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Falling Asleep In The Church

ACTS 20:7-12

Introduction

1. I am sure that many of you having listened to the Scripture reading this morning and looking at the sermon title are wondering where I might be going with this sermon.
2. No doubt a few of you have struggled to stay awake in worship at one time or another:
 - a. Some of you are so worn out by the weekend that the moment you get still, you are asleep.
 - b. Perhaps there are others whose medication prevents you from staying awake.
 - c. Of course a number of us fight the urge to go to sleep when the room gets warm.
3. This was the problem which Eutychus had in Troas — by the way his name means “fortunate!”

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I. The Events Surrounding Eutychus' Mishap

A. A CHANGE IN PAUL'S ITINERARY (ACTS 20:1-6)

1. In the beginning of Acts 20, Luke tells us that when Paul left Ephesus he went to Macedonia.
2. While there he encouraged the Christians in each of the congregations in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea.
3. He then made his way to Greece where he spent three months, most likely in Corinth.
4. His plan was to take a ship from Greece to Syria and then travel on to

Jerusalem.

5. However, just before he was to set sail, Paul learned of against his life by some who would be traveling with him.
6. Seven men who were accompanying him sailed on to Troas a city in Asia Minor where Paul had not been able to preach earlier because of his concern for Titus.
7. There they waited for Paul while he went back north to Philippi and there caught a ship to Troas.
8. These men who had been influenced by Paul helped him in many ways:
 - a. Sopater was from Berea, the last city in Macedonia on Paul's second missionary journey.
 - b. Aristarchus (Thessalonica) — accompanied Paul to Rome (*Acts 27:2*); fellow prisoner (*Colossians 4:10*); fellow worker (*Philemon 24*)
 - c. Secundus (Thessalonica)
 - d. Gaius (Derbe) — the last city on Paul's first missionary journey/ he had also been drug out by the Ephesians in the uproar there (*Acts 19:29*); he had hosted Paul and the church in Corinth (*Romans 16:23*); Baptized by Paul (*1 Corinthians 1:14*)
 - e. Timothy (Lystra) — Paul's "beloved and faithful child in the Lord" (*1 Corinthians 4:17*)
 - f. Tychicus (Asia) — Paul's messenger (*Ephesians 6:21*; *Colossians 4:17*; *2 Timothy 4:12*; *Titus 3:12*)
 - g. Trophimus (Ephesus) — he was the reason for the later riot in Jerusalem (*Acts 21:29*).
9. After Paul and Luke arrived in Troas, the group waited there seven days in order to worship with the saints on the following Sunday.

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B. SUNDAY WORSHIP (ACTS 20:7-8)

1. In that time and culture, Sunday was just another work day.

2. It is very likely that those who came to worship that evening had already worked all day.
3. Because Paul was planning to leave in the morning, he wanted to worship with them and share with them as much as he could.
4. So it was that he spoke for several hours.
5. Because it was dark outside, there were many lamps burning in the third story room where they were meeting.
6. A boy named Eutychus was sitting in a window.
7. While Paul spoke, Eutychus fought sleep as long as he could, but eventually, his eyes closed, his body relaxed and he fell to the ground below.

Slide 4**C. EUTYCHUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION (ACTS 9-12)**

1. Paul stopped and everyone ran down to see about Eutychus.
2. Those who reached him first realized that he was dead.
2. However, when Paul got there, he fell on him and embraced him.
3. Eutychus revived and Paul said, "Do not be troubled, for his life is in him" (*Acts 20:10*).
4. Everyone then went back upstairs where Paul broke bread with them and then continued talking until daybreak.
5. Needless to say, everyone was "greatly comforted over the fact that Eutychus was alive.
6. The sleep I want to address this morning is not the physical sleep which many of us, like Eutychus have fought from time to time, but a spiritual sleep which is dangerous to our souls.

Slide 5**II. Why Do We Fall Asleep In The Church?****A. WE'VE NEVER BEEN AWAKE TO SPIRITUAL THINGS**

1. We have attended worship all of our lives.
2. We have sung a countless number of hymns, listened to thousands of

prayers being prayed, and heard God's Word being preached and taught more times than we can count.

3. But in all of that we were present in body only.
4. We have done Christian things in Christian ways, but understood little of what was done.
5. The truth is, we've never been awake to spiritual things.
6. Perhaps, we have been like Demas . . .
 - a. Who along with Luke sent his greetings to the Colossians in Paul's letter to them (*Colossians 4:14*).
 - b. Who Paul also referred to, along with Mark, Aristarchus and Luke as his fellow workers in his letter to Philemon (*Philemon 24*).
 - c. But of whom Paul wrote in his last letter to Timothy, "Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica" (*2 Timothy 4:10*).

