



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 20:1–12

“Eutychus and the Easy Path to Fame”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We turn this morning in our Scripture reading to Acts chapter 20, as we continue our series of studies in this remarkable history of the early church, and we are reading today for the Scripture reading verse 1 through verse 12. One of the nice things about the reading of the book of Acts, and one of the things that is of interest, is the comparison of the events of the book of Acts with the writings of the apostles, particularly the Apostle Paul. And one, as one reads through the book of Acts, would like to have some absolutely authoritative word concerning the date of the writing of Paul’s letters, in order to place them in their proper context in the book of Acts.

Unfortunately, that’s not possible for us; although it is possible for us to be fairly certain about the place of origin and time of the writing of some of Paul’s letters. I mention this because in Acts chapter 20, when Paul comes again to the city of Corinth, it’s very plain from the study of the Epistle to the Romans, that he wrote it from Corinth and probably wrote it at the time of this third missionary journey. And so we’ll make a comment about it when we come to the place that probably records events that have to do with that time. But, let’s begin reading with verse 1, and Luke the church historian writes,

“And after the uproar, (that is, the uproar at Ephesus, as the preceding context indicates) was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia.

(Now, of course, he is in Ephesus, in Asia Minor.) And when he had gone over those parts and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, and there abode three months. (And, incidentally, it's likely that he wrote some of the Corinthian correspondence from northern Greece) And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.”

And while Paul was in Corinth for this three months, it's likely that he was staying in Gaius' house, Gaius of Corinth, and there wrote the Epistle to the Romans. Romans tells us that he was in the house of Gaius, and so this third verse is the circumstance out of which originated the Epistle to the Romans. Phoebe, you'll remember, was a servant of the church at Cenchrea, Cenchrea was the port of the city of Corinth and it is into her hands that the apostle gave the Epistle to the Romans to take to Rome. So she evidently was taking a trip to Rome from the Corinthian area and had in her purse, among other things, of course, I just imagine she had a lot of things in that purse, but no woman ever had anything more wonderful than the Epistle to the Romans, which Phoebe had in her purse. Now, you can be sure that there would be no shipwreck that would make it impossible for her to get to Rome. She did get there. She gave the Romans the letter and we have that remarkable epistle from the apostle, through her instrumentality. And the 4th verse continues.

“And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe. (Luke mentions specifically that this Gaius is different from the Gaius of Corinth. So he says, “Gaius of Derbe.”) And Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. These going before tarried for us at Troas.”

Now, if you've been paying careful attention to the things in the book of Acts, as we've been going through it, you'll notice that Luke again begins to use the first person plural here. Now, he had used it when they were in Philippi on the second journey, but then when Paul left Philippi the first

person is stopped. And Luke begins to speak in the third person. Now, as Paul comes back to Philippi, Luke again begins to speak in the first person, which indicates most likely that when Paul was in Philippi on his second missionary journey, Luke was with him. Luke stayed there and has been there ever since, carrying on ministry. But now, as Paul comes back on his third missionary journey, coming through Philippi, Luke rejoins the apostle and now follows with Paul on the way down to Ephesus again.

“And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.”

Remember, in the second missionary journey, when Paul left Troas to sail to Philippi, they made the journey in three days, so Luke points out. And we made mention of the fact that it probably was the providence of God that gave them the winds, so to speak, as they made their first entry into the continent of Europe. Now, going back the other way, it takes five days, and Paul stays for seven days in Troas, evidently, in order to be there for the meeting of the church, because we'll see that he will leave immediately after the meeting of the church and make his way on down toward Ephesus and, ultimately, Jerusalem.

“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, ‘Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.’”

Now, you who are Bible students, I'm sure you remember if you've read the Old Testament much that this is very similar to the events that occurred in the lives of two of the Old Testament prophets. Now, we're going to have a little quiz and the deacons are going to pass out pieces of paper, and you're going to first sign your name and then you are to write the names of those prophets who had the experiences that were similar to Paul's. Now some of you are looking rather fearful, but you know, of course, that we're not going to do that. But I'll just give you a little hint, both of these prophets names begin with an E. Some of you are repeating, begin with an E. So you know.

Now, this is rather interesting, because the apostle has the same kind of experience and one, I think, sees from this that the spiritual gift of miracle or healing was a gift that the apostle had, and evidently exercised it at this place, in testimony to the fact that God was with the apostles and the new movement that is represented by them. verse 11.

“And when he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.”

