

Falling asleep in Church

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[0 : 00] Well, it's great to see you all this morning. And as Andrew said, if you're visiting this morning or it's your first time with us, you're very welcome. We're delighted to have you here on this wet, windy morning.

But it's great to be gathered together. Well, this morning we're going to continue our series in the Book of Acts. We're going to pick up from where Andrew left off last week, which means this morning we're coming to Acts chapter 20.

And we're going to be looking at verses 1 to 12. And Natalie is going to come now and read our passage for us. So thank you so much, Natalie, for doing that.

When the opera had ended, Paul sent for the disciples. And after encouraging them, said goodbye and set out for Macedonia. He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people.

And finally arrived in Greece, where he stayed three months. Because some Jews had plotted against him, just as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back to Macedonia.

[1 : 17] He was accompanied by Sopater, son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derb, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia.

These men went on ahead and waited for us in Troas. But we sailed from Philippi after the festival of unleavened bread. And five days later joined the others at Troas, where we stayed seven days. On the first day of the week, we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people. And because he intended to leave the next day, he kept on talking until midnight. There were many lamps in the upstairs room where they were meeting.

Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead.

Paul went down through himself on the young man and put his arms around him. Don't be alarmed, he said. He is alive. Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate.

[2 : 25] After talking until daylight, he left. The people took the young men home alive and were greatly comforted. Well, thank you, Natalie.

Well, they say that kids thrive on encouragement. Well, you know what? I think that this is true for us all.

You know, no matter what age we are, we all thrive on encouragement. And that's something that I have definitely come to see more and more as time goes on.

We all need encouragement on our journey of faith. What we see here in verses 1 to 6 of our passage this morning, that Paul spent at times days, at times even months, in different places, encouraging believers in their faith.

With this, we see Paul's encouraging, shepherding heart. You know, Paul wasn't just about get them saved and then move on.

[3 : 47] We also see that Paul was very much about encouraging believers in their faith. What a blessing it is. What a blessing it is to encourage others.

And what a blessing it is to encourage others. Well, Paul's heart to encourage brought him to Troas, where we read in verse 6 that he stayed for seven days.

Well, while he was in Troas, we see in verses 7 to 12, which will really be our kind of main focus for this morning, that he tells us about this incredible story about this guy called Eutychus, who essentially fell asleep in church.

And, you know, I trust that as we look at these verses, that they'll be an encouragement to us this morning. Now, I say that Eutychus fell asleep in church because I think in many ways, church is essentially what these believers in Troas were doing.

We see in verse 7 that on the first day of the week, the believers there, they had gathered together, they broke bread, and they were looking to God's word. Paul was teaching them.

[5 : 11] Well, if we think about this, gathering together, fellowship, breaking bread, a time in God's word, they were in many ways essentially doing church together.

So this young man, Eutychus, he essentially fell asleep in church, or at the very least, he fell asleep in some sort of a Christian gathering. Well, this is what happened.

We are told in the rest of verse 7 that because Paul intended to leave the next day, he kept talking until midnight. Now, it kind of seems that maybe Paul thought that he wasn't going to see these believers again, or maybe at the very least he wasn't going to see them for a long time again.

So Paul, it seems, wanted to make sure that he said all that he wanted to say and needed to say to them, so he kept on talking and talking and talking and talking late into the night.

Well, we're told that on the third story of this place where Paul was sharing was this young man named Eutychus. And he was sitting on the windowsill of the third story.

[6 : 34] And of course, you know, there was no glass in the windows like we have today. So you can picture him just sitting there up high on this windowsill.

Well, as he sat there listening to Paul, by the time it got to midnight, we're told in verse 9 that he was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on.

Some translations say he fell into a sound sleep. Some translations say he fell into a complete sleep. Well, whatever way we want to put it, this poor fellow fell asleep while Paul was preaching. And he was so much asleep that we see at the end of verse 9 that he actually fell out of this third story window down onto the ground and he was dead.

I mean, can you imagine what a fright the people there must have got as Eutychus fell out of this third story window down onto the ground to his death?

