

The Dangers of the Doctrine of Demetrius

Acts 19: 23-34

The setting for our text today takes place in the city of Ephesus. It was known as the wealthiest city of its day in Asia Minor. It was built near a prosperous sea port on the Aegean Sea. Ships from all over the world docked in her harbor, contributing to her wealth and prosperity.

Ephesus was also known for the magnificent temple built there for the Greek goddess of fertility, Diana. It was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. This led to much indulgence and immorality.

Paul arrived in Ephesus and founded the church there. He would eventually spend three years ministering to this people. From Ephesus Paul wrote both letters to the Corinthian church. The apostle John also came to Ephesus some years after Paul's departure. He too was inspired of the Holy Spirit while in Ephesus, writing the gospel that bears his name and the three epistles. The young, promising Timothy followed Paul as pastor in Ephesus.

Clearly God was doing a great and powerful work among the church in Ephesus. Revival had broken out early in Paul's ministry there. [v.10b – so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.](#) [v.20 – So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.](#)

With such power and conviction among the people of Ephesus, it wasn't long until opposition began to mount. The adversary will not sit idly by while the church prospers for the glory of God. Our text deals with a man by the name of Demetrius who staunchly opposed Paul and the work of the Lord. The names may have changed through the years, but there are those among us today that still possess his doctrine. I want to look at the details of our text as we consider: [The Dangers of the Doctrine of Demetrius.](#)

I. The Sinful Motivation (24-27) – These verses reveal what really motivated Demetrius, his sinful lusts, greed, and desires. Consider:

A. He was Motivated Financially (24-25) – It is evident that Demetrius was largely driven by his wealth and the desire for more. His craft of making idols for the worship of Diana had [brought no small gain to the craftsmen.](#) He admitted that [by this craft we have our wealth.](#) It is estimated that there were at least 33 different shrines to Diana throughout Asia, and he was at the heart of that worship in Ephesus.

- Paul revealed the sinfulness of idol worship and as people were saved, the trade of Demetrius suffered a great loss in sales. He was furious that the source of his wealth was being impacted by the preaching of Jesus.

- If you haven't noticed, greed and wealth continue to drive a lot of people. We are all familiar with the phrase "money talks." It seems as if our culture is consumed and motivated by the lure of riches and the desire for more. Even a lot of religious groups are influenced largely by monetary gain.

- 1 Tim.6:10 – For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Mat.6:24 – No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (*treasure, riches.*) Many cannot serve God because of their love for worldly gain.

B. He was Motivated Religiously (24, 26) – Demetrius was involved in pagan worship, but he was devoted to it nonetheless. Much of his devotion to religion was likely motivated by greed, but he was committed to the cult that worshipped Diana. He was not interested in hearing the truth of the gospel. In fact, he was infuriated that anyone would even preach something that was contrary to the largely popular Greek goddess.

- One of the greatest hindrances to spreading the truth of Jesus Christ is organized religion. Many are very active and sincere in some form of organized religion, but much of it majors on tradition and is void of truth. We cannot allow the pretense of religious worship to hinder us from sharing the truth of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world. Hell will be filled with those who were devoutly religious, but possessed no relationship with Christ.

C. He was Motivated Sensually (27) – Demetrius was quick to defend the worship of Diana and resisted anyone who sought to change that worship. Clearly this was motivated by the lusts of the flesh. Diana was the goddess of fertility. The great temple in Ephesus was attended by hundreds of temple prostitutes that promoted all sorts of lewdness and immorality as an act of worship to their goddess.

- I don't know of such a temple today, but the doctrine of Demetrius remains strong in modern culture. There are shrines to the lustful desires of humanity all around us. We are a culture and a nation driven by sensual desires of the flesh. Our children are being indoctrinated with such theology at a very young age. Media and other outlets continually bombard us with sexually suggestive materials.

- Wikipedia, the internet encyclopedia, stated that in 1998, the sale of pornographic materials brought in between \$750 million and \$1 billion annually. That number increased to between \$2.6 and \$3.9 billion annually in 2001. These numbers are now ten years old, and I am sure that their sales have greatly increased. It is estimated that the adult film industry brings in around \$13 billion a year.

- Reports reveal that divorce is on the decline, but that is in large part due to the fact that fewer choose to marry, choosing rather to live together outside of marriage. The homosexual agenda is being pushed and promoted at an alarming rate in our modern society.

- This is a doctrine that has the ability to ruin our nation. Nothing is off limits in today's culture. People are encouraged to live as they please without regard to their health or morality. We need to take a stand for decency and morality in our day. Our children need to know that God ordained the family unit and has established its order and function!

