

Eutychus – The Gospel for a Teenager

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Bible Text: Acts 20:1-12

Preached on: Sunday, November 17, 2002

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Our thoughts this morning and this evening have taken us to the small city of Troas—a port city—on the northwestern edge of what today is Turkey. Troas in the Scripture is not a significant city. It's only mentioned a very few times. However, for the spread of the Gospel it was an important jumping off point bringing the Gospel from the East—from the Near East, of the eastern Mediterranean unto the West—into Europe and eventually into the Americas.

Three times we know Paul passed through this port town. The first instance we considered this morning as he was guided by the Holy Spirit to bring the Gospel to those in Macedonia. And then the first verse of Acts 20 which we read tonight in Paul's third missionary journey we read of him departing from Ephesus where they had had the great uprising leaving for Macedonia. And while it is not explicitly told us it seems highly improperly that he would have gone any other way but, again, through the port city of Troas.

And then after three months of ministry in Greece he sought to return to Antioch in Syria—his home base—by ship. But we read that in the providence of God his course again was changed to include Troas. We with me what it says in Acts chapter 20 verses two and three. Starting in the very end of verse two it says:

He came into Greece, and there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.¹

In many of the cities as Paul went as he preached to the Gentiles the Jews were very upset and many Jews sought to kill Paul. There was a group that sought to kill Paul and he came to know about their plot as he would have sailed back to Antioch. And so instead Paul took the over land route north of the Aegean Sea and back again through Philippi, and then Samothracia and then into Troas again.

We're told that he spent seven days in Troas and here on his last trip that we know of through the town he apparently left behind some of his own personal belongings because he wrote to Timothy near the end of his life in 2 Timothy 4:13: "The cloke that I left at

¹ Acts 20:2-3

Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.”²

But while Troas had never an epistle written directly to its church and though its mention in Scripture is very brief, it is a city in which the Lord guided Paul on at least these two occasions. And on this final visit we read that Paul spent seven days here. And for the whole seven days that he spent in Troas Luke was given by the Holy Spirit to account for us in the Acts of the Apostles only one incident that occurred. And it happened on Paul’s last evening there. He was there on the sabbath day. And knowing that he would leave in the morning he preached through the night all the way until midnight. And then we read he continued with the people until morning. And the one resident of Troas who has been given an eternal name by having his name here in the Scripture—the one in this passage given to us—is the boy Eutychus, the boy who is famous for falling asleep in church.

But as no point of the Scripture is insignificant our attention is directed to the events surrounding the story of Eutychus. We’ve entitled our message: “Eutychus: the Gospel for a Teenager.”

The first thing we notice about Eutychus was his condition. Eutychus was a youth. Eutychus is described in verse nine as a young man. The particular word that appears in verse nine is a word that is used only to describe three people in the New Testament. It is used here of Eutychus himself; it is used of Paul’s nephew who alerted the centurion of the plot to kill Paul; and it was used of Paul himself when as a young man he stood and received the cloaks of those who martyred Stephen.

These three contexts would describe to us a young man—not a boy who would still be clinging to his mother’s skirts, but also not a full grown man. By the use of this particular word in the passage we might assume that Eutychus was a boy in his late teens—perhaps even in his early twenties.

But Eutychus is also called a young man in verse 12. And here there is an entirely different word used in the original. Here we find a much more familiar word; a word which is often used to describe a boy who is a child. And so it is likely—considering both of these usages—that we are dealing with a boy between the ages of 13 and 19, a teenager. In my mind, given the situation, probably more likely a boy closer to 13 than to 19.

They are called so many different things today: whether they are called teenagers or young adults or youth they are the in between crowd. They are too old to be truly classified with the children. And they’re not yet quite old enough to be joined to the adults. But here in Acts chapter 20 the Holy Spirit moved Luke to devote all of what happened in that week at Troas, all the attention that he would give to those seven days, are concentrated in the story of this young man Eutychus.

² 2 Timothy 4:13

In considering Eutychus' condition we rejoice to note at first that he was found in the meeting. Paul was determined to leave Troas the next morning and so on this Sabbath evening he met with the Lord's disciples in that town for a meeting that went late into the evening. And whether it was his parents or some others who were responsible, someone saw that Eutychus was in that meeting.

There is no better place for a young person than to be under the sound of the preaching of the Gospel. And while it is true like Eutychus—and like some who sit here tonight—they will not always pay attention, they will hear. Romans 10:17 tells us that: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."³

Salvation does not come with age, it does not come with maturity and it does not come with a certain level of intellect. It is the power of God that saves a human being. And it is this power of God moving through the hearing of the Word that God brings men to Christ.

And so we want our children under the sound of the preaching of the Word. That is why as we meet here each Lord's Day we do not have a nursery. We do not have babysitting. We do not have a playroom for the smallest of the children to go to. We do have a cry room where a mother can take a child who is being disruptive. But even this is a place where the preaching can still be heard. It's not a room where the children are given toys to play with. It is not a room where they are babysat to while away an hour while others sit under the preaching.

