

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 15TH–16TH // BOOK OF ACTS

MACEDONIA & GREECE (ACTS 20:1–6)

Once the chaos and rioting in Ephesus died down, Paul gathered the Believers to say a heartfelt goodbye before heading west toward Macedonia (modern-day Greece, v. 1).

- Paul sought to encourage these Believers to stay strong in the faith, even in his absence.
- He had spent two very fruitful years in Ephesus, but now it was time to move on. Moving on isn't always easy, but if God is in it, it's for the best.

As Paul made his way through Macedonia, his focus was on building up the churches he had already planted (v. 2).

- Most likely, during this time he also would have collected financial relief from Gentile churches to support struggling Believers in Jerusalem.
- Meeting real, tangible, financial and physical needs was essential to early Christian community life.
- Giving faithfully actually builds us up (v. 35).

From Greece, Paul had planned to take the long journey by sea directly back to Syria (where his sending church at Antioch was).

- However, the plotting of some anti-Christian Jews made him take a more overland route back through Macedonia, accompanied by many companions (vs. 3–4).
- This was Plan B, but really it was God's providential care in directing Paul's steps.
- Paul's traveling companions served as trusted representatives from various churches to ensure proper stewardship of the funds (even Paul lived under financial accountability).
- While part of the team headed straight to Troas, Paul and Luke stayed behind in Philippi to observe Passover (v. 5).
- Afterwards, after a five-day sea voyage, they reunited with the rest of the team in Troas (v. 6).

WHY ALL THE DETAILS?

Luke, the author of Acts, doesn't include all these specific travel details to bore us but to give an authentic account of how the gospel spread across the ancient world.

- The first Christians were real people who faced the same ordinary limitations, temptations, and challenges that we do.
- The gospel's power is relevant to real life.

NAPPING IN CHURCH (ACTS 20:7–16)

ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, WE ASSEMBLED TO BREAK BREAD..." (V. 7)

This is one of many NT references to Sunday worship for the early Christian community.

- The Believers assembled to "break bread." "Eating together and practicing communal life was an essential part of Christian worship."
- It was also an evening service, as Sundays were typical workdays for Jews and Gentiles.
- Any Sunday gathering would have had to happen after the workday was over.
- Paul was preaching, and because he knew he had to leave the next day, his sermon was a long one—it went on until midnight.
- What's up with the lamps? Maybe they cut off the oxygen in the room or dimly lit it and made it quite relaxing. The service was long. Most people had worked all day...

"And a young man named Eutychus was sitting on a windowsill and sank into a deep sleep as Paul kept on talking" (v. 9).

- If you're sleepy, don't sit on the open windowsill of a third story building.
- Eutychus fell asleep and took quite the tumble.
- Paul and the others in the assembly went downstairs, where they found his lifeless body.
- What happens next is quite interesting...

"Paul went down, bent over him, embraced him, and said...'he's alive'" (v. 10).

- In 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 4, Elijah and Elisha stretched their bodies out over dead boys, and God miraculously raised them to life.
- Paul's actions signaled to these early Believers that the same authentic, miraculous power from God that was at work back then is available now through the name of Jesus.

THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE? "LET'S EAT!"

Everybody went back upstairs and ate a midnight snack. Paul kept preaching until daylight (v. 11), when everyone left, encouraged and comforted by what God had done in their midst (especially the family of Eutychus!).

- Is this story included in the Bible just to keep us entertained? Or is there a deeper meaning behind it? From Troas, Luke gives us geographical notes to get the missionary team to Miletus (where the next major event will take place).

- Interestingly, Paul deliberately skipped visiting Ephesus itself—a city he loved—because he was determined to reach Jerusalem in time for the Feast of Pentecost, and he didn't want to get delayed. There was something that awaited Paul in Jerusalem (more on that later).

What's the story of Eutychus all about? In Scripture, sleep generally refers to one of three things:

- Literal, Physical Sleep: Natural rest for the body (Luke 8:22–25).
- Physical Death: A common NT metaphor for Believers who have passed away (1 Thessalonians 4:13).
- Spiritual Lethargy: A metaphor for spiritual apathy or carelessness (Matthew 24:42; 25:13).

AWAKE IN THE LIGHT VS. ASLEEP IN THE DARK

There's an interesting contrast happening in that church service in Troas—Paul and the church were wide awake, bathed in lamplight, fellowship, and worship, despite the late hour.

- Eutychus stands out as the exception—he drifted off into sleep, lost focus, fell out of the lit room into the dark night, and crashed down three stories into what appeared to be death.

The call of God upon the Church is to stay awake, engaged, and focused on God's presence in our midst, even as the darkness from the world surrounds us (Matthew 24:42; 25:13).

- Eutychus represents what happens when spiritual complacency pulls someone away from the Christian life. What happens? They slip into a kind of sleep and tumble into darkness.

