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A Dangerous Faith
Acts 19:21-20:1

How would you describe your Christian faith? Interesting? Satisfying? Joy-filled? Purpose driven? Challenging? Or might some be honest in saying its frustrating? Confusing? boring? Life-less? Mechanical? Rote? Apathetic? What is the Christian life meant to be? Ever thought of Christian faith being dangerous? Someone defined the Christian as Completely fearless, continually cheerful and constantly in trouble. That certainly describes the Apostle Paul as he ministered to the people in his day. In our wealthy comfortable American churches we tend not to think in terms of danger...but I would suspect the reason we don't equate Christianity in terms of danger is because you and I have failed to live it out as we ought. Christianity is a very dangerous faith and if we don't think so.... then we probably have not begun yet to live it. Indeed the One whom we pledge to follow said these very words "I have come not to bring peace on earth but a sword, and to make a division among men." Matthew 10:34. This is a hard saying, but it is by such paradox of means that Jesus purposes to heal the war and strife on this earth, to repair the messed up brokenness and shards of hurt that scatter over our lives. This Jesus desires to bring men and women of faith together loving each other and sharing with each other together. Christianity is a dangerous faith if we dare to join Jesus on a risky adventure of actually daring to follow in obedience to Him, to change our minds about following evil and walking in truth instead.

When Paul arrived at the scene in Ephesus in Acts 19 he found a city that was in a headlock by the evil one. The pagan superstition, black magic, occult, demonism and darkness left the people miserable and

depraved. Paul attacked that stronghold of evil by holding out the most powerful weapon ever known. That is the weapon of sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. The word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any other kind of double bladed sword and is able to pierce down into the very thoughts and intentions of the heart. Within two years the gates of hell itself had been trampled down and crushed by the compelling truth and light of the word of God and by the believers who dared to live out that truth. The result in Acts 19:18 was the people totally changed the way they were living. Confessing and admitting they were wrong and God was right and affirming their desire to walk in righteousness. They had a great big bonfire in Ephesus where people brought their astrological charts and black magic books and Ouija boards and horoscopes and burned them in the public square right in the center of the city. It appeared that the situation in Ephesus was well in hand and God had won a great victory. Paul was ready to move on to the next assignment in v.21 of Acts 19.

READ with me Acts 19:21-22. There were some things that had gripped Paul's heart. He wanted to care for and disciple those brand new Christians in Macedonia. He wanted to teach more of the truth about God to them. In Paul we can see welling up an intense desire to penetrate the very heart of the Roman Empire and plant the truth of the good news of Jesus. "I must also see Rome" We hear Paul continue this phrase in the next chapter. G. Campbell Morgan says that is not the 'must' of a tourist...that is the must of a man with a missions heart for the lost.

The apostle planned to stay in Ephesus until the celebration of Pentecost (I Cor16:5-9) but circumstances changed his mind and Luke now tells us what happened. Lets read Acts 19:23-20:1 (READ)

These believers in Ephesus decided they had enough of their evil ways and so they were getting rid of anything that was an obstacle to their new found faith in Jesus. It was radical. It was dangerous. They could have sold all that stuff and financially gained but they so believed

it was evil, garbage that they burned it ensuring that no one else would be tripped up by the evil that had enslaved them for so many years.

There must have been quite a number of people who radically chose to obediently follow the truth of God's word because it made a huge impact on this city. Ephesus was one of the 3rd or 4th largest cities in the world. It may have had 250,000 people living in it. And it must have been a substantial group of new believers who chose to live out their faith in order to rock the economy of this size of town. My point this morning is this: Living out God's truth will impact people around us. And city wide impact comes when a group of believers decide to dangerously live out truth in a righteously radical way.