[7 : 50] Ironically, the name Eutychus means fortunate. Well, at this moment, he wasn't very fortunate. I mean, it would have been a lot more fortunate if he fell inwards rather than outwards.

But at this moment, he fell outwards. He fell downwards to his death. Well, we read in verse 10 that Paul ran out to him.

Essentially, he put his arms around him. He kind of threw himself on top of him. And with what only can be described as an amazing act of divine power, our God brought Eutychus back from the dead.

How amazing our God is. He makes dead things alive. He brought Eutychus back from the dead. And I love this.

What did Paul do then? Well, you would imagine that he might have said, well, okay, guys, we better call it a night. Maybe that's enough for one night, you know, in case anyone else falls out the window.

[9 : 05] But no, we see in verse 11 that then Paul went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. And after talking until daylight, he left.

So just thinking about this just for a moment, it was around midnight when Eutychus fell and was brought back from the dead. Well, then after that, Paul went back upstairs, he broke bread, and kept on preaching until daylight.

It was hard to stop the Apostle Paul when he had something to say. Really is an amazing sequence of events.

Eutychus seems to be the first record of someone falling asleep in church, at least in the New Testament or in some sort of a Christian gathering. Well, this might be the first record of someone falling asleep in church, but he would be by no means the last.

In fact, there has no doubt been thousands of successors ever since. And falling asleep in church is certainly something that still happens today.

[10 : 24] Before Amazing Grace was formed, I spent a couple of years driving around the place, preaching in different churches and different counties, kind of all over the place, all sorts of different places.

Well, during those two years, I definitely came across some folks who fell asleep during church. I remember being at one place and this one gentleman fell asleep and he started to snore.

Well, let me tell you, when you're sharing a sermon, there's nothing like the sound of a snore to make you think that maybe you should finish sooner rather than later. You know, people talk about sermons kind of being like an airplane flight.

That's at least what I was told when I was in Bible college, that you kind of take off, you go on a journey, and then you land the plane. Well, when someone starts to snore, there's nothing like that that makes you think like maybe you should start landing that plane.

Another thing that you'd see often is people might nod off and fall asleep. And as they nod off, they kind of, you know, relax in their seat and they kind of slump down a little bit.

[11 : 34] And if they have a Bible or a glasses case or something on their lap, next thing, the Bible falls or the glasses case fall with kind of a bang down close to their feet.

And with that bang, they give themselves such a fright that they go from a kind of a slump position to kind of jumping up and, you know, their heads almost hit the roof. So sometimes you see people kind of, you know, slumping down and next thing they jump up when something happens.

Or further afield, I heard the story of another man who fell asleep during church. He fell asleep during the singing. Well, when the sermon started, his wife thought that she better wake him up. So she gave him a little nudge and he woke up. The only problem was as he was waking up, he thought they were still singing. So he started to sing out loud only to find that no one else was singing with him.

There are many stories of people falling asleep in church or at the very least falling asleep in some sort of a Christian gathering. But do you know what?

[12 : 39] Falling asleep in church, nodding off in church, doesn't really concern me at all. For some folks, they have been up all night working some sort of a night shift.

They've come straight to church. They're tired, but they're here. For some folks, they have been up all night looking after babies, feeding babies, looking after sick children.

They're worn out, but they're here. For some folks, they have been worrying about something that we can all relate to worrying about something, having a night of tossing and turning about something.

And you're drained, but you're here. For some folks, they're looking after the other kind of babies, the four-legged ones. They're out looking after calves or lambs or pigs or some sort of a thing like that.

And they're heading out into the night, hour after hour, they're here, but they're tired. For some folks, they're having some sort of medication that just makes them feel a little bit more drowsy, especially when they sit down.

[13 : 53] And for some folks, they just have a little bit more mileage on the clock, and they just get a little more tired than maybe some of the younger folks. Falling physically asleep in church does not concern me at all.

It doesn't happen that often, and it could happen all of us for various different reasons. My real concern is not people falling physically asleep in church.

