

PM Acts 20:1-16 Through the Window

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 August 2026

Preacher: Rev Robert Dale

[0:00] Let's turn now to the Bible, and our reading is in Acts chapter 20.

! Continuing my series on the missionary journeys of Paul, we're reading Acts 20 verses 1-16.

At the end of chapter 19, we have the riot in Ephesus.

Then we read in chapter 20, After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia.

When he had gone through those regions, and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece.

[1:03] There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews, as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.

So Peter, the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him, and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and the Asians, Titicus and Trophimus.

These went on ahead, and were waiting for us at Troas. But we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread.

And in five days, we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days. 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. There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer.

[2:37] And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. 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.

And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed.

And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted. But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there, for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land.

And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went to Mytilene. And sailing from there, we came the following day, opposite Chios.

The next day we touched at Samos, and the day after that we went to Miletus. For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia.

[3:58] For he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost. Well, let's turn now to the Word of God, and Acts 20.

And in particular, that remarkable episode at Troas, where Eutychus falls out of the window, and is raised from the dead.

We've just sung of the God of miracles. Well, there is a very notable miracle. We sang earlier in Psalm 118, words that Eutychus could have sung very literally.

I shall not die, but I shall live. The Lord's great works I will proclaim. The Lord severely chastened me, but rescued me from death's domain.

Just to remind you, I'll read from verse 9. A young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep, as Paul talked still longer.

[5:31] And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story, and was taken up dead.

But Paul went down, and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, Do not be alarmed, for his life is still in him.

I've called this sermon Through the Window for two reasons. Obviously, Eutychus fell out through the window.

But also, this passage enables us to look in through the window of the early church at worship.

Apart from the miracle, I think we will find it recognizably similar to what we do today.

Here is a group of Christians, probably not many, since they can all squeeze into an upper room, meeting together on the Lord's Day, hearing the word, as we do today, and breaking bread, as we will, next week.

And although we don't see miracles like this today, can we not see here a living parable? here is a story of human weakness and God's grace.

[7:08] It's our story. On the grand scale, we could say that mankind is fallen, but God has been merciful and raised up a multitude of people from death to life.

But also, on a more particular scale, have we not often, as believers, fallen asleep spiritually?

And God has revived us again? And has the church not sometimes fallen asleep spiritually? And God has restored the church.

the name Eutychus means good fortune. And Eutychus certainly was fortunate in the way that God had dealt with him.

And so are we. God is gracious to his people. I want to explore these themes tonight, though I promise not to speak until midnight.

[8:26] we'll look firstly, briefly, at Paul's travels in verses 1 to 6, then at Paul in Troas in verses 7 to 12, looking first in through the window at the church, then at Eutychus falling out through the window, before returning briefly again to Paul's travels in verses 13 to 16.

16. And I hope that we'll be encouraged. Like those believers in Troas, of whom it says in verse 12, with great restraint, they were not a little comforted.

So first then, let's trace Paul's travels in verses 1 to 6. Paul, remember, is on his third missionary journey.

First had taken him from Antioch to Cyprus and Asia Minor, accompanied by Barnabas. Second was much longer, accompanied by Silas, later Timothy and Luke.

He has gone through Syria and Cilicia, then through Asia Minor again, encouraging the churches before crossing over to Macedonia, then on to Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and Corinth, and returning to Antioch.

[9:58] He had actually visited Troas on that journey. You remember, that was where he had that famous vision of the man of Macedonia saying, come over to us and help us.

Now this third journey has taken him again through Asia Minor to Ephesus, where we saw him in the last chapter. He's established a strong church there, but then a riot is broken out, stirred up by the silversmiths whose images of Diana are no longer being sold, and Paul concludes that it is time to move on.

And so in verse 1 we find him departing from Ephesus and going to Macedonia. These journeys are best followed on a map.

If you have maps in the back of your Bible, as some Bibles do, do have a look and try to trace where these journeys are. If you trace this journey from Ephesus to Macedonia, the likelihood is that he would go through Troas again, a second time at this stage.

And that is confirmed by 2 Corinthians 2 and verse 12 where we're told that he stopped at Troas on his way to Macedonia, but he had no rest in his spirit because Titus wasn't there.

[11:45] But that isn't mentioned here. Instead, we follow him on in verse 2 to Greece where he spends three months. And then he was planning to go back to Syria.

But news of another plot causes him to double back through Macedonia. He is accompanied on this journey now by seven friends from the churches that he's founded.

Sopater, the Berean, Aristarchus, and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius of Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia, most likely from Ephesus.

