

Acts 20:1-16

"The Danger Of Drowsiness"

On the Day of Pentecost, the church was born. Jesus had tasked His disciples w/the mission of taking the glorious message of all that He'd done, everything He'd accomplished through His death & resurrection into all the earth. From Jerusalem, to Judea, into Samaria & out to the uttermost parts of the earth.

The book of Acts is a record of exactly that. The message of the gospel making its way into all the earth. By the time we hit Ch 20, Paul the apostle is actually on his 3rd missionary journey during which he's just had an incredibly fruitful few yrs in the city of Ephesus & in the entire area of the ancient Roman province of Asia Minor.

God opened a door for him to plant, water and establish a strong church in Ephesus. People were being changed, lives were being transformed, the area had been saturated w/the good news & strong disciples & w/that Paul sensed his mission there had come to a close.. So he purposed in his spirit to travel through Macedonia & Achaia, head to Jerusalem & then from there he wanted to see Rome. Not for the purpose of sight-seeing, but soul winning & strengthening the believers.

But just prior to his departure, a man by the name of Demetrius (a silversmith who made his living selling hand crafted shrines & idols of the Greek goddess Diana) stirred up some heavy dissention in the city & sought to put an end to all the harm that the gospel was bringing to his business... So many people were coming to Jesus that it was putting people like him out of business. They didn't need false gods & idols in their homes, they had a relationship w/the true & Living God. It's simply a net effect of people turning from sin & trusting in Jesus.

But he got the city so riled up that about 25,000 people stormed into the amphitheater chanting "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" for some 2 hrs! However, when the chief executive officer of the city stepped in, the people quieted down & he managed to speak rationally w/them so that a full-fledged riot was thwarted & the assembly was dismissed before Rome got involved.

One of the things I love about all of that is that Paul & his associates never even said a word. They didn't need to defend themselves, they weren't put on the platform, God just ironed it all out for them. He spoke "peace" to the storm (if you will) & everything was brought to a calm. Be encouraged by that this morning. God can speak peace into the turbulent times of our lives. He never leaves nor forsakes us, He's always w/us.

Even in the most trying & seemingly stressful of times. As we read in the book of Isaiah, *"Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."*¹

Vs 1

Everything had calmed down, Paul was preparing to leave, but before he did he wanted to take the time to embrace & encourage the disciples in Ephesus one last time. He'd just spent 3 yrs w/these people, he couldn't just cut the cord & go. I think sometimes we can forget the human element when we read through the scriptures. Paul loved these people, he'd invested 1,000s of hours of discipleship w/these people... But His calling was to establish a work, commend it over to the care of the Christians in that community & move on. (Paul leaves Ephesus Map)

Now; when you read 2nd Corinthians, you discover that Paul's plan was to meet up w/Titus in Troas. He was the man whom Paul had sent to oversee, & work through the struggles that were happening in the church at Corinth. But when he got to Troas, Titus didn't show up, so Paul was unsettled in his spirit. Even though the Lord had opened a door to him there, he didn't stay because he was restless not knowing what was going on or how the church was responding to his 1st letter to them.

So he hopped on a boat, sailed across the Aegean Sea, arrived in Macedonia & found Titus there. Now, something else that strikes me when we read the record is what's *not* said. Again, when you piece together the timeline & compare what's happening here to what Paul writes in 2nd Cor about this trip (which most scholars believes comprises about a yr of Paul's life that Luke condenses into a couple of Vs), you discover that it wasn't really a primrose path filled w/fun times & rainbows, but times were tough for these guys!

He writes saying, *"For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears. Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more."*² Paul's letting them know that they've become the silver lining in the otherwise dark/dreary times that were upon them! He was encouraged that they'd taken heed to the instruction of his 1st letter & made some major changes in their church. It was like that reminded him that what God was doing through him really was making a difference.