This morning we see an example of how a group of believers who dared to live out their faith rocked this town... and it made a huge impact. Do you want to make an impact for the kingdom of God? Do you want to see lives changed? Do you want to see God use you? Paul did. He wasn't afraid to take the good news message right into the very heart of the Roman empire. Completely fearless, continually cheerful and constantly in trouble. That's a recipe for a dangerous faith that makes an impact.

v.23 "there was no small disturbance concerning the way" The riot that ensued is proof that these believers were making an impact on this town on the most sensitive part of human anatomy...their pocketbooks. You see these people had not only become believers in Christ, they had become radically serious about it and lived it out. What would happen if even 30 percent of the people who claimed to be Christian actually lived like it, actually chose their entertainment like it, their video, their books, their music, the things they fed into their bodies, the things they fed into their minds and eyes and ears. What would disappear in society? What businessmen would be upset? These new Christians had come so far under conviction of the Holy Spirit convicted of sin and they radically ripped it out and got rid of it. This totally impacted their city. If my

Christian faith is not affecting the economy of the world then I don't have much Christianity. Living out God's truth is going to make waves and the waves crash onto this town of Ephesus.

v.24 Demetrius is the president of the silversmith union. They made a lot of money by making little silver shrines of Artemis. Artemis was the goddess the people in Ephesus worshipped. There were two goddess named Artemis in Asia minor. One was the Greek goddess of the hunt. The other was Artemis of the Ephesians. She was a many-breasted goddess of fertility. Its probable that the original statute was a meteorite that was fashioned to resemble a woman with many breasts. V. 35 refers to this image which fell down from heaven. She was housed in a huge temple. Named one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. It was 425 ft long 220 ft wide and 60 ft tall with 127 pillars of marble inlaid with gold and Cyprus and cedar wood carving. The temple of Artemis was filled with works of artists from the greek world. On the 25th of May each years the statutes of the goddess would be taken out and paraded up and down the main street, the Archadian way in Ephesus with a processional of music and dancing. The parade would eventually end up at the huge Theater over 1 1/2 football fields in diameter, Picture an open air Rose Garden that seats 25,000 people.

On this day Demetrius had worked up the mob into a riot fury. Paul's preaching the truth about what God had done in Jesus Christ caused thousand of people to begin worshipping the authentic real God and the forsaken the Artemis and silver trinkets and replica gods so that the income of the silversmiths plummeted. They were angry with Paul and it wasn't Pauls fault that the silversmiths revenues had slipped. God was the one who changed people lives and habits, but they couldn't hit God so they decided to take a swipe at Paul instead. They couldn't even find Paul so they grabbed a couple his traveling companions named Guias and Aristarchus. Opposition.

Do you want to make an impact for the God's kingdom? Then there are a few things we can expect. First expect some opposition. Impact responds with opposition. It's a package deal if you want to make a difference that is why living out the truth of the Christian life in a radical way is dangerous. Playing it safe and comfortable will guarantee results of boredom and apathy. And it's the dangerous faith that brings satisfaction and fulfillment and joy. If you are making a difference, the evil one is going to hammer back. Expect opposition but always remember that greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world. Remember that as you walk through the halls of our your school. Keeping your mouth shut about the truth of Jesus may keep your popularity and teeth in tact, but it will do nothing to advance the kingdom and will only make your faith weaker and weaker. Steering clear of spiritual conversations at work, on the ball field, in your homes, in your youth group, in your church body, in your family gatherings, may serve to keep conflict to a minimum, but it will not keep peace. Peace is only found through truth.

If we are going to live a dangerous faith that makes an impact we must have open-eyes that see the lies of the evil one. Watch how Demetrius tries to defend what is wrong. V.26 Demetrius assembled the silversmith guild and appealed to them. It was all driven by the loss of the dollar. In fact the only other pagan gentile opposition to the Way mentioned in Acts was in chapter 16 when the owners of the fortune telling slave girl got angry because they lost their cash cow after the demons had been cast out of here. The Gentiles only got angry when it affected their pocket book. And that was the main driver here, but Demetrius was subtle enough to insert some more respectable motives for opposing the Way.

v.27 Our reputation is in danger. Our trade guild might lose its good name. Our temple of Artemis might lose its prestige and the honor due to our majestic goddess. He disguised his money interests in local

patriotism and religious zeal, all he really cared about was the financial loss. He was concerned that Paul's advocating worship of the true God would ruin their idol making business.

