to listen to them. You dig in your heels even deeper, and you refuse to listen to anything or anyone.

[34 : 58] I don't want your counsel. I don't want your opinion. I don't want your advice. You just shut it down. Oh, the goddess of Artemis got poked at, and the people of Ephesus are angry, and they're confused, and they don't want to hear another word.

Notice this on the screen. Could it be that one of the reasons we refuse to have a conversation with others is because we don't want our idol exposed? See, I know that if I'm open with you in this conversation, guess who's going to walk in the room?

My idol. I don't want to talk about it, and I don't want your opinion on it, so just leave my idol alone. Oh, make no mistake, faith family, the idol always fights back, and you can tell it by these kinds of responses. So why is it that we respond this way?

Because it's getting to the very heart of who you are and what matters most in your life, and I'm almost done. I'm almost done. What does all of this reveal? What does all of this reveal?

[36 : 10] Are you seeing the flow of the text? The gospels getting proclaimed, turn from yourself and from your idols, turn to Jesus, receive new life in the Spirit, and those that are clinging to idols fight back, and a crisis emerges.

And you see that because they're angry, and they're confused, and they're shutting down conversation. And what? Can I get permission again to preach, preacher? What does it all reveal? It's something I've told you before, but I will continue to tell you. Verse 27. There is a danger. Not only that this trait of ours may come into disrepute, but also that temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing.

She may even be disposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship. What's being revealed here? This is so good. If you've zoned out, zoned back in, you've got to hear this.

Who is Artemis? The goddess of fertility, which in Ephesus manifested itself as the goddess of business, and commerce, and economic prosperity.

[37 : 25] That's what Artemis was. So isn't it interesting, listen, that the very people who are selling Artemis are afraid of running out of business?

The God who promises you economic prosperity can't even keep your business afloat. because idols can never deliver what they promise. Because the gods made with hands are no gods at all.

Do you see? Look at Isaiah 45, verse 20. Assemble yourselves and come. Draw near together, you survivors of the nations.

They have no knowledge who carry about their wooden idols, and keep on praying to a God that cannot save. See, Paul is right that gods made with hands are no gods at all, because at the end of the day, they cannot save you, they cannot satisfy you, and they will not sustain you.

[38 : 45] Here is what idol worship will lead you. Are you with me, Faith? I'm almost done. Hang with me. Idol worship will leave you angry, confused, and alone.

Because rather than carrying you, you have to end up carrying them. Rather than God carrying you, you have to carry your gods.

So I have a much, much better approach to life. Listen. Turn from your idols and turn to the Savior. His burden is light. His yoke is easy. And you don't have to carry Him. He carries you. That's the good news of the gospel. Amen. Faith family, Don saw firsthand what we so often forget, that the gospel of Jesus Christ can cause a crisis.

[39 : 54] And that's because the gospel not only comforts, the gospel cuts. It exposes our idols and our idols always fight back.

Always. After all, the riot in Ephesus was not the first riot the gospel ever caused. Do you remember another one?

When a Jewish crowd gathered in the streets? How they responded when their idol of religion and self-righteousness was being exposed?

Do you remember how they were angry and confused and refused to listen to the truth? Do you remember when their idols thought back?

And it looked like for three days their idols had won. But on the third day, Jesus proved decisively and eternally there are no other gods before Him.

[41 : 09] And all God's people said, Amen. Lord, thank you for your word to us tonight. We are a people that love the gospel. We are comforted by the gospel.

But at the same time, we need to remember that the gospel causes a crisis. Because the gospel demands that there be no other gods before the one true and living God.

It calls us to turn from ourself and to turn from anything and everyone that we are trusting in and put our trust only in the Lord Jesus.

And when that happens in our life, our idols always fight back. There's always a crisis and a spiritual warfare that takes place when the gospel is being proclaimed.

Help us tonight identify and be aware of what our idols may be that we would worship you and you alone fully with our hearts and with our lives.

[42 : 14] Lead us now as we enter into a time of remembrance where we remember that day when the idols of religion and the idols of self-righteousness fought back and crucified the very Son of God.

but Jesus won the victory for He is the one true and living God. We pray it in His name. Amen. Amen. Amen.