

## Eutychus Goes to Church

- Acts 20:7-12
- If you think you can get away with sleeping in church then you might want to listen to this. “A man who went to church with his wife always fell asleep during the sermon. The wife decided to do something about this and one Sunday she took a long hatpin along with her to poke him with it every time he would doze off. As the preacher got to a part in the sermon where he asked, ‘and who created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh?’, she poked her husband, who came flying out of the pew and screamed ‘Good God almighty’.”
- “A man liked to sleep frequently in church, so the pastor devised a plan. During one service the pastor asked his congregation while the man was sleeping, ‘All who want to go to heaven, please rise.’ Everyone stood up except the sleeper. Then, at the top of his voice, he bellowed, ‘All who wish to go to hell, stand up now!’ Only the sleeper stood up. The sleeper looked around and said, ‘I don’t know what we’re voting on, preacher, but it looks like you and me are the only ones for it’.”
- We don’t know why Luke included this story about Eutychus falling asleep in church, but I’m glad he did. It encourages me that someone could even fall asleep when PAUL was preaching. But think about it. Given that it was midnight, in a third floor room filled with oil lamps, the question is not, “Why did God let Eutychus fall asleep?” but, “Was there anyone other than the Apostle Paul awake?”
- You have to be careful when and where you fall asleep. I remember a kid in our high school chemistry class who fell asleep, didn’t even hear the bell go off for classes to change, and was still asleep when the next group of students came in a found him with a paper airplane sticking out of one ear, courtesy of a classmate. I remember one night when Cindy and I were dating and we stayed up all night talking (that’s all!), and then I had to be at IBM at 4:45am for work. I fell asleep on Hwy 54 and when I woke up I was passing a car. God was merciful. Think about some things that happened in the Bible, good AND bad, while people slept:
- Adam fell asleep and woke up married! And missing a rib.
- Samson fell asleep and woke up in chains. And missing his hair.
- Daniel fell asleep and woke up having a vision. And looking at the angel Gabriel.
- Jonah fell asleep and woke up in a fish.
- Eutychus fell asleep and woke up dead!
- Now clearly this passage in the book of Acts is not there to warn us about sleeping in church. But if the pew fits, sit up in it and pay attention. ☺ The Bible DOES warn believers, however, to make sure that we do not sleep when we should be awake. Paul wrote in Romans 13:11, “Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.” And verse 14, “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” It’s one thing to fall asleep on the preacher. It’s another entirely to fall asleep on the Lord! Let’s look at the story together, and then we will talk about principles of worship we find in this passage.
- Eutychus is a young man (vs 9), and most likely a youth. He was sitting in the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor window, which in a middle-eastern home then would have just been an opening in the wall for ventilation. Why was he sitting there? Perhaps because it was so hot in the room with all the bodies and the lamps. Perhaps because he had given up his seat for someone else, and was sitting in a window where it was not comfortable so that someone else could be comfortable. As Paul preached and the evening grew later, and the midnight hour came, Eutychus slipped into a deep sleep. He was out. And though his name means “fortunate,” and he may have been nicknamed Lucky by his buddies, he was anything but lucky that night. He suddenly fell out of the third floor window and died on impact. Verse 9, “he was taken up dead.” Luke the physician was there and wrote this account and he was clear that this young man was dead.

Paul's sermon was brought to an immediate end as everyone rushed down to see what had happened when Eutychus fell. This was Paul's first and only time when he raised someone from the dead. And the way he does it makes you think of Elijah and Elisha, who both raised a person from the dead. Remember? In each case they stretched themselves out on the dead person and prayed. Paul bent over Eutychus and took him in his arms, and then spoke faith into the crowd which probably included grieving parents, saying, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." John Stott says this is not a statement that the young man was still alive despite his disastrous fall but that he was alive again after Paul had embraced him. God raised Eutychus from the dead that night in Troas. Then they all went back to the third floor room and continued the service and what do you think the atmosphere was like then? Well, verse 12 gives us a hint: "And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted." Luke, the master of the understatement. Hey, I think we can agree that the midnight to 6am service after God raised Eutychus from the dead was the most joyful celebration of Jesus and His power and authority that those people had ever experienced. God reminded His people once again that death cannot hold us and the grave cannot keep us and sin cannot destroy us, because Jesus is Lord of all.

