

9/4/16

Acts 20:7-12

Don't Sleep In Church

On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. ⁸ There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. ⁹ And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. ¹⁰ But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." ¹¹ And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. ¹² And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted.

(Pastor prays)

When the great English preacher G. Campbell Morgan was asked to explain this passage, he simply said, "It's about a sleepy lad that fell from the window and was killed." This is not very helpful when you are studying to preach so you have to ask the question: Why is it in there? What is it about? Why would Luke write it down for us?

The apostle Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 3:16 *⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.* If that's true, and I believe that it is, why is this here? It's significant that Luke wrote it down, that it's here to help us. It's not a footnote. It's not for entertainment. It's here for us, for us to learn something about the will of God and the character of God. Let's set the context.

Paul is in a place called Troas. He has been there before. It's where he experienced the Macedonian call. He's among friends (they are listed in v. 1-6) and it's a Sunday and people have gathered to hear him preach; and in this passage, Paul can't land the plane. Even Luke says in v. 7, *and he prolonged his speech until midnight* and a middle schooler named Eutychus went to sleep in a window sill and fell out. It killed him. God miraculously healed him and Paul went back to preaching.

It's a strange story about a peculiar group of people known as the church, and part of what I want to do is convince you today to embrace those things that make us different and see that in the name of Jesus...

God's People are a Distinct People

Let's see if we can work through this text together and point out some of the distinctions.

We Worship on a Distinct Day

You see that as soon as you dip into the passage.

V. 7 says, *On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together*. This is the first time in the Bible that we see the church gathering on Sunday and it's doing so for several reasons. The Jewish day of worship (Sabbath) was the *last* day of the week – Saturday. It's part of the Ten Commandments. The fourth commandment is “remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.”

Now you might ask: Why don't we go to church on Saturday if the Sabbath is a Saturday and one of the Ten Commandments is “Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy”?

The answer is because that is the *old* covenant that has since been broken, time and again, when Jesus Christ came and lived perfectly and was crucified on a Friday. He kept the Sabbath in a grave – Dead. And on the *third* day, Sunday, God raised him from the dead, bursting forth with the new covenant of grace found and established in Christ.

Why do I worship on Sunday? Because I am not under the law – Saturday. I'm under Grace – Sunday. We worship on this distinct day, the Lord's Day, with the principle and pattern of the Sabbath – 1 day in 7 – it is different than any other day. Think about Sunday in the New Testament:

1. Jesus raised from the dead on Sunday.
2. The church was born on a Sunday. Acts 2.
3. Worship through giving was on a Sunday. 1 Corinthians 16.

4. John called Sunday the Lord's Day in (the Book of) Revelation.

We declare what we believe by gathering on Sunday. And *not* to do so, *not* to see the importance of gathering on a Sunday is also a declaration. The people in the text gathered for hours. It was what they believed. Going to church on a Sunday is a statement that says "I believe in the death of Jesus on the cross for my sins. And that his death in my place was accepted by God as payment for resurrection is proof that death and sin are defeated and real hope is in Christ."

God's people are a distinct people. We worship on a distinct day.

We Have a Distinct Message

Lots of people misunderstand the Christian message or what it is about because they know the things we stand *against*. And it's true that as the moral fabric of our nation continues to rot, it will seem like we are standing against more and more. But the truth is, it's *not* the message of Christ that has changed and that message is found all the way through this passage. Allow me to point it out.

V. 7, "Breaking bread" is most likely a reference to The Lord's Supper, and The Lord's Supper is a tangible, touchable declaration of the shed blood and sacrifice of Christ on the cross, a declaration that says Jesus died for sinners and, if you are a sinner, turn from your sin and turn by believing. Turn by believing in Christ and you will be saved.

V. 7, *On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.* Paul talked with them and, in v. 11, he conversed with them. The word is *homilio* (or homiletics).

Paul is preaching. If Paul is consistent, then what he is speaking of is the Gospel. It's what he told the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 2:2 when he said, *For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.* That's the central message of this story and the whole message of the Bible. In fact, this story gives us a dramatic illustration of going from death to life and the joy it brings.

There are nine resurrection accounts in the Bible and they all point to the resurrection of Jesus and the new life you can have in Christ. Let's look at this one in v. 7. It's

Sunday, they are meeting in someone's house because they don't have a building yet. It's at night and Paul has preached for a couple of hours. V. 8, *There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered.* There were torches burning oil. It was stuffy in there and, in v. 9, a young man named Eutychus (which means "lucky") is by the window.

There is fresh air along with the breeze, and the warmth combined with the rhythm and cadence of Paul's speech puts him right to sleep. He fell down from the upper story and Luke, who is a doctor, tells us in v. 9 that he's dead. Dead? At church? Paul is preaching – dead. Can you feel the horror of getting the news that your 12-year-old is dead?

They checked his pulse and felt his breathing. He is dead. Paul rushes down and in v. 10, like Elijah in 1 Kings and Elisha in 2 Kings, he bends down over the boy (like Christ does for the dead in sin). Paul says, he declares life is in him and in v. 12, They took him away alive, with new life. There is great joy and hope and comfort.

Here is a miracle and, as always, the miracle demonstrates, confirms and displays the message. That message is that we are Eutychus in v. 9. We are dead. Maybe even at church – dead. Dead in sin. It's what Ephesians says. And we stay dead until we are made alive in Christ. Revelation 20 tells us all will die and all will be raised and stand before the throne, and the dead -- great and small -- are judged by what is written in the book of life. V. 15 says, *And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

It doesn't have to be like that. This story in Acts is a story that ends in joy, hope and comfort. All of these are found in the new life of Christ.

(Pastor shares the Gospel message and prays)