So Demetrius appeals first to numbers and then to emotion. See the everybody does it argument at the end of v.27 "She whom all of Asia and the world worship..." Then the emotion appeal as the crowd is worked up into a frenzy of shouting Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" v.34 shouting for two hours straight. V32 Some shouting one thing and some another. Most were not even sure what the cause of the shouting was all about. Mob mentality. Appeals to numbers and emotion. I hear plenty of wrong being defended that way today. If you say that enough folks are doing it then it must be good and true. NBC takes a polls last night that says that 68 percent of the people say the president is lying about what he knew about Iraqs Weapons of Mass destruction. Or 30 percent or 7 percent. Whatever. Who cares what the people think. The point is not whether people think he is lying or not, but is the president lying? Numbers measure only perception of reality not reality itself. Numbers are used to shift perception into reality and that is what Demetrius was trying to do here in Ephesus.

As a believer committed to living out the truth, we must keep our eyes open to the attempts to defend wrong by throwing around numbers. A believing student goes away to college, and is told "nobody holds those old values any more. Get with it, everybody is doing it." Of course that is not true. He holds those moral values and unless he is a nobody then at least one person thinks that way. But what people really mean when they say that is "the majority of people think differently today and if you don't think this way then you will be hopelessly out of touch with reality of life". When pressed they might admit that there is a narrow core that still hold to morality, but quickly counter that if you want to get with it and join the "in" group, then you had better get rid of that way of thinking.

Wrong is also defended by emotion. The peer pressure of “go, go, go” at a party, a work group. Maybe you’ve heard this one, “ If it feels good, it can’t be wrong. After all how could something that feels so good be wrong?” Modern advertisers know all about it. Stir them up. Appeal to the emotion. Image is everything. Sex is a huge selling tool. But of course there are maybe things that are evil and defended by numbers and emotions and feelings. Numbers and feelings don’t ever make evil right.

If you decide to stand up and begin to live a dangerous faith, then you must expect some things. First you need to expect that you will encounter some opposition. There will be those who don’t like your changed, ways, habits. Friends will try to pull you back down because they don’t like their own sin exposed and don’t want to deal with it. If you fall down they can better hide. Expect opposition and be wise to the way the evil one works.

For those who decide to dangerously live out truth there is another thing we can expect. We can expect peace and courage. See v.30 Paul wanted to go into the assembly a mob on the verge of riot. His friends and friendly politically connected folks called Asiarchs repeated said, Paul this is not a good idea.” I see here Paul filled with courage and filled with peace in a time that both of those would be hard to come by. Chuck Swindoll defines peace as the ability to stay calm in spite of the panic of uncontrollable and unpleasant circumstances. Its easy to have peace and courage when everything is going well and there is no problem. But having courage and calm when a riot is raging at your doorstep...now that requires true peace. That kind of peace only comes from God. God is bigger than any person, any mob, any circumstance no matter how out of control it gets. Peace from God when you are unjustly accused, falsely slandered in the community, ignored from the family will, in a house full of out of control children and that doesn’t include the ones under 20. Peace is the ability to trust that God is in control of a situation even when it appears to be wildly out of control. Peace affirms that God knows

what he is doing. Peace is patient to see how God will work this one out. Why do we enjoy so little peace? Its because we want to be in control. We want to be in charge of our lives. You might expect life to always be calm but then a dam breaks loose and here it comes. Just like in Ephesus “no small disturbance to the way.” It is the people who live out truth and rely on God instead of themselves who enjoy the peace He has to offer.

Proverbs 3:5,6 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths.” Isaiah “26:3 “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is focused on Thee because he trusts in Thee” That is the double shalom, shalom. “perfect peace” in the Hebrew. Philippians 4:6 “Be anxious for nothing but in everything in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God and the peace which surpasses all comprehension shall set a guard around your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” When we rest on the rock, He supports us in peace. Someone wrote that courage is fear that has said its prayers. Or better yet, courage is the power of the indwelling spirit released when we pray. Expect peace and courage when you dare to dangerously live out God truth as you see the expulsive power of a new affection taking hold of your life. When there are no walls between you and God, you can rest assured that God is standing with you.