FIGHTING SPIRITUAL COMPLACENCY

The most dangerous threat to your spiritual walk is complacency: spiritual sleep.

- Complacency leads to compromise, compromise leads to sin, and sin leads to death.
- Complacency will eventually lead us to fall and drift further away from God than we can imagine.
- We must fight against complacency by discipline, accountability, and service.

DISCIPLINE, ACCOUNTABILITY, SERVICE

Discipline: Intentionally building daily habits that keep your faith active.

- Accountability: Surrounding yourself with trusted Believers who regularly check on your spiritual walk.
- Service: Getting involved and serving others, so your faith doesn't become self-centered, self-serving, and stagnant.

WAKE UP! (REVELATION 3:1–3)

Scripture warns Believers against looking active on the outside while being spiritually dead on the inside.

- The call of Revelation 3 to the church of Sardis is simple: wake up, hold fast to what you learned, and return to an active, alert faith.
- Don't fall asleep and get complacent! You will tumble further than you think.

REVIVAL AFTER TAKING THE TUMBLE

The most encouraging part of the story of Eutychus is the fact that God raised him up after he drifted off and took a tumble into darkness.

- Maybe you fell asleep and stumbled into darkness and spiritual death—it's not too late for you.
- God isn't shaming you. He's offering to send you a jolt of supernatural life to raise you up and invite you back inside, back to the table.

COMMISSIONING (ACTS 20:17–38)

From the city of Miletus, Paul sent for the elders in the church in Ephesus (v. 17).

- Throughout most of Acts, we have seen Paul as an evangelist, missionary, and church planter. Now we're seeing his heart as a pastor and spiritual father.
- In a way, Paul was passing the torch. He was preparing these local leaders in Ephesus to take full ownership of the ministry in his absence.

THE EXAMPLE OF A FAITHFUL LIFE (VS. 17–21).

Paul certainly wasn't a perfect man, but his ministry in Ephesus was marked by faithfulness, humility, tears, and perseverance.

- His character and faithful teaching were seen publicly and privately ("house to house"), and he shared a consistent message of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus. Paul's message was backed up with a faithful life.

COMPELLED BY THE SPIRIT (VS. 22–27)

Even though Paul knew suffering awaited him, he was compelled by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem. Paul knew he had to obey.

- His life plans weren't organized around comfort or self-preservation—only to finish his course and testify to the gospel of God's grace.
- Paul always told the whole truth; he didn't water down, dilute, or soften God's Word.

BE ON GUARD (VS. 28–31)

The responsibility of leaders within the church is to watch out for and protect the church from deceptive doctrines.

- Distortions of the gospel are inevitable. There are savage wolves who only want money, fame/ platforms, sex, or power from the church.
- Guarding ourselves against lies and holding fast to the truth require active effort.

GENEROSITY VS. GREED (VS. 32–35).

Paul reminds the elders that he never used his leadership for financial gain or material comfort; he worked with his own hands to support himself and help the needy.

- This passage is a sharp reminder for modern Christians to avoid leaders who treat faith as a business. The blessed life (and blessed ministry) delights in giving instead of receiving.

A COSTLY LOVE (VS. 36–38)

After concluding his final words, Paul knelt down with the elders to pray.

- Knowing they would likely never see Paul alive again, these leaders wept and embraced him, bound together by deep love and a shared mission of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. Despite his tears, Paul knew he had to move on in obedience to the Holy Spirit.

FINISHING THE COURSE OF THE GOOD LIFE

- Living with visible integrity (both in public and in private) and strong character.
- Serving humbly, and bearing hardship patiently.
- Believing and proclaiming the full truth of Scripture without compromise.
- Guarding against falsehood and greed.
- Living a life of generosity with a deep love for people.

THE GREATEST ENEMY TO YOU FINISHING YOUR COURSE FAITHFULLY IS YOUR OWN SPIRITUAL COMPLACENCY.

- Complacency happens when we're burnt out, disconnected, and tired because we've practiced unwise spiritual rhythms or tried to work in our own strength.
- Complacency happens when we're prideful and overconfident in our own abilities.
- Idolatry and distraction lead to complacency.
- Complacency happens when we get bored, and boredom happens in the Christian life when we are not using our spiritual gifts to serve.
- Complacency happens when we're surrounded by others who encourage us to stay lukewarm / distracted and to compromise.
- Complacency - Compromise - Sin - Tumble

STAY AWAKE!

- Don't let spiritual sleep dull your heart. Actively fan into flame the spiritual gifts God has placed inside you! (2 Timothy. 1:6–7)
- If you're spiritually tired, find rest in Christ, *practice a Sabbath*, stay in community, and let others in the Body minister to and encourage you.
- If you've fallen asleep and tumbled into darkness, today is a good day for a resurrection.