

THE SOURCE OF TRUE RICHES

Acts 19.11-41

How does faith in Jesus impact a culture? The creation and flow of wealth is a part of every society. It makes sense that Scripture talks so much about money because it plays a significant role in our lives.

Faith in Jesus re-prioritizes our financial habits

In some parts of the world, mental and physical maladies are more commonly associated with a malevolent spiritual realm. We are often quick to dismiss spiritual explanations, but we still talk about “darkness”, “sickness”, or even “oppression”.

The seven sons of Sceva want to use the benefits of Jesus without any relationship with Jesus. While there is healing in the name of Jesus, it is never detached from a relationship with Him. This remains a problem today with phony faith healers.

As a result of their genuine faith in Jesus, the Ephesians take action to follow Him. In modeling true repentance, they abandon their false practices at great personal cost (Acts 19.19).

How we spend money is an indication of our spiritual maturity.

Money can get an unhealthy grip on our hearts

In Ephesus, there was a cult to the goddess Artemis. Pilgrims liked to buy souvenirs, silver figurines of the goddess. This stimulated a thriving business in the production of these statues (Acts 19.24).

We see in Demetrius that his security was tied to his income. To threaten his finances was to threaten him. Finding our significance and security in man-made things is what we call “idolatry”.

Demetrius shows us our fallen human impulse to disguise the real issue in a way that gathers people to our side. He makes this about Artemis, a more respectable motive, rather than his own wellbeing.

Is Demetrius worried that Paul’s message would demoralize his workers as they realize they are not making real gods?

In the history of the world, believing in Jesus has been the greatest check on unrestrained self-interest. While affirming wealth creation, our faith in Christ shows us there is a higher good.

Christ is the source of true riches

Paul writes this Ephesian church a few years later reminding them of “the riches of grace” and the “unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephesians 1.7, 3.8; Cf. Philippians 4.19; Romans 2.4). This refers to the sufficiency of a restored relationship with the God of the universe through the Lord Jesus.

We know many materially rich people who have hard, empty lives. Can we be whole without peace with God?

Key Point: Money is a good gift from God to be stewarded for His Kingdom purposes.

Application Questions:

How are the seven sons of Sceva like Simon the Sorcerer back in Acts 8.9f.? How is this problem still prevalent today?

Paul established the church in Ephesus in about the year AD 55. The Apostle John wrote to this church in about AD 90. Read Revelation 2.1-7 and see what lessons we learn from the church in Ephesus.

What does this passage teach us about the “psychology of crowds”? How did it form? How was it calmed?

What is Paul’s motivation for action in Ephesus (Acts 19.30)? How is this different from the motivations of Demetrius and the town clerk (Acts 19.35-41)?