Third thing you ought to expect when you live out the truth of God’s word. Expect that God will provide for you. We see God’s provision in the Asiarchs, political rulers in Asia and happen to be friends of Paul. It doesn’t say they were Christians, but they seem to understand and were impressed by the message of Christ and moved to protect Paul from the mob. We see God’s provision in this town clerk. Our image of some bean counter guy wearing a pocket protector doesn’t do him justice. This guy was the CEO of the town, the city manager. When he appeared people calmed down and listened. God providentially move this man into place at just the right time to block the opponents moves. God does that.

God can easily move even unlikely people to defend us as He the great arranger of events. Be patient. Wait for God's moves.

This CEO of Ephesus stands up and says in v.35 "Don't we all know that our city is the guardian of the temple of Artemis and the image sent from heaven. His point. Our god is heaven sent not man made...and everyone know this so why be concerned with Paul's preaching. Then in v.37 he asserts the innocence of Gaius and Aristarchus. Then he points out the legal methods of obtaining a hearing. But this mob is illegal. Then he warned the group about the political implications of the riot. This would be hard to explain to Rome and our city could be in danger of getting its privilege status stripped. So go home.

Here God used government channels to providentially care for these believers. Expect God's care when you step out in a dangerous faith that lives out the truth of God's word. He can calm even the wildest riots. I'm sure Aristarchus was pleased that God can do that. And God can calm the riots in our life as well.

In the first verse of chapter 20 "after the uproar has ceased...Paul gathers the disciples together to explain the whole affair to the Christians. There is something about what happened that he does not want them to miss. It doesn't say exactly what that exhortation is but there is a passage of scripture in 2 Corinthians chapter 1 that may very well refer to this very occasion. We know that Paul wrote these letters to the church of Corinth during this time in Ephesus. READ v.8 If you put yourself in Paul's sandals this was a very threatening circumstance. Paul is crushed and distressed. His very life in danger. It looks for a time that this mob may just sweep right through the city and wipe out every known Christian. It's a very dangerous time for a radical faith. But READ v.9b. "but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead" That's the heart of the man or woman who lives out the truth of God's word in a dangerous faith. Paul continues to explain in chapter 3:5 of 2 Cor. "It is not as though anything is coming from us; our

sufficiency is from God. God alone is able. God without anything else, without any other human resource, is able.”

I am guessing hear what Paul exhorted these Christians after the riot uproar. I am guessing that Paul took the opportunity to say that God sent this event, God allowed it to happen in order to teach us that he is able to handle things when they get far beyond anything we could dream of controlling. When our circumstances get way out of order, when the riot get far beyond what our resources we normally look to, God is able. And God teaches us this so that we will not rely on ourselves, but rely on Him who raises the dead, who works in us and who is ready to exceedingly abundantly beyond all we could ask or think according to the power that works within us. READ II Cor 1:10-11

If we are going to live out the truth of Gods word in a dangerous faith, expect that God will take us to our weakest point and then providentially provide everything we need so that we can know that it is all of God and none of us. I think the writer of Acts wants us to learn that we too come into situations of opposition, danger, pressure, trouble. They usually strike without warning. We never could have dreamed yesterday that would happen. These come, allowed by God so that we might rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.

Do you wish to make an impact in the lives of people around you? Do you long to have a faith that is far more then status quo, ho-hum, and boring? Then perhaps its time to engage in a dangerous faith. A faith that is completely fearless, continually cheerful. A faith that radically dares to live out the truth of God’s word. Expect opposition...its part of the deal. But also expect God given courage and peace. And expect that God will providentially provide just exactly what we need. Maybe in an unexpected way. So that we can learn our sufficiency is not in ourselves but in God who is able. For when I am weak, then He is strong.

