

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study

“NEEDING AND DELIVERING ENCOURAGEMENT”

For individual study or discussion

In an era in which most English novel readers were far more biblically literate than now, author Charlotte Brontë alluded to the story of Eutychus in her novel *Jane Eyre*. The allusion is made in a description of Sunday evenings at Lowood, the grim boarding school for charity girls that Jane attends. Every Sunday after supper, the girls were required to repeat by heart the catechism, the Sermon on the Mount, and listen to a long sermon being read aloud. A frequent interruption to these activities was:

“the enactment on the part of Eutychus by some half dozen little girls; who overpowered with sleep, would fall down, if not out of the third loft, yet off the fourth form, and be taken up half dead. The remedy was to thrust them forward into the center of the school-room and oblige them to stand there till the sermon was finished. Sometimes their feet failed them, and they sank together in a heap; they were then propped up with the monitors’ high stool.”

Who wouldn’t sympathize with little girls struggling to stay awake through an evening like that? The real Eutychus, however, surely had a different experience than the girls at Lowood. It seems unlikely that the night with Paul was tedious or boring. The falling into slumber is understandable, given the probable warmth of (and perhaps lack of oxygen in) the lamp-lit room. What is intriguing and perhaps mystifying to those of us in the internet age is the great eagerness to listen and learn on the part of Paul’s audience. They listened until there was no more listening to be had. Dawn had arrived, and Paul had to leave.

- 1) What makes people hungry for knowledge of God?
 - What circumstances can make people more open to hearing the Gospel and more desirous of knowing everything they can about being a disciple of Christ? (See Ps. 63:1 and 1 Pet. 2:2.)
 - Are there ways to increase our appetite for such knowledge?
 - What dampens our desire to know God better? (See Eph. 4:17-32.)
 - Most people today have very short attention spans, largely (one assumes) because of the frequent consumption of TV and social media. Add busyness, because isn’t almost everyone busy these days? As Christians, should we fight this problem or accept an inability to focus as something that is regrettable but inevitable?
- 2) Of all the difficult-to-pronounce names in this passage, Eutychus is, of course, the stand-out. But it’s worth pausing and thinking about all the other people named here. Different regions and cultures, and most likely, different levels of society are all represented in this group of Paul’s companions. (Some of them are mentioned elsewhere, i.e., Col. 4:7-10.)
 - What does this passage teach us about Christian community?
 - How is the encouragement of fellow believers both a privilege and a responsibility of every Christian? See Heb. 10:23-25.



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

DATE: October 4, 2020

SPEAKER: Chad, Brian

SERIES: Acts

PASSAGE: Acts 20:1-12

Family Dinner Table

In this passage, we’re told about a really long sermon, followed by the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, followed by hours of more informal teaching. In between, of course, is the story of Eutychus, the young man who just couldn’t stay awake while Paul was preaching (he “talked on and on”!) in a hot upper room.

Do you find it hard to listen to a long sermon? If you’ve ever read about church services a long time ago, you may know that one and two hour sermons were not uncommon—in fact, they were the norm.

You may think that people in the past didn’t have much else to do (no TV, no internet!) so maybe sitting in a hot, crowded room listening to a man talk on and on seemed way more interesting to the Ephesians than it would to us. But then you have to think about the fact that even after the alarming fall, death, and coming-back-to-life of Eutychus, everyone returned to listen to Paul talk for the rest of the night—hours when they would normally have been sleeping.

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Robbie and Lydia Sweet serving
with MTW in Scotland