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Is 41:10]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
² *The New King James Version*. (1982). [2 Co 7:5-7]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& I'm going to be honest, sometimes we need that! I've not experienced *anything even close* to the tough times of the apostle Paul, but sometimes people who serve in ministry can feel downcast & discouraged! Wondering if anything they're saying is resonating, connecting or making a difference. & There are times that some of you have sent me a timely word of encouragement & it reminds me that God is at work, strengthens me to stay the course & to run the race to win. We all need that from time to time.

But I say all that to say this. Let's not read of the results, the miracles, the radical times written of throughout the book of Acts & paint this picture in our minds that it was nothing but a primrose path for those guys. That it was always this amazing experience of watching God move & minister. No doubt there *were* incredible times! But how quickly we forget that things were far from easy for these pioneers/1st century preachers of the gospel! The truth is, these guys were going through times much tougher than most of us could even identify with & in many cases getting much more done despite it.

In my early Christian years I used to read of the end times church in the book of Rev 3:8, where Jesus said of them, "You have a little strength" & think, "What do you mean, 'a little strength'? We trust *in* You, we follow *after* You, we want to *glorify* You!" **But the truth is, we have so much more available to us... Radio, T.V., internet, the ability to be in one place today & on the other side of the world tomorrow, we can travel from city to city in hours at most & the amount we accomplish in comparison to these disciples is almost embarrassing.**

They didn't have electricity, computers, cars, a guarantee that they'd have a place to stay (or really even eat). They might be cold at night, hot during the day, no creature comforts, no running water... Law & order was sporadic, thieves & criminals were everywhere & yet they were turning this world upside down for J.C.

How convicting is that? **Luxury tends to create lethargy & apathy. Comfort spurs on a "convenience" mentality, our spiritual strength is lacking comparatively. God help us to be contagious w/the gospel of J.C.**

Vs 2-6

So Paul was on route to Greece, making his way down through Macedonia "encouraging them" w/many words, strengthening the churches he'd previously established (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea etc). As mentioned last week the purpose of Paul in going back through these parts was 2-fold. 1st of all...

It was in his heart to receive a collection from these Gentile churches in order to bring relief to the impoverished believers in Jerusalem. It was his way of communicating that they were sharing one another's burdens, that there was a oneness among all believers everywhere. When one suffers we all suffer, when one rejoices, we all rejoice. The gospel had been sent out *from* Jerusalem, the least they could do was send aid back to Jerusalem... & They were pleased to do it.

We read in the book of Rom, *"For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things."*³ (That's kind of interesting isn't it? If we partake of spiritual things from somewhere, it's our "duty" [or really the word is obligation] to minister to them in material things. I'll just leave that right there, it's not really our primary point). The primary point is that Paul had a heart to unite the Jewish/Gentile church & this is one way that he found to be fruitful in doing so.

& Once he'd made his way through the region, he came to Greece (Corinth specifically) where he stayed for 3 months. It was during this time that he wrote the book of Romans while he was there. & I know I've mentioned this before but as you read the 1st Ch in the book of Romans, more than likely it's a reflection of the kind of things he was seeing in Corinth. Corinth was more less the "sin city" of Greece.

But from there (keeping to his plan) he sought to head to Syria (where his home church was) on his way to Jerusalem, but somehow it became known to him that there were some Jews who had plans to kill him & toss him off the ship out in the middle of the sea! So he decided to take a different route going back up through Macedonia but the men who were accompanying him (in Vs 4) went ahead & got on the ship & they agreed to rendezvous in Troas.

& Once Paul made his way back up to Philippi, we take note that Dr. Luke (we) once again joins his crew. Paul had left him in Philippi a few yrs earlier back in Ch 16. Now, on his way back to Jerusalem, Luke joins his entourage once more & will stay w/him till he arrives in Rome.

Ok, couple things worth drawing our attention to. As I mentioned Paul not only wanted to receive the collection, he was also all about making disciples & establishing leaders. When Paul went through these various regions, he picked up representatives from these churches he'd planted.

³ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Ro 15:26-27). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

No doubt they carried the collection from their respective regions to present in Jerusalem. Being together made for accountability, it vouched for Paul's integrity & signaled unanimity in the churches. (Map, Paul Leaves Ephesus)

He's got a couple of guys from Macedonia, a couple from Asia, a couple from the region of Galatia... Here's the point, Paul is raising up leaders. He's entrusting to others that which has been entrusted to him!

Jesus said, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe (obey) all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*⁴ The command wasn't to make "converts" (as great as that is) but disciples. What's the difference? A convert is someone who makes an initial decision to believe in Jesus. But that's not the finish line, it's the starting line. We see this decision all the time & then the people evaporate, they drift back into the world & throw in the towel on their commitment to Christ.

A "disciple" is someone who's committed to following Jesus for life. One who will take up their cross "daily", every day for all their life, & follow Jesus. It's learning to deny yourself, face the hardships & stay true to J.C. Paul was modeling this & mentoring others in the same way. He would eventually write to Timothy & say, *"You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."*⁵ Then he went on to speak of the hardships we'll need to endure as followers of Jesus, it's part of the package. But the idea is that having been discipled, we're to disciple others.

& One of the ways Paul discipled people (apart from writing to them) was simply by spending time w/them. & To go ahead & plug our life groups, this is a big part of the vision behind them. Life's better together, why do it alone. Our heart is to create opportunities for you to position yourself around other believers, other leaders in the fellowship that you might encourage one another, minister to one another, grow together, serve together... be discipled & disciple others.

One other quick thing here is found in their names. On the one hand you have "Aristarchus". His name was connected w/& it's where we get our word "aristocracy", the ruling class. He was most likely from a wealthy & powerful family. On the other hand...

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 28:19-20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (2 Ti 2:1-2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

We see Secundus. This is a common slave name. It simply means “Second”. Often times slaves weren’t even referred to by their proper names. The 1st ranking slave in the household was referred to as Primus, the 2nd was “Secundus”. Yet they were both serving the Lord together from the same church in Thessalonica, aiding the apostle Paul.

Here’s the point, those social, or ethnic, or even gender related (in the ancient world), dividing lines are eliminated & all are on equal footing in Christ. Galatians Ch 3, *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*⁶

Vs 7-12

Wow! Well, there’s that! Ok. I think we’re all a bit blown away by what happened w/Eutychus, but before we focus on that let’s look quickly at something else. It’s back in Vs 7 & it’s the 1st definitive statement we have in the NT (though there are certainly allusions to it elsewhere) of Christians making a practice to come together for fellowship & the word of God on the 1st day of the week, on Sunday... Though it seems it was a Sunday evening service, because for them, Sunday was a regular working day, not a “weekend” kind of day off.

I bring it up because occasionally someone has the question, “Why do we meet on Sunday as opposed to Saturday (or the Sabbath day)?” & It’s a fair question, after all, God blessed the Sabbath, ordained it as a holy day, a day of rest & all of that... So why the transition in the church from Saturday, to a Sunday, day of worship?

There are multiple reasons & I’ll keep it very simple. #1 Because under the new covenant, in Christ, *every day* is a holy day. *Every day* is a “Sabbath” day in that we’ve rested from our works & we’ve taken refuge, find our rest in the finished work of J.C. (His death & resurrection). As a matter of fact, out of all 10 commandments there’s only 1 that’s not repeated in the NT. Any guesses? “Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy.” Why? Because Jesus said, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”*⁷ Paul told the Colossians, *“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.”*⁸ Every day is a day in which we should honor God & glorify J.C.

Another reason they met for worship & God’s word on Sunday is because that was the day that J.C. rose from the dead. So that’s the day they wanted to celebrate the risen Savior! It makes good sense!

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ga 3:28]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Mt 11:28]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Col 2:16-18]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Another reason is because, in those early days, many believers didn't forsake the Sabbath service in the Synagogue, but they also wanted their own service, so they met on Sunday. & Again, it made perfect sense.