We cannot expect our children to grow up in the Gospel if we move them away from the congregation of the Lord's people where the Word is being preached.

We do not teach them to reverence the things of the Lord by putting them in a toy room while others are hearing the Word of God without them.

This is an important guide for us in rearing our children not only here in the public worship, but also in the time of family devotion. It is essential that the children are included.

We do not dumb down the gospel to try to reach their level. Yes, we explain. Yes, we take some time. And yes, we answer their questions. But we don't minimize the gospel.

Rather, we endeavor from the earliest age to bring our children up to the level that they can hear the Word of God; that they can see Christ in the Word of God; and that they by God's Spirit can come to understand and be saved.

But though Eutychus was in the meeting that night he was not in the best place for he was in the window. The disciples in Troas met together in an upper room. We read that it was the third loft which is the third story. As they heard Paul that night they were in the third story of a building. And we don't know how crowded that room was. We don't know how big

³ Romans 10:17

that room was. But we might assume that the seats were full because Eutychus was given—and was allowed—to sit on the windowsill.

Three stories up and Eutychus the boy was allowed to sit on the windowsill. This speaks to us of his condition of carelessness. Even in broad daylight full of alertness and fully awake a third story window is no place for even an adult to be sitting—let alone a small child. And remember, that in this house in Troas, a third story window was not a place where there was glass. There was nothing but an open hole in the side of the building to let air and light in and out. It was not a place for anyone to be sitting.

Eutychus never imagined sitting on that windowsill that he would fall. You know, there is a certain invincibility that each one of us has experienced as we have been a teenager that nothing can harm us. We are invincible. And whether that manifests itself in a dare devil lifestyle or whether it comes as a lack of concern for our eternal souls—such carelessness is dangerous.

And this was Eutychus' condition. He sat in a window far from the ground. He never imagined that he would fall out of that window. We might imagine that he never thought that he would fall into hell either.

But there was more to his carelessness. The Lord's apostle was preaching the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and Eutychus was not paying attention. Perhaps he had chosen the window seat that night so that he could be easily distracted by the stars in the sky overhead. It would have been late spring time. And on a clear night he might have seen many stars. Perhaps he chose the window seat so he could look down and see the occasional passer-by in the street below. But whatever the reason for his sitting there, he was not paying attention to the Word that was being preached.

He was physically in the meeting, but mentally and spiritually he was clearly out of the meeting. And Eutychus fell into a deep sleep. We read that Paul was long in preaching that night and so our inclination might be to make an excuse for Eutychus.

You could almost hear his parents saying, "Well, he is just a youth. He can't be expected to stay awake to hear for such a long winded preacher into the night."

Well, then parents if he can't be expected to stay awake to hear how can he be expected to stay awake and remain upright in the window? Eutychus was in peril because nobody cared. Here was a small boy three stories up sitting in an open window and nobody cared. Eutychus was drowsy in that window and in danger of falling three stories to the ground yet no one thought to move him from that window.

Eutychus was drowsy in that window and in danger of falling into hell for his sins outside of Christ yet no one thought to move him from that place where he would fall. No one said, "Eutychus, wake up! You need to hear what Paul is preaching."

As important as it is for a parent or any other responsible adult to move a child or a youth from physical danger, it is just as important to move him from spiritual danger.

We spoke of the fact that as youth we all saw ourselves as invincible. Nothing could topple us. A parent who knows better than a child will tell that child to wear a bicycle helmet, to buckle a seat belt, to be home by dark. But where is the concern for the spiritual condition of our children?

Educators have told us throughout the generations that the youngest children absorb the most. And we see that parents believe this because they spend money to give their children music lessons at a young age. They strive to get reading skills into them as early as possible. But why aren't we as a Church across the land using these youthful years of our children—and I'm talking about from birth to age six—why aren't we using these years to teach our children every truth of the Gospel that we can get into their heads?

So often the attitude is that we'll just wait until they're older when they can understand better. Take a typical four year old—and in some cases even a younger child—and consider how a four year old has mastered the English language. Talk to an immigrant who has been in our country for four years and worked diligently to learn our language. And compare the two. You'll get some idea of what it is that a young mind can absorb that the older mind cannot.

And so we must teach our children the Gospel from the youngest age. So often the attitude is to wait until they are older. So often the attitude is just to give them a vague understanding of Noah or Jonah or some other story from the Old or New Testament. But if our children walk away with nothing more than an impression that Noah was a man with a big smile who liked animals we might as well have been telling them fairy tales.

Our children will and our children can understand something of the doctrine of man's fall and something of their need for a Savior. And when we put off teaching them those things until they are older we are missing a great opportunity. And we're putting them in tremendous peril.