Why are they all traveling with him? Well, we learn from Paul's letters that he had organized a collection from the Gentile churches to take to Jerusalem for the poor saints there.

And very likely these representatives of the churches were carrying that collection with him. Now this journey takes him yet again to Troas, probably his third time in Troas.

[13:07] The others go ahead of him while Paul remains a short while at Philippi, and then they set sail. By this time it seems Luke has joined him, or rejoined him.

Hence, in verse 5 we have the plural us. They set sail after the days of unleavened bread. Not that they would have kept that festival. There's no longer any need for Christians to keep Jewish festivals. but they're aiming to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost. So, they're thinking in terms of the Jewish calendar. After five days they get to Troas and they remain there for seven days.

Which brings us to Paul in Troas in verses 7 to 12. Troas was an important seaport on the Aegean Sea in what is now Turkey.

[14 : 20] It was the gateway between east and west, between what we now call Asia and what we now call Europe. And nearby was the ancient city of Troy where the Trojan War had been fought.

don't know but I would guess the children perhaps know the story of the Trojan horse. Oh, a couple of shaking heads there.

Well, there's something that you can learn about in the days to come. Very famous story of a wooden horse that was offered as a gift during the Trojan Wars.

but it was a trick because it secretly contained soldiers who jumped out at night and captured the city. Well, nine soldiers of Christ have just arrived in Troas.

But there's no secrecy about it. They've come quite openly with the all-conquering gospel. There's evidently a church there already, maybe founded on Paul's previous visits, and on the Lord's Day, they have a meeting.

[15 : 41] Which gives us our opportunity to look in through the window, as it were, at the early church at worship. Verse 7, we read, 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, he prolonged his speech until midnight. And in verse 8, he adds, there were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered.

Now, that phrase, the first day of the week, doesn't mean the first of the seven days that they were in Troas. not necessarily, anyway. It's a technical phrase, of course, familiar to us from the Gospels. It is our Sunday. And you will know the significance of that first day of the week. It was the day when our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Matthew 28, verse 1, now after the Sabbath, towards the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

[17 : 01] And of course, they found it empty. Again, Mark 16, verse 2, very early on the first day of the week, when the sun was risen, they went to the tomb.

Verse 9 repeats that, when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene. These gospel readers are determined to impress upon us that it was the first day of the week when Jesus rose.

Luke 24, 1, on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And then that same day, still on the first day of the week, he appears to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

And later on, they ate, and he took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to them. Then again that night, he appears to all of them in the upper room in Jerusalem, and he had supper with them.

so many echoes of what we're reading here in Acts 20. John 20 tells the same story, the early morning appearance to Mary Magdalene, and the appearance in the evening, emphasizing again, it was the first day of the week.

[18 : 34] And then in John 20, 26, eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them, and Jesus appeared. Eight days later, to us, that sounds like it breaks the pattern, but it doesn't, because they counted days inclusively.

So the eighth day was again the first day of the week, our Sunday. The Jewish Sabbath, our Saturday, was on the seventh day, and still is.

The resurrection was on the eighth day, our Sunday, the first day of a new week. And there's significance in that.

The first day was the day of creation, but God has now begun a new creation. A new week has begun, as it were, for the world.

work it out, and you'll realize that Pentecost also, the fiftieth day after Passover, counting days inclusively, was also the first day of the week.

[19 : 51] So, as an old hymn puts it, on that day a triple light was given, the creation, the resurrection, and the pouring out of the spirit.

And already, from the very beginning, it's evident, that that day had become the preeminent day for Christian worship. They'd met together, remember, at Pentecost in Acts 2, on the first day of the week.

1 Corinthians 16 mentions the meeting on the first day of the week, when Paul says a collection is to be taken, the same collection that they're carrying with them here in Acts 20.

And now we read of the meeting again in Troas, on the first day of the week. Became known as the Lord's Day, that's what it's called in Revelation 1 and verse 20, I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day, and eventually it became known as the Christian Sabbath.

Well, here we have Christians in Troas meeting on the Lord's Day, on the Christian Sabbath, setting us an example, meeting just as we do.

[21 : 20] if they were counting time in the Jewish way from sunset to sunset, this would have been our Saturday evening when they met.

If they were counting it in the Roman day, it would have been the Sunday evening. It's not entirely clear which. But here we have them, meeting on the Lord's Day.

The meeting is held in an upper room, on the third floor in fact, very much an upper room. There were no church buildings in those days, remember?