I. The Sinful Motivation (24-27)

II. The Hateful Opposition (26-34) – Demetrius was opposed to all that was godly and right.
Notice:

A. He Opposed God's Man (26) – He specifically mentioned Paul and blamed him for the demise of his lucrative industry. Clearly he had a personal vendetta against Paul, simply because of the gospel he preached that was bringing about change in peoples' lives through salvation.

- Modern society has little use for a man who will proclaim the Word of God faithfully, exposing sin. In fact, the average church in America doesn't want a man who preaches truth. Society desires those who will encourage them, making them feel good about themselves regardless of the life they live.

B. He Opposed God's Word (26) – Demetrius spoke of Paul [persuading and turning away much people](#). Paul did not persuade them through his own personal influence. I doubt they feared Paul or felt any obligation to him. The preaching of the Word brought about change. God's Word brought conviction to their hearts and they turned from their wicked ways!

- Society hates the stinging rebuke of the Word. They don't want to hear what the Bible says about sin and their ungodly ways. In recent years, many have sought to water down or simply deny the Word. Many believe that the Bible no longer applies, but rather it is an outdated, archaic book. This blessed Bible is not obsolete; it is absolute! It is just as relevant today as it was when Paul preached the truths of Christ then!

C. He Opposed God's Son (26) – Demetrius hated the fact that Paul preached Jesus and Jesus alone, resisting the doctrine of the many gods that men served according to their lusts.

- That has always been the line drawn in the sand and it always will be. There are not many gods or many ways to inherit eternal life. There is only one God and there is only one way! I know that our "politically correct" and all inclusive society doesn't like that, but it is true nonetheless. Christ is the only way of salvation and apart from Him there is no hope. [1 Tim.2:5-6 – For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; \[6\] Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.](#)

D. He Opposed God's People (29, 33-34) – Gaius and Aristarchus were men of Macedonia, fellow Greeks, but Demetrius and his followers opposed them because of their association with Paul and Christ. Alexander was singled out for his faith as well. Clearly there was no compassion or distinction; believers in Christ were opposed and despised.

- We are not facing that level of opposition yet, but I fear that it is coming. I believe that we will see a day in America that the church is opposed and resisted because of our faith. Society is growing less tolerant of the church of Christ our Lord even as they demand our tolerance in regard to sin and immorality on every hand.
- We cannot give up or back down. We must stay the course and stand for the cause of Christ.

I. The Sinful Motivation (24-27)

II. The Hateful Opposition (26-34)

III. The Harmful Instigation (29-34) – Here we discover that Demetrius and his poisonous doctrine incited a riot.

A. It Promoted Confusion (29a, 33) – The gathering turned into a frenzied mob, full of confusion. No doubt many joined the turmoil that had no idea what they were protesting or why.

- Truth never promotes confusion. It sometimes brings emotions to the surface, but truth is always right and easily understood. Truth never changes. [1 Cor.14:33 – For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.](#) [Jam.3:16 – For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.](#) Confusion is a work of the devil. I pray that we will strive to present truth and avoid confusion.

B. It Promoted Rebellion (29, 34) – [The crowd rushed into the theater.](#) That has the idea of "*setting in rapid motion, to stir up or incite.*" This angry mob was quickly getting out of hand. For two solid hours they stood and cried [Great is Diana of the Ephesians.](#)

- That is exactly what the enemy desires to promote among the church. If he can generate rebellion and a mob-like mentality that refuses reason, he can disrupt the work of the church. Sadly these types of events are all too common among the church as well.

C. It Promoted Persecution (29, 33) – These men were only guilty of serving the Lord. They had committed no crimes, but they were persecuted for their faith. Demetrius and the others sought to instill fear in their hearts in an effort to discourage their commitment to Christ.

- Many around the world face persecution today for their faith. I read the other day of a pastor in Iran who is facing the death penalty if he doesn't renounce his faith. His only crime is being a Christian and sharing the gospel with those who need to hear. It may come to that in America some day. We need to be ready should that day come.

This is a desperate situation, which in many ways, looks much like the day in which we live. How are we to overcome and resist such doctrine? Consider [Chp.20:1-2 – And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia. \[2\] And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece.](#) We must embrace one another and find encouragement among the brethren. We must stand together and lean upon the Lord. Life isn't going to get any easier; it will only get worse. But, we can rejoice in the Lord. He is in control and we have a heavenly home awaiting.

If there is a need in your life I would like to encourage you to come to the Lord for help. He can help you overcome the temptations of the flesh and give you courage to stand and face your fears. We must prevail.