Finally, they wanted to honor Jesus, give Him "His Day", the Lord's Day & they chose to do that on the 1st day of the week. If He's worthy of the first fruits of our time, talent & treasure, He's worthy of the first fruits of our week as well.

So they met on Sunday for the breaking of bread (it was a time for a love feast, a meal together, & then also remembering the broken body & shed blood of Jesus, the communion table) & they spent time in God's word.

On *this occasion*, Paul spent an exorbitant amount of time! ☺ Like, hours & hours... You guys get to looking at your watch after about 30 minutes (JK)! ☺ **But when they came together for God's word, the time was set apart to God's word, it wasn't about what they had to do later, this was what they did. Now; this is surely a bit of an exception, & understandably so. We'll discover later that Paul had the suspicion that he might never see them again & there were things that he wanted to make sure they knew...**

Family, we smile when we read through this section of scripture, but I just want to say that it's important to give ample time & attention to the word of God. Whatever is in our minds about what's going on later should be a distant 2nd or 3rd priority, after we've spent time marinating our hearts & minds in God's word.

Well, Paul was preaching, & preaching, & preaching, these guys have worked hard all day, it's late at night, they're 3 stories up in a stuffy, semi-smoky/fume filled room from the torches & oil lamps... & there he is, right? This young man named Eutychus, he's sitting in the window, trying to get some fresh air, trying to beat back the sandman, but he's losing. He's getting drowsy, He's drifting into a deep sleep (& I just want to say, there's not a preacher I know who doesn't draw some kind of comfort from the fact that people fell asleep, even when listening to the apostle Paul ☺). But there he is, & he falls down out of the 3rd story window & he's picked up dead! "Well this party died! ☺"

& It's almost nonchalant the way Luke writes of it, but Paul goes down, lays down on him, embraces him, back to life, sends him home till the morning & then goes back up & continues talking to everyone till the break of day! I'd guess after something like that, he's regained everyone's attention!

But listen, let's think this thing through. I just want to say that sleeping in church isn't probably the best idea (if you can avoid it ☺). But it's certainly not the worst kind of sleep you could experience.

I'd much rather you come in here, enjoy ½ a meal & be spiritually alert outside these doors than like so many who sit awake in church but fall asleep (spiritually) as soon as they leave the doors... Paul told the Thessalonians, *"You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night."*⁹ The idea there isn't of their conduct in church meetings. He's speaking about the way we lead our lives, our conduct as followers of J.C. Being spiritually asleep is indigenous to those who are in the world, it shouldn't represent, or be characteristic of the follower of Jesus. We're to be spiritually sober, awake & alert.

Well, in the morning Eutychus was brought back to the meeting, everyone was encouraged, & Paul and his crew headed out.

Vs 13-16 (Map, Paul leaves Ephesus)

Again, being aware that he was headed for harm's way (as we'll see next time), he probably wanted a little alone time to sort his thoughts & spend some time in prayer & communion w/the Lord. So they got back on the boat in Troas, but Paul walked about 20 miles to Assos & boarded w/them there. **(Closing)**

There is inherent danger in drowsiness; & the danger is that of drifting off to sleep. It can be disastrous, even deadly spiritually. Maybe that's you today, drifting, in danger; listen, wake up, snap to, open your eyes, let God renew & restore you today...

Prayer Points:

God, Your word is rich & refreshing. May we receive that refreshing, that refocusing today. Wake us up, turn our hearts to You, be glorified in our lives.

It's interesting that Eutychus (which means "fortunate") had done nothing deserving of God's help; but purely out of the grace of God, he was restored to life. He had fallen (in Adam all have fallen), and he was dead (all are dead in sin); he was given life by grace alone. God wants to give you life today. If you've not turned from your sin, trusted in J.C. do so today.

⁹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Th 5:5-7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.