They met where they could. Probably here they're meeting in the house of one of the wealthier members. Three-story house, by the way, wasn't at all unusual. residential buildings in Rome, apparently, were quite often five stories high.

It can't have been a large gathering in such restricted space. True, when it says that there were many lamps, that suggests a large room.

[22 : 40] But even so, it's hard to imagine that there were more than maybe 50 people there. so it's not so very different from ourselves today.

And what are they doing? Exactly what we still do 2,000 years later. They broke bread and they prayed.

Sure, there would have been singing as well and prayer, though those aren't specifically mentioned. breaking bread, of course, went back to the Last Supper, that upper room in Jerusalem, the night before Jesus died.

Jesus had broken bread, given it to his disciples, said, take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you. He'd taken the cup and said, this is my blood of the New Testament or the New Covenant.

And he'd commanded them to do this in remembrance of him. Here they are in Troas, obeying that command. Maybe 20 to 30 years afterwards, they're still keeping the command of the Lord Jesus, as we do 2,000 years later today.

[24 : 06] Some have suggested that the church in Troas may have broken bread every Lord's Day and have lamented that in the Reformed churches generally, we keep it so rarely.

Historically, I think it would be true to say that the infrequency of communion in the Reformed churches was a reaction against the superstition in the Roman Catholic Church, where the Mass was held to be a miracle and was held as often as possible, at least once a day, sometimes more. Reformers went, as it were, in the opposite direction, the idea being that if it were kept less frequently, that it would be the more precious to us.

in fairness, we don't know that they kept it in Troas every Lord's Day, only that they kept it this particular Lord's Day.

They kept the breaking of bread, but notice that it was not until after the preaching of the word. having the Apostle Paul there, they would have been listening with rapt attention to everything that he had to say, and the ministry of the word came first.

[25 : 39] They broke bread later, when they had taken in afresh, the full meaning of that word. Paul continued, till midnight, I've not heard anyone suggesting that we should follow his example in that.

Indeed, if anyone tried it, I rather suspect that they would find the church empty by midnight and all the lamps turned off before they had finished. But this was different.

This was Paul. When you have a great preacher, you want to hear more and more from him. there are stories of some of the field preachers in the days of the covenanters who would preach for seven hours.

And you think, well, how could people possibly endure that? Well, they could endure it because this preaching was so wonderful and so full of the spirit that they couldn't get enough of it.

Some of you have heard some of the great preachers of our own day. Martin Lloyd-Jones, for example, I could happily listen to him for an hour, two hours, three hours if he wanted.

[26 : 56] Most of us preachers are not quite on that level. But the point is that these people in Troas, they loved the word and they wanted to hear the word.

And this was Paul. They wanted to listen. Sure, if Paul saw signs of them all getting bored, he would have stopped. But he could see that they were still drinking it in.

So he carries on and on till midnight. But for one young man, it's all too much. Which brings us to Eutychus, falling out through the window.

In verse nine, a young man named Eutychus sitting at the window sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. You can feel his weariness, can't you?

They didn't have watches, did they? But he must have been thinking, it must be eleven o'clock and he's still preaching. Eleven thirty, when's he going to stop?

[27 : 58] And then he's gone. Maybe he was just tired. It was midnight, remember?

I'd be tired by then. Maybe he'd been working all day. They didn't yet have Sundays off work.

Maybe the fumes from all those oil lamps were just too much.

Or maybe he just couldn't concentrate. I heard a very godly lady a short while ago commenting on their new minister in a reformed church that he was very earnest and very good, but he just preaches too long.

And she said that he preached about 50 minutes. Doesn't sound long compared with this, but she said, and quite rightly, I just can't concentrate at my age for that length of time.

It's true, isn't it? We have our limitations. I think we can all sympathize with Eutychus, can't we? even the disciples themselves fell asleep in the garden of Gethsemane.

[29 : 16] I have to confess there have been times when I have felt drowsy during a sermon, and if I were to give in and close my eyes, I would be gone. It isn't necessarily the preacher's fault.

It obviously wasn't here. It's just human weakness. But on this occasion it's fatal. Falling from the third story of a building onto a stone pavement, that would have caused multiple injuries, and he is taken up dead.

But this is Paul who is preaching, and Paul had the power to work miracles. I've heard it said, tongue-in-cheek, you can preach till midnight if you like, as long as you can raise the dead.

Paul, by the grace of God, can. In the previous chapter, chapter 19, verse 11, we read how God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hand of Paul.

Well, here's another extraordinary miracle. In verse 10, Paul went down, bent over him, taking him up in his arms, said, do not be alarmed, his life is in him.