Parents should be teaching their children the Scripture from the moment that they can utter their first words. And I know that as this is done this will be criticized. They'll be told, "Oh, those children don't understand. You're just filling their heads with things. To them it's just so many words."

And I would agree that most times it is just so many words. But I know that as a parent I want to see the Word of God written on my children's hearts and minds while they are so receptive so that when difficulties in life occur later on they will have a store of God's Word to work from. When God by his grace might move in their hearts to bring them to salvation they'll have a tremendous foundation for their life in Christ from what they were given to learn as a young unsaved child.

But nobody cared enough about Eutychus. Eutychus was left to his own. And this was his condition. But it led to Eutychus' catastrophe because Eutychus fell. Eutychus fell from light into darkness.

Look with me at verse eight of Acts chapter twenty. It says, "And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together."⁴

Why is this mentioned? These people were not gathering together covertly. They were gathering together not only in the physical light, but in the light of Jesus Christ. And Eutychus fell out of the presence of that light. And Eutychus fell into the darkness of the street below.

This is what happens to a troubled teen even if he exposed to the Word; even if he is brought up in a Gospel home. It is so easy for a young person—or even for an older person—to fall from the presence of the light into the presence of darkness.

The world loves to grab hold of those who only have a vague familiarity with the gospel and to take them for their own. Eutychus fell not only from the light into the darkness, but from the Word into the world.

He was in the presence of the preaching. He fell from the very presence of Christ because we're told that whenever two or three or more are gathered in the name of Christ he is there in our presence. And so Christ was in that room as the crowd assembled in Troas that Lord's Day evening. But Eutychus, careless for the Word of God, fell out of that window away from the Word of God and into the world.

He fell from the relative security of a people moved to follow Christ on to a world—that when he hit the ground—took his very life from him. He fell from being by the Word of life to the world of death.

How many sit in Gospel meetings week by week unmoved that they are hearing the very words of life; unmoved by the fact that for their very sins they are destined for Hell; and that the preaching of the Gospel is not just something we do out of habit? But the preaching of the Gospel is for the conversion of men and women and children's souls unto faith in Jesus Christ – to be saved from your sins. Eutychus has no appreciation for the Word of God preached in his midst. And this is what happens

⁴ Acts 20:8

How often have we seen that children come from a Gospel home and all is assumed to turn out well just because of the home they come from? But children must be nurtured. They are not to be left alone on third story windows to sit by themselves. They are to be taught. They are to be encouraged and they are to be disciplined.

We can almost hear the conversation.

The mother says, “Eutychus, you come down from that window this instant.”

Eutychus says, “Aw, mom.”

“Young man, you get right down here this minute and you mind your tongue.”

This is the language of old storybooks. This isn’t the language that we would hear in most families today.

I think of one family we know with some very rebellious teenagers. And every time I hear the children speak to their parents it is with an exasperated annoyed tone.

“Leave me to do my thing.”

This is not God’s design for a family. It is not a family that is raised under the discipline that God gives us.

I know of a particular woman who had a very difficult time in her growing up years and had many conflicts with her own parents. And as she came to be a late teenager she fell in love with a man who was a number of years older than she was. And she left her family. This was not a Gospel home. She left her family to marry that man and was estranged from that family for over a decade. And eventually that marriage went sour and ended in divorce. But before it did there were children born. And upon having children of her own this woman who resented the discipline of her parents as she was a child swore that she would never discipline her children the same way, that she would strive to make sure that her children loved her.

And so she never stood up to them. She never disciplined them. She wanted them to like her. And now, while her teenagers are not the worst we could imagine, they do lack respect. They don’t see their mother as one to be honored and respected because she never ever demanded it of them. And she thought that she was doing them a favor.

Lax discipline, according to the Word of God, is no favor to our children. We read in Proverbs 23:13-14:

Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.⁵

Do we sanction child abuse? Absolutely not! But God has given us a pattern. He has given us a direction for raising our children and it includes a judicious use of discipline. Use of the of rod represents both obedience to God’s direction and also an evidence that a

⁵ Proverbs 23:13-14

parent truly does love a child. Proverbs 13:24 says, “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.”⁶

This mom said that she would not discipline because she wanted her children to know that she loved them. But God’s Word says that he that loveth his child will chasten him, will discipline him.

The world says spanking is wrong, the psychologist and the social workers. But God says discipline is what we need in our families so that we don’t have Eutychuses sitting on windowsills and falling out away from the Gospel – falling away from all that is good in this world.

Eutychus fell. He fell, we said, from light to darkness. He fell from the Word into the world. And he fell from life into death. This is what awaits our children if we neglect the instruction God has given.

Yes, God can and God does save children who are spiritually neglected, but this is evidence of his profound grace. It does not change the fact that he has commanded parents to teach their children and to rear them in “the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”⁷

It is a truth that the Lord has called us to minister to our children in the Word and in godly discipline.