So what truth are you going to begin living out in a radical way in order to see how God can impact those around us for His kingdom?

Maybe like the Ephesians you are thinking of something in your home, your car, your shop, your kitchen that needs to go. Some book, video, tape, photo, email. Website. Its evil and holding you back from the joy of following Jesus. You need a burning. Get rid of it. Perhaps for some of us Jesus is telling us we need to start engaging in living out radical truth. I'm not sure what that would be; you need to ask Jesus. What is that truth that I know but haven't been living out. Is it forgiveness? Is it letting God take care of vengeance? Is it a loving a certain hard to love person? Men does Jesus want you to begin praying with your wife? Kids maybe its time Jesus wants you to start respecting you parents even if when they aren't respectable? Maybe Jesus is calling you to be a promoter of joy or to a life of thanksgiving, of patience. Of self-control. Of mercy, gentleness. If we engaged in that kind of a beautiful fruit basket. If we just this number of people here in our church started to really love others the way Jesus did. We would have an incredible impact on this community and they would be busting down the doors to find out how to radically experience the change only God can bring.

Acts 19:21-41

Luke put this story in to show that Rome had no case against Christianity in general or even Paul in particular. The clerk implied that the opposition was merely emotional and that the Christians being innocent had nothing to fear from the legal process. Gallio was impartial,

the Asiarchs were friendly, the Ephesus city clerk was cool and reasonable and served to give the gospel freedom to continue its radical spread across the world.

If only a few people had come to Christ and changed their ways in Ephesus the riot would never have happened. The riot was a proof of how successful the Way was spreading by the preaching of the gospel. Not only had people become Christians they had become serious about it and lived it. Maybe we need to think about today. What would happen if the 30 percent of people, who claimed to be Christians actually lived like it. What would disappear in our society? What business men would be upset? These Christians had come so far under the conviction of the HS convicted of sin confessed and they got rid of it. If Christianity is not affecting the economy of our world then we do not have much Christianity.

God has given us laws and even the secular civil laws to protect us. God used the secular govt to protect Paul. We may need to be careful about our attitudes toward govt, police as we are urged to work within our system. Vote. Write letters, congressmen. In our form of govt. our vote can make a difference.

v.21 This verse sets the tone for the remainder of the book. Paul's sights were set on Rome. Acts focus is the shift from Jerusalem to Rome,

v.23 The riot in Ephesus was an extra incentive for Paul to leave for Macedonia as planned.

NOTE: Only twice in the book of Acts did Gentiles oppose Paul. Here and again in 16 when the owners of the slave girl fortune teller in Phillipi were upset. Both times it was because of money interests were threatened.

Two goddesses in Asia minor were named Artemis: One was a Greek culture goddess Diana the virgin goddess of the hunt. The other was Artemis of the Ephesians, a many breasted goddess of fertility. It is probably that the original statue of the goddess was a meteorite that resembled a woman with many breasts. V35

Silver smiths made statues of this goddess but because of the gospel, their business had gone bad...no orders.

v.26 Demetrius assembled the silversmith guild and appealed to them on business and religious. It was all about business losing money, but he was subtle enough to insert more respectable motives: Our trade guild would lose its good name. Their temple will lose its prestige and our

goddess the divine majesty due her. So he disguised money interests in in local patriotism and religious zeal. Our trade will lose its good name and prosperity.

The temple of Artemis will be discredited. But really all he cared about was the financial loss. Obviously he was concerned that Paul's preaching that man-made idols are not gods would ruin their thriving idol making business.

First appeal to numbers: Everybodys doing it

Second appeal to emotion: Two hours of "Great is Artemis"

Isn't this the way wrong is defended today? If you can prove enough people are doing it anyway then some folks ought to say we should legalize it and say it must be good and true. NBC took a poll last night and 68 percent of the people say that the president is lying. Or 3 percent or whatever. Who cares what people think. The point is not whether or not people think he is lying, but is the president lying??