[30 : 35] Now, I suppose a skeptic might say that Paul is merely saying here, don't worry, he's still alive, the fool hasn't killed him, he's survived.

But that would hardly be worth mentioning in scripture, would it? We're meant to understand, I'm sure, that Paul had raised him from the dead.

His life is in him now, now, now that Paul has prayed for him. We remember Jesus in Mark 5 with that 12-year-old girl.

Why are you making a commotion, he said, and weeping? The child's not dead, but sleeping. Then he went in, took her by the hand, and said, Talitha Kumi, little girl, arise, and she arose from the dead.

Paul is following his master. Remember also Peter with Tabitha, also known as Dorcas in Greek, also following his master, he said, Tabitha, arise.

[31 : 52] Luke is making the point here that Peter and Paul were both apostles of the Lord, given the power to raise people from the dead, and that both of them self-consciously followed the pattern of their master.

It was an extraordinary miracle. Paul, however, just carries on as if nothing had happened. Verse 11, when Paul had gone up and broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak.

That's another six or seven hours, and so departed. In other words, he just finished the service, as if nothing had happened. But clearly for the church, this was a big event.

Verse 12, they took the youth away alive and were not a little comforted. I'm sure they long remembered that breaking of bread, and I'm sure when word of it got out, it made a big impression on the town.

Now, we have not been given the power to raise the dead, or to work any miracles. Some claim they have today. I don't doubt that God is able to work miracles, but I've yet to see anything quite like this.

[33 : 17] but it does seem to me that we can see in this a spiritual parable. The miracles of our Lord were signs, weren't they, pointing to deeper spiritual truth.

Why should that not also be true here? As I've said, at the highest level, mankind is fallen, but God has raised us.

not everyone, of course, but multitudes whom he had chosen. And at a more personal level, it's a very vivid picture of our human weakness as Christians.

Spiritual sleepiness is all too common among the Lord's people. people. We become drowsy, and the things of God no longer have a grip on us as they once did.

It doesn't necessarily happen to everyone at once. It may be the rest of the congregation are still drinking in the word, but for whatever reason, you personally have become sleepy, and it no longer interests you the way it does others.

[34 : 43] even the very best sermons have become wearisome. Even the gospel itself somehow fades away in our minds.

And if we give in to that, theoretically, it could be fatal. But, God is able to step in graciously and rescue us.

And how often has he done that for each one of us here. Sometimes he'll just give us a little dig, won't he, before we fall asleep to keep us awake.

Sometimes he'll step in after we've fallen, after our lives have collapsed, after we've suffered multiple injuries through our own foolishness.

And he revives us again. reviving. We need that reviving often as individuals. We need it sometimes as churches also.

[35 : 50] Historically, the church has frequently fallen asleep. Back in the 18th century, in spite of all that had happened in the Reformation, all that had happened in the days of the Covenanters, the church in Scotland in the early part of the 18th century was drowsy.

It drifted off into what they called moderatism. They no longer believed in miracles, no longer believed in Jesus as the Son of God. It was as if the church had died, and they needed the reviving hand of God, and it came in the great evangelical awakening, the story was the same in England and in America.

And it's happened repeatedly. God's church has needed reviving. There are many sleepy churches around today.

Churches where enthusiasm for Christ and for the gospel has died. And we need the spirit of God. to revive us.

But for Paul, this was all in a day's work. And the next day, he's on his travels again. Let's just finish with Paul's travels in verses 13 to 16.

[37 : 25] Paul's companions set sail the next day for Assos, the next seaport to the south. Paul decided to walk distance of about 20 miles.

Doesn't say why, but maybe he needed time to reflect on what had happened and what might happen in Jerusalem. them. They take him on board in verse 14.

They sail on to Mytilene, then south past Chios, touching at Samos, next day, to Miletus, which was the seaport for Ephesus. But Paul doesn't intend to stop at Ephesus because he was hastening to be at Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost.

not once again because he felt bound to keep Pentecost as a Jewish feast, but he wanted to be there when all the pilgrims were gathered from all over the world to present that collection.

Knowing as we do what happened to him there, we can't help being reminded of our Lord himself, of how he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

[38 : 42] He's not forgotten the church at Ephesus in the next chapter, we'll see how he calls the elders together at Miletus. But remember Troas, that little church in the upper room, meeting just like us, where God showed his love and his power in such an extraordinary way.

may the Lord help us to continue meeting faithfully every Lord's day, and may we see much of his love and power.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.