So many in our world have adopted the attitude of the welfare state. We deplore welfare when it comes to giving money to people who don’t work, but yet so many are so welcoming of it when it comes to dismissing our children; sending them off to the government to educate them; sending them off to the Sunday School to give them what little knowledge they’ll ever have of Christ.

Being a parent is a responsibility. There is a soul that is given by God into your care for your direction, for your upbringing. And as Ezekiel and the watchman, you are not responsible for the salvation of that child, but you are responsible for sounding the cry to the child that sin will overtake that child and cast him or her into Hell. The responsibility of the parent is to bring up that child knowing that there is a God and knowing that there is salvation in Jesus Christ.

That done, the parent has fulfilled his duty before God. We pray that God would bless the effort and that God would bring those children to Christ. But God is sovereign. The responsibility of the parent is to show the child Christ.

And now we must also consider Eutychus’ care. God was gracious to Eutychus. Rather than give him over as a trophy to the devil, he was restored to life and given as a warning

⁶ Proverbs 13:24

⁷ Ephesians 6:4

to us all. As Elijah and then Elisha had at one time brought young children back from the dead, so was Paul given to lay over this child and his life was restored to him.

But though Eutychus was spared God owes us no such favors. We must take the example given to us in Eutychus' case and care for our children. We must be diligent. We must love them. We must discipline. We must catechize them. We must point them to Christ. We must give them opportunities to hear the Word of God. And we must insist that they hear that Word and give diligence to what the Lord would speak.

And we must as parents set good and godly examples for them. What parent here if their child had a deadly disease would not seek out a medicine that might be available to cure that child? Well, every child here and every adult here has the disease of sin that will cast them eternally into hell for which there is only one cure and that is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

No good parent would ever forsake getting the medicine to help their child of a physical disease. But how lax are so many with bringing our children to Christ? We see that as the most important role we have as parents, more important than feeding them, more important than housing them, more important than clothing them well—which are all very important—we must bring our children to see their sin, their need for a Savior and God's provision of that Savior in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Finally, we look at Eutychus' comfort. Eutychus was restored to the congregation and we read that there was great comfort. This is our reaction to God's grace in our lives. We rejoice with the angels in heaven when we see God bring a soul to himself to wash one who was lost clean in the blood of Jesus Christ.

We are called upon to work in this labor with our children. Psalm 127 tells us:

Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.⁸

Children *are* an heritage from the Lord. They are a gift and they are a trust. When we are given children to raise we are being given a sacred trust from heaven. These children have souls which will live forever. Their souls are no more important than the souls of older folks, but neither are they any less important.

There are those who fall for the lie of the devil. That for some unknown reason imagined in the eyes of men—certainly not in the Scriptures—they believe that all who die in childhood will automatically go to heaven. But it is a fable. It's not something that we can see in the Word of God.

⁸ Psalm 127:3-5

Often the rationale for this fairy tale is taken from the child of Bathsheba and David whom God was pleased to take to heaven. But all this story provides us with is an example of the sovereignty of God.

God can work in the heart and God, and God, by grace can bring a child to salvation at the youngest age. But nowhere in his Word are we told that he always will do so. And so the parent who feels that he can put off telling his child of Christ until he is older leaves that child in peril of an untimely death resulting in eternity in hell.

Children are an heritage from the Lord. They are precious and they are to be taught. And this for the glory of the God we say we serve. Children are the godly seed that we've been given. And we are to raise them as precious seed of the Lord's Church.

Now, we do not pervert the promise of the covenant by saying that just because they are born into a Christian home that they will be saved. Some take words like those that appear in Acts 16:30,31 as saying that children born in covenant homes will by obligation of the Lord will be saved.

The Philippian jailer said: "What must I do to be saved?"⁹ And Paul and Silas said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."¹⁰

And some would take the Scripture and stand it on its head to say that this verse and others like it teach that if you believe—that if you only believe—those in your family, in your household will be saved. This is nothing but a lie from the devil.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house,"¹¹ means that this is a promise for you, that if you believe you will be saved and if your children believe they will be saved. But no one has ever been saved from their sins except by their own personal faith in the atonement purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is only one way for men to be saved. There is only one way for women to be saved. And there is only one way for children to be saved. And that way is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who gave his life for us and his righteousness to be imputed to our account.

Much of what is taught contrary to this even in Bible believing Churches regarding the salvation of children is nothing but a lie from the devil which is lulling the Lord's people into complacency, into not caring about the souls of their children to bring to them the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These are our children. They are given to us by God. God spared Eutychus. Let us earnestly pray that he will spare our children also. And let us work in faith to see this done that he will be glorified in it. Amen.

⁹ Acts 16:30

¹⁰ Acts 16:31

¹¹ Ibid.