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B. SIN HAS LULLED US INTO A SPIRITUAL STUPOR

1. Perhaps, at one point in our lives we have been very strong in our faith.
2. However, in that moment we stopped being vigilant in our faith.
3. It was then that Satan lured us into his snare.
4. Most, if not all of us, are familiar with David:
 - a. The one referred to by Samuel as "a man after [God's] own heart" (*1 Samuel 13:14*).
 - b. It was this same David who wrote . . .
 - a. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want" (*Psalms 23:1*).
 - b. "I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart" (*Psalms 40:8*).
 - c. "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped" (*Psalms 128:7*).
 - c. He was also the man who . . .

- 1) Committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah (2 Samuel 11:2-4).
- 2) Orchestrated Uriah's death (2 Samuel 11:14-17).

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5. We also remember Peter, one of Jesus' twelve apostles and a part of His inner circle — Peter, James & John.
 - a. He was the one, who after the feeding of the 5,000 had said to Jesus, "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God" (John 6:69).
 - b. He was also the disciple, who, when Jesus asked the twelve, "Who do you say that I am?" responded, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God?" (Matthew 16:15, 16).
 - c. However, it was to this same Peter that Jesus spoke these very words on the night of His betrayal, "Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times" (Matthew 26:34).
 - d. Peter, vehemently denied this, saying, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You" (Matthew 26:35).
 - e. But, Peter did deny knowing Jesus, not once but three times just as Jesus had foretold.

Slide 8**C. OUR FAMILIARITY HAS PREVENTED OUR REVERENCE**

1. Perhaps many of us here today "grew up in the church."
2. Our parents began bringing us to worship as infants.
3. Our mothers held us in their arms.
4. As we grew, we came to know the words to various hymns by heart.
5. In worship, we often found things to do so that we wouldn't get into trouble.
6. We counted the lights in the auditorium, the panes in the windows, the pews in each isle or something else like that.

7. We learned the songs that different song leaders preferred and how many verses they would lead in each one.
8. For us, worship became ho hum — we lost our reverence for God and His holy presence.

- a. Consider the praise of God by the seraphim in Isaiah's vision:

“And one called out to another and said,

“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts,

The whole earth is full of His glory.””

(Isaiah 6:3, NASB95)

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- b. Remember the words of the prophet Habakkuk to those who continued to worship their own hand made idols:

“But the Lord is in His holy temple.

Let all the earth be silent before Him.”

(Habakkuk 2:20, NASB95)

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III. How Do We Stay Awake In The Church?

A. RECOGNIZE THE DANGER OF SUCH SPIRITUAL SLEEP

1. It is the time when Satan sows his seed into our hearts.
2. He uses this time to lull us into a false sense of security.
3. Peter learned this lesson the hard way.
4. Never did he think he would deny His Lord, but Satan had been quietly working behind the scenes to bring about Peter's denial of His Lord.
5. Peter never forgot what Satan had done.
6. Some thirty years later he warned the Christians in Asia Minor to “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8, NASB95)

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B. CONFESS ANY SIN WHICH HAS BROUGHT ON OUR STUPOR

1. Do we look for reasons not to be with the rest of our brothers and sisters in Christ when they gather to worship?
2. Do we criticize various aspects of the service?
 - a. The song leader is too fast or too slow.
 - b. He leads songs with which I am not familiar.
 - c. The prayer was too long or too short.
 - d. I didn't like the preacher's sermon.
3. Realize that each of the men who stand before you at any given time are human, just like yourself, and are doing the best they can to honor God with their service.
4. Ask God to forgive you for being critical or judgmental of the service because it has kept you from worshiping Him as He desires.

Slide 12**C. ASK GOD TO HELP YOU ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN HIS WORSHIP**

1. Ask Him to help you come to ever worship and Bible study with great eagerness and anticipation for what you will learn and experience.
2. Ask Him to help you shut out every distraction and give yourself fully to the singing of each hymn so that you sing it to God, not only with your mouth but also with your heart.
3. When we partake of the Lord's Supper, ask God to help you focus upon the life giving sacrifice which His Son carried out on your behalf:
 - a. "This is My body which is give for you; do this in remembrance of Me"
(Luke 22:19).
 - b. "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood"
(Luke 22:20).
4. Ask God to help you truly listen when the Scriptures are read, because it is Him speaking with you.
5. When His Word is preached or taught, ask Him to help you focus on the message which He is communicating to you through the human vessel who stands before you.

Conclusion

1. This building is not holy, but those saints who gather here are and so is the worship in which we engage.
2. Let us never take our time with God for granted nor belittle our worship of Him in any way.

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3. Instead, let our response to our God be as that of David, “the sweet psalmist of Israel” (2 Samuel 23:1).

“Be exalted, O Lord, in Your strength;
We will sing and praise Your power.”

(Psalm 21:13, NASB95)

“O magnify the Lord with me,
And let us exalt His name together.”

(Psalm 34:3, NASB95)

“Be exalted, O God, above the heavens,
And Your glory above all the earth.”

(Psalm 108:5, NASB95)

4. Always, may our worship here lift our souls heavenward and may we forever be alert in the church of our Lord.