The pressure of numbers hits new Believers. A student goes away to college and wants to live like a Christian, but what he is told "nobody holds those old values any more. Everybody is doing it. That of course is not true. He olds them and unless he is anobody which he isnot atleast one person thinks that way that that is me. But really what people mean to say is "the majority of people think differently today and to not think that way means you are out of touch with reality of life. When pressed they might admit they think only a conservative narrow core hold to morality, but if you wantn to get with us and join the "in" crowd you had better get rid of that old way of thinking.

Have you heard this one "If it feels good, it can't be wrong. It can't possibly be wrong for something that feels so good." But of course it can be wrong and many things that are evil are defended that way. Number and feelings will not make them right.

Emotion: Stir them up. Modern advertizeing does that too. Appeals to emotions by repetition.sec is a chief selling tool.

v.28 The mob was angry at Paul. Rushed to the Ephesus theater capable of seating 25,000 people. The excavation site is still magnificent. The craftsmen probably went running down the Arcadian way, the main street in Ephesus from the harbor to the Theater which was 500 feet in diameter over 1 1/2 football fields. They grabbed a couple of friends of the way Guias and Aristarchus Acts 20;4 and 27:2 who escaped with little harm.

Lifchange p166 The temple of Artemis was 425ft. long 220 ft wide, 60 ft. high with 127 pillars of marble inlaid with gold and woodwork of Cyprus

and cedar. It was filled with works of artists of the Greek world. May 25th each year the statues of the goddess were taken up the broad processional road with music and dancing to the theater where they were worshiped by up to 25,000 people.

The shrines were probably not statues of the goddess, but small representations of her seated in her temple. Devotees would purchase these and present them to the temple as an act of worship. As a result of Paul's preaching the gospel spread and thousands of people had begun worshipping the authentic God and forsaken the Artemis and trinkets and replicas so the Silversmith income plummeted.

Was it Paul's fault that the sale slipped. God was the one who changed lives, but they couldn't hit God so they decided to take a swipe at Paul instead.

PEACE: The ability to stay calm in spite of panic of uncontrollable and unpleasant circumstance (swindall)
It's easy to be at peace when there is no problem, but being calm when a riot is raging at our door, that requires true peace. That only comes from God. He is bigger than any person, any mob, any circumstance no matter how riotous and out of control.

v.30 Paul was ready and eager to take on the opponents, but Christians wouldn't let him. Even some officials of the province would not let him get caught up in the riot. Asiarchs "Rulers of Asia" were in charge of the communities political and religious welfare.

V,32 Luke's sense of humor "most the people didn't even know why they were there. The Jews were strongly monotheistic and opposed to idols so they put Alexander up front, a Jew. The Jews wanted to issue a disclaimer, the reduction in Idol business was not their fault. However, anti-Jewish sentiment took over the mob refused to listen. Chanting in a two hour frenzy. Great is Artemis. Seeign the monotheistic Jew only enflamed their polytheistic zeal.

v.35 The city clerk (picture pocket protector, bean-counter doesn't do him justice. He was the CEO of the city, the City manager. When he appeared people listened.

God moved the pieces into place into just the right place to block the opponents moves. God has a way of arranging unexpected events and unlikely people to defend us. We just have to wait for him to make his move.

PEACE: The ability to wait patiently in spite of the panic that is brought on by uncertainty: In times of fear, remember God's peace filled promise:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding in all your ways acknowledge him and He will Prov.3:5,6

1. Appealed as Ephesus being the guardian of Artemis and her image sent from heaven. Point; Artemis was not made-made but sent from heaven everyone knows that, so why be concerned with Paul's preaching.
2. Then asserted the innocence of Gaius and Aristarchus
3. Then pointed out the legal methods of obtaining a hearing; courts, proconsuls, legal assembly. But this assembly is illegal.
4. warned group of political implications of the riot. It would be hard to explain to Rome and the city could be deprived of some of its privileges.