My real concern in church is folks being physically wide awake but being spiritually asleep. How many people warm the seat, so to speak, every Sunday with their bodies wide awake but their souls asleep?

With their bodies wide awake but they are spiritually dead? dead. That is my real concern.

What do I mean by someone being spiritually asleep or dead? Well, very simply, someone is spiritually asleep or dead if they're not trusting in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

[15 : 16] in Ephesians chapter 2 we see that when we trust in Jesus, when we turn to Him, we are by His grace at that point of salvation made alive in Christ.

You know, Ephesians chapter 2 is very clear that we are dead in our sins but we are alive, we are awake in Christ. So if you're here this morning and if you are a believer, if you're a new creation in Christ, well, you can rejoice because your soul is awake in Christ, you are alive in Christ, you are spiritually alive and awake in Him whether you're physically awake or not.

If you're a believer, you're alive in Christ. But if you do not know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, if you're not a new creation in Christ, you're spiritually asleep, you're spiritually dead in your sins.

So folks, the real danger is not physically nodding off in church. That doesn't matter. The real danger is being in church or some sort of Christian gathering wherever you are week after week being physically wide awake but being spiritually asleep, spiritually dead.

The real danger is that we are physically wide awake but we don't know Jesus. Well, I think the good news is with what happened to Eutychus in this passage, it reminds us that our Lord makes dead things alive.

[17 : 09] He makes sleeping things awake. He rose Eutychus from the dead and in a spiritual sense, that is what he will do when we turn to him.

When we turn to him, he makes dead things alive, he makes sleeping things awake and he delights to do so. Our God delights to make dead things alive.

He delights in making sleeping things awake and in a spiritual sense, he would delight to do that in you if he hasn't done so already.

So if you are here this morning and you're physically wide awake but you just know that deep down yourself, deep down you know yourself that you are spiritually asleep, you are spiritually dead, you are not in Christ, you've not relied on him as your saviour.

If that is you, I just want to encourage you this morning to know that our Lord delights in making dead things alive. He delights in giving us eternal life and he would delight to do that for you this morning.

[18 : 31] In that sense, if that is you, your call this morning I think is Ephesians 5.14 Wake up sleeper, rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you.

Folks, if you come in here some morning and you are just wrecked and you're tired beyond what you can handle and you need to rest your eyes for a few minutes, well don't worry about that at all. We'll wake you up, we'll give you a poke when it's time for tea and coffee. But what matters more than anything else is that you're not here week after week, spiritually asleep in Christ.

Christ. Because your salvation depends on it. So if you are here and you're alive in Christ, you're a believer, rejoice because you have everything.

As believers, we have everything in Christ. And let this morning just be a fresh reminder that you are alive. You can be sleeping physically if you want, but you're alive and that can never be taken away from you.

[19 : 41] But if you're here and you just know that you haven't already called out to Jesus in that sense, you haven't turned to him, let's simply call out to him.

And I want to say I can guarantee in his timing, he will shine upon you and he will make you alive in him. All who call out to him, he will make them alive in him.

And you will never look back because there's nothing like knowing Jesus, having a relationship with him. I want to close just with these words from Ephesians chapter 2.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins. In what you used to live, when you followed the ways of this world.

But because of his great love for us, God, who was rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions.

[20 : 57] It is by grace you have been saved. Let's pray together and then we'll finish out our time this morning by singing praise to our Lord.

Yes, Lord, we thank you this morning for our time together and even our time around the Lord's table and the reminder of all that you have done for us. And we thank you for the reminder in your word this morning that you make dead things alive.

And we thank you that in a spiritual sense that's what you do for us. So, Lord, I just pray for each one of us if we don't already know what it is to be alive in you, if we don't already know what it is to rely on you as our Savior and to have eternal life.

Lord, I pray that you would help us to turn to you. And, Lord, we know that when we turn to you, you will shine on us and you will make us alive in you and we will never look back.

So, Lord, I just pray that you would use these things to impress on our hearts and help us just to worship you now, Lord, for you are worthy of all of our worship and all of our praise.

[22 : 09] In Jesus' name, amen.