There is one interesting thing here that I'd like to mention. Sometimes in the light of the fact that the Jewish people reckoned the beginning of the day differently from the Gentiles, some have thought that the church probably met on Saturday night, rather than Sunday morning, because according to Jewish reckoning of time, the first day of the week would begin on our Saturday night. So sundown was the end of the day, and when night began that was the beginning of the new day, according to Jewish reckoning of time. The Gentile or Roman reckoning of time was different. Roman reckoning of time was the reckoning of time that we use today. This incident shows us that it is the Roman reckoning of time that was that which the early church followed, because you can see from verse 7, it says, “Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his

speech until midnight.” Now, it would not be the morrow if they were using Jewish reckoning of time. The fact that it is the morrow, in the morning, the break of day is evidence that they were following Roman reckoning of time. And so in verse 11, he talked a long while, “even till break of day, so he departed.”

Now, this you might think is of no real significance and I guess you’d probably be right except that in the history of the Christian church and, particularly, in evangelicalism because evangelicals often are people who’ve been in a rather stayed and dead church and then having heard the gospel somewhere, they come to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible becomes a new book to them. And the tendency of evangelicals is often to pay, therefore, no attention to the traditions of the Christian church because they found the Lord, it seems, outside of those that practice the traditions of the Christian church. So, often, they do not pay the serious attention to the historical traditions of the church that they should.

And not long ago, well, it was some time ago, some years ago, but in the history of Believers Chapel, which is not so long, we had a group of people who used to have a Saturday night church. Now, the reason they have a Saturday night church, one of the chief reasons was that they believed that the first day of the week began on Saturday night. So they felt that they were following apostolic tradition by meeting on Saturday night instead of Sunday morning. But, as is so often the case, they hadn’t in my opinion at least paid careful attention to the teaching of the Word of God. It’s obvious that in Troas, the early church met on the first day of the week, which was a Sunday and not a Saturday. So that is the reason that we feel that the Christian church meets properly on the first day of the week, Roman time; that is, on Sunday, reflecting, of course, a celebration originally of the fact that the Lord Jesus arose on the first day of the week.

So, anyway, that’s of some interest because, as I say, so often we don’t pay attention to the history of Christian doctrine. It’s very important that we do. Do not think that it is proper for us to discard all the history of the study of Christian doctrine, down through the centuries, and just follow what we think the Bible teaches. The Holy Spirit has been teaching for nineteen hundred plus years.

The attitude that says, “We don’t have to pay any attention to the tradition of the church or the history of Christian doctrine,” is the attitude that ultimately says, “The Holy Spirit has been wasting his time, and He has not really given the Christian church any sound body of teaching to which we should pay attention.” I think you could see that this is really an arrogant attitude toward the things that the Holy Spirit has been doing. We honor the Holy Spirit most when we listen to the Word of God, but when we also pay attention to what he has been teaching the Christian church as a whole.

Now, since Paul preached until midnight, stopped, then went on talking till the morning, I’ve taken the liberty of giving you the first message now. May the Lord bless this reading of his Word and the message that followed it, and let’s have a word of prayer now together.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these marvelous accounts of the history of the early church, given us by Luke the historian. We are grateful because, Lord, we felt that it is important for us to pay attention to the way in which the Holy Spirit, in which the Triune God, through the Spirit, has guided the Christian church, from the first century. And we pray that we may be submissive to the Word of God, preeminently, but also that we may be responsive to the things that the Christian church has been taught through the Spirit, down through the centuries. Give us, Lord, a truly submissive attitude. Deliver us from the arrogance that suggests that the Spirit has really wasted His time and has not really been teaching the Christian church. Help us to be truly responsive.

We would, Lord, ask Thy blessing upon this entire assembly, its elders and its deacons, especially, its members and its friends and the visitors who are with us. May, Lord, we experience the spiritual blessing that comes to men through the Lord Jesus Christ, who offered Himself a sacrifice for sinners. Father, if there are some in this meeting who have never responded to the gospel, may today be the day in which they do. We pray for the sick, especially those mentioned in our Calendar of Concern. We remember, also, particularly, those who have experienced bereavement just in recent days and others, Lord, who have been mourning the loss of loved ones. O Lord, we pray that Thou

wilt minister to them, prove Thyself to be to them the God of all consolation and comfort. We ask Thy blessing upon us in this meeting. May we experience, truly, the blessing of the Lord God, through Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] We study today in the continuation of our series of studies in the book of Acts, one of the best-known men in the Bible. The fact that makes him famous is that he fell asleep during a sermon. That may seem to us to be a very ordinary feat, but Eutychus was creative. He was the first who was known to do so under the preaching of an apostle. Now that, of course, means that when you fall asleep under my preaching, it's no great feat. But with Eutychus, it was a great feat to fall asleep under the preaching of the Apostle Paul. Why, throughout the ages of eternity he can say, "I fell asleep while Paul was preaching. The rest of you fell asleep while ordinary preachers were preaching. That's no real feat." So he becomes the patron sinner of sermon-sleepers. [Laughter] There are, of course, many who follow in the tradition of Eutychus, though they may have forgotten his name. "How late do you usually sleep on Sunday mornings?" a friend said to another friend. He received the answer, "It all depends." "Depends on what?" "The length of the sermon."