- Principles of Worship
- We can learn some things about Christian worship and the church coming together from this passage, but let me give a caution, first. We cannot take what we see here and try to imitate it exactly, lest we fall into legalism at worst, or a wooden interpretation of the Scriptures at best. If we said, "THIS is it! We have to worship exactly like this!" what would we have to do? Meet in a third floor room, in the evening, use only oil lamps for light, and have a very long sermon that lasts at least until midnight. Of course, if we are going to be wooden in our interpretation of what IS there, then we would have to do the same with what is NOT there. So, we could not sing any. They didn't. Or take an offering. (I heard somebody say amen in his heart) We couldn't even read the Scriptures. So, let's not adopt this passage as prescriptive, but see it for what it is: descriptive. There are several things we can learn.
- **They met on the first day of the week.**
- Verse 7 is the first time in the NT that clearly spells it out, that the church met together on the first day of the week. That would be Sunday. Sabbath for the Jews started at 6pm on Friday and continued until 6pm on Saturday, but the Christians began meeting on Sunday because it was the day the Lord was raised from the dead. Many years after this event in Troas, John wrote in Revelation 1:10, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day..."
- Luke writes this as matter-of-factly as it could be written: "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread..." Of course we were! That brings us to another observation from this text:
- **They met together to break bread.**
- This is a reference to the Lord's Supper, eucharist, not to a meal together, which they called agape, or love feast, though they often did both. John Stott writes that the Lord's Supper became, very early on, the main service for which the church gathered on the Lord's Day. It was a joyful and a grateful celebration of the death of the Lord Jesus, and it followed the pattern which He instituted with His disciples on the night He was betrayed. He took the bread and broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My father's kingdom." (Matthew 26:26-29) What are we doing when we take the Lord's Supper?
- First, we are giving thanks for Jesus' death. The bread (or cracker) reminds us of His body broken for us on the cross. The juice reminds us of His blood that was shed for us, not to merely cover our sins but to take it away forever.

- Second, we are celebrating His life now as the body of Christ, connected through His blood and by His Spirit TO one another. We are reminding ourselves of His prayer in John 17: “I have made known to them Your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” (John 17:26)
- Third, we are looking forward with great joy to that day when we will be with Him at the marriage supper of the Lamb. We are reminding ourselves and each other that this life is not all there is, this is not our home, that the things of earth would grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace! They did not just gather to take the Lord’s Supper, though, as important as that is for the life of a healthy church.
- **They met to hear the Word and to discuss it together.**
- In fact, the Word came first and last, with the Lord’s Supper in the middle. They didn’t take communion until after midnight, and after the miraculous event with Eutychus took place. Paul spoke from sundown until midnight, and then they came back to the room with a greatly relieved Eutychus and Paul preached again, until the sun came up. There was discussion and probably question and answer, as the word that Luke uses in verse 7 and 9 seems to indicate, but it was a long time together in the Word!
- As you can see, the Word and the Sacraments fit together like hand in glove. The Word is preached to declare the truth of what God did for us in Christ, and the sacraments are observed to dramatize what God did for us and continues to DO for us in Christ. Next Sunday we will observe the other of the two evangelical sacraments, baptism, where you will see the dramatization of being buried with Christ in His death, going under the water just as he went into the grave, and then raised to walk in newness of life in resurrection power, just as Jesus conquered the grave and rose triumphant on that first Lord’s Day! The declaration of “He is risen, just as He said!” is on display whenever a new creation is baptized by immersion. The declaration of “This is my body, broken for you” is on display whenever His new creations take communion together.
- Well, that day in Troas was different than all the rest, and it will always be part of the story of redemption. Perhaps the biggest question for each of us today is not, “are you awake right now?” The biggest question is, “Are you awake?”
- Are you awake? Paul says to all of us in Ephesians 5:14, “Arise, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”
- Song?
- Communion