While at Ephesus Paul wrote I Cor

How long did Paul stay in Asia? He ministered in Ephesus for 3 years total Acts 20:31. Of that he taught in a synagogue for 3 months 19:18 another two years in the school of Tyrannus v.10 and 9 months in Asia all while his heart was tugging at him to head to Rome. Unfulfilled dreams can be a source of frustration, anxiety and rash movements. But God's peace was over him

PEACE: The ability to remain faithful in spite of the panic of unfulfilled dreams.

When we rest on the rock, He supports us with peace

About that time v.23 a dam breaks loose and trouble comes rolling. Because Paul was content to wait on the Lord you might think that that life should be calm, but then the dam breaks loose and the trouble comes flooding in. v23 "no small disturbance concerning the Way."

Why do we have so little peace? Because we want to be in charge of our lives. We want to be in control, manipulate our uncertain futures. People who rely on God instead enjoy his peace. Thou will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is focused on then. Isa 26:3

Courage is fear that has said its prayers. Or better, Courage is the power of the indwelling spirit released to us when we pray.

Make two resolutions this morning:

- 1) Obey Christ at all costs
- 2) Obey Christ whether anybody else does or not.

So who won in the end. I doubt there is a living soul on the earth that worships artemis but there are millions who worship Jesus Christ.

Kent Hughes p261

Leaves falling from the trees that have held on through the winter fall because they get pushed out by the spring sap and new buds that push through the dead winter leaves.

When leaves fall away...expect persecution: Demetrius.

In the last half of 19th century England the salvation army underwent a terrible persecution because their Christianity touched the pocketbooks of society. The attacks were led by the publicans and brothel keepers and so organized a skeleton army. They put out hit lists and offered up to 1000 pd rewards on heads.

If professing Christians repented and the new life caused them to faithfully live out the implications of their faith. If Christians stopped watching certain television programs, the pollsters would detect the decline in interest, sponsors would pull out and the programs would end. What if only 10-20 percent of believers stopped attending raunchy movies? Today Christiana church is clothed with dead leaves of materialism and sensuality. We've become desensitized to evil and allow it to voyeuristically cater to our senses in our living rooms. It is impossible to be filled with the spirit and set our minds on things below. Its impossible to be filled with the spirit and live for the dollar. Its impossible to be filled with the spirit and watch entertainment that feeds our baser instincts.

When leaves falls away we can expect peace and courage:

When there are no wall between you and Gdo you can rest assured that Gdo is standing with you. They had peace because they trusted in God. Is 26:3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace. Double shalom shalom. Thous will keep him in Shalom, Shalom whose mind is steadfast because he trusts in you.

When leaves fall away, God assures us of His providential care:

The clerk. The crowd in an uproar but God was in control all the time. God was moving the pieces into place

Have we become desensitized to sin? Are we doing things we once abhorred? Do we laugh or smile at things that God finds disgusting? Is your life indistinguishable from our decaying culture? Have I become spritually useless?

Or is springtime beginning to run in our soul? Are we becoming so full of Christ that our lifestyle has changed? Even the way we spend our time and money has begun to change

Do you long for the power of the new life within?

1. Yield to the spirits promptings. Surrender daily to him

2. Confess your specific sins. Agree with God that you are wrong and He is right Name them. Call the sins out of the closet. Materialism? Sensuality? Idolatry? Pride? Lying? Bitterness? Cold heart?
3. Ask Gdo to give you back His strength. Let him know this only comes from His enabling grace and power.
4. Read the Word of God and do what it says.
5. Rest and take peace in Him.

Brian Martin:

Ways that people make an impact in peoples lives.

Ephesus was probably the 3rd or 4th largest city in the world up to 250,000 people. Filled with trade as they traveled up the Cayster river.

Three things that impacted Ephesus:

1. Paul consistently teaching God's word and truth. (first half of 19)
2. Our ministry has an impact when we consistently teach the truth. It doesn't take the spiritual gift of teaching to teach our children. Living and telling the truth in our workplace.
3. v.11-17 Paul allowed God to do the work. God was doing great works through Paul. It wasn't about Paul.
4. Turn from our sin. Confess. No matter what the cost. V.18