Well, I have friends of mine who have fallen asleep under my preaching. And I must confess, sometimes, I find myself rather dull and I'm not surprised. And I don't feel they've accomplished a great deal by falling asleep under my preaching. Sometimes it's not all that it should be.

Insomnia, when chronic, is often the defeat of the doctors. This desperate disease requires a desperate cure. And Hugh Latimer, the famous bishop, who was martyred in the sixteenth century, describes an afflicted lady who had, without avail, tried everything in the whole range of medicines in her day. And at last, in desperation, she said, "Doctor, I'll no more of it. Oh, do take me to the parish church. I've slept soundly there the last forty years, and I think I could sleep again." [Laughter] So maybe it is a cure for insomnia to come to church on Sunday morning, at least for some.

The most interesting aspect of this passage, however, though that’s interesting to me, is that it contains one of the clearest pictures in the New Testament of an actual church meeting. And what is even better about it is that the author of the account was there, himself. So what we have is a first-hand account of what took place when the early church met.

Now, we read that on the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them. That tells us some important things about the early church. First of all, it tells us that one of the purposes, it’s expressed here as the primary purpose in this instance, was the breaking of bread. But, also, in the context of the breaking of the bread, there was the preaching of the Word of God. Often when people think of Protestantism, they think of a preaching service. When they think of Romanism, they think of the observance of the Mass. One Protestant preacher said that Protestantism’s loftiest alternative to life in the cloister, is a life of pilgrimage by automobile to an hour on your haunches with God.

Well, we have two aspects of a local church’s experience, set out here very plainly. Luke describes the situation in which Paul was, in the 7th verse, “Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight.” The apostle is on his third missionary journey. He remains at Troas for an entire week, evidently, since he left immediately after the meeting to enjoy the ministry of the Word of God and the worship with the church in Troas on the Sunday.

Now, it says that they came together to break bread. Lloyd-Jones, Martin Lloyd-Jones, one of the outstanding preachers of our recent generation, a man whom I heard with a great deal of appreciation and still hear because I have a number of his tapes, used to say that people come to church in order to go home. And what he meant by that was that that pretty well described their religious experience. They came to church in order to go home.

The early church met, Luke says, in order to break bread. Now, it doesn’t say that they came in order to observe the Mass. It doesn’t say that they came to hear the choir sing. It doesn’t even say that they came to have Christian fellowship, though, of course, we assume and are most certainly

right that they did enjoy Christian fellowship. It doesn't even say that they came to hear a sermon. But, as Luke puts it, when the disciples came together to break bread, it's obvious he's laying a great deal of stress upon the experience of the observance of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week.

There are two tendencies in Christianity that we should avoid, and one is the tendency to make out of the leader of a service a person to make out of him a priest or a master of liturgical ceremonies. That's bad because when we have church as simply a series of liturgical experiences, it's obvious that the truths that we are talking about have difficulty becoming personal truths. And all truth, ultimately, should be truth that touches us most intimately in the inner man.

The other extreme, however, is to be avoided, too. And that is to think of the individual who is leading a ministry of the Lord's service as a kind of professor, who is delivering lectures on Christianity, his favorite academic subject. What we are to think of on Sunday morning is, and in the meetings of the church, is that there are two aspects of the meeting of the Christian church. There is the preeminence of the worship side of the meetings, and there is, also, the opportunity for the ministry of the Word of God. Now, in Believers Chapel, of course, we have two meetings. We have a meeting in the morning and we have a meeting at night. We do not have the luxury, it might be a good idea, we don't have the luxury of having one meeting which may go on for quite a few hours, as evidently took place in Troas. So far as we know, there was a large percentage of the early church that were servants, slaves, and, therefore, they had relatively [little] free time. They couldn't come out whenever they wanted to come out. And, evidently, they did often meet at night.

And in meeting at night, they took advantage of that and their meetings lasted for some time. This is characteristic of many mission fields in which one meeting will go on for a considerable length of time. We have a short attention span; and so we have a ministry of the Word meeting on Sunday morning and then on Sunday night in the Chapel we come to sit around the Lord's Table and to observe the Lord's Supper, as Luke says, “to break bread.” In that context, there may be gifted

men who exercise the ministry, ministerial gifts; teaching, exhortation, and other things that have to do with the ministry of spiritual gifts.

Now, it seems to me that when we think of the ministry of the church on the first day of the week, we should think of both of these things. We should think of the ministry of the Word of God; we should think also of the observance of the Lord's Supper. And I do not see anything detrimental at all to the observance of the Lord's Supper, Sunday after Sunday. Occasionally, people will say to me, “If we observe the Lord's Supper Sunday after Sunday, it might become a kind of stale experience.” Well, I often think that the best reply to that is to say, “Well, God has given us the privilege of prayer because we exercise our privilege of prayer, does that mean that that is liable to become a rather stale experience for us? Should we pray once a week? Once a month? Once a quarter? Or once a year?” Well, most of us would grant that the Scriptures exhort us to pray constantly, and to pray constantly doesn't mean that prayer becomes a stale experience. In fact, the more we pray, most of us can testify, the more we enjoy our time of prayer. So, likewise, around the Lord's Table, the more we are around the Lord's Table, the more we reflect upon what Christ has done for us; generally speaking, the more we come to appreciate it and, also, we experience by God's grace the deepening of our own spiritual lives. And I've found, at least in my experience, that individuals who come regularly to the Lord's Supper, and reflect on the things that Christ has done for them, inevitably come to have a deeper appreciation of the sufferings, the death, the burial, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We know that this was the tradition of the early church. We know this from the writing of men shortly after the time of the apostles. They describe some aspects of their meetings and this is prominent in this. We know this is reflected in the history of the Roman Catholic Church's observance of the Mass every Sunday. And while there are aspects of that that, I think, are contrary to Scripture, the fact that they observe the Mass Sunday after Sunday is a testimony to the tradition, originally, of the observance of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, every week.

One of the striking things is that most of the great teachers of the Word of God have affirmed that that is the teaching of the Word. Let me give you some illustrations, in Calvin's *Institutes*, though the tradition that he represents does not practice this today, he says that in his opinion, “It is scriptural to observe the Lord's Supper every week.” John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, affirms that in his opinion it is scriptural to observe the Lord's Supper week by week, though the tradition represented by him does not as a general rule practice that today. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a Baptist, though his tradition does not generally follow this particular custom, affirmed that it was scriptural to observe the Lord's Supper, Sunday after Sunday. So we are not following something that is strange; we're following something that has the seal of the tradition of the Christian church, something to which we should pay careful attention because as we have said earlier, in the first sermon, that it's important for us to pay attention to the tradition of the Christian church. Tradition is not always wrong. As a matter of fact, tradition, Christian tradition, is usually right. But we should remember that we do not put tradition above the Word of God. We honor the Word of God first and tradition can be wrong. Creeds can be wrong but creeds, generally, are very useful. In fact, if you were to read the creeds of the Christian church, you would have a good course in Christian theology. So the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread; the earliest unambiguous evidence for worship on the first day of the week of a Christian church.

Now, in that context, Paul preached unto them. We should not de-emphasize the preaching of the Word of God because we observe the Lord's Supper, Sunday after Sunday. Now, in chapter 20, in verse 28, Paul will exhort the elders in the city of Ephesus that they are to feed the church of God, “which He has purchased with His own blood.” So Paul is following in that proper tradition and, as an apostle, he will feed the church at Troas. He comforted the saints.

Now, Luke doesn't tell us what Paul preached here. Shortly, we will study Acts chapter 20 in verse 28, and the context and we will learn what Paul ordinarily preached in the church. In fact, I say ordinarily with some question because that's the only instance that we have of the apostle's preaching to a church or to a body of men who belonged to the church. And if that's a standard, if that is like

what he ordinarily did, he stressed the work of Jesus Christ. He stressed the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And, no doubt, he also went on to talk about the other privileges that we have.

If I were to just simply speculate a bit and say, “What did Paul preach?” Well, he preached primarily the work of Christ. I learned that from his letters. He rarely ever says anything about the life of Christ. He regarded that as well known. He talks about the significance of his death, burial and resurrection and the theological issues that flow out of the fact that the second person of the Trinity took to himself an additional nature, a human nature, and came to Calvary and there offered up a sacrifice for sinners and was buried and was raised again from the dead and on the Day of Pentecost gave the Holy Spirit. And now, through this age, the Holy Spirit indwells all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ permanently. That was something new on the Day of Pentecost; something new for this age. And that’s why the church is called “a new man.” Paul stressed those things. And, no doubt, he stressed therefore the ministry of the Holy Spirit and all aspects of it. He stressed the privileges of prayer. He stressed the responsibilities of following the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our daily life. That, I would imagine, would be some of the things that Paul preached to them.

Now, Paul continued his speech until midnight. We often say we should follow the example of the apostles. Well, should we follow the example of the apostles? I do not think that our congregations in the twentieth century have the spiritual stamina to follow the apostles. Now, I don’t blame you for not following it, when I’m preaching. But even if we had a great preacher come, why, we probably wouldn’t have the stamina to do this. I heard of an exhausted victim of a long-winded preacher, who once declared, “The man who thinks by the inch, and talks by the yard, ought to be dealt with by the foot.” [Laughter] When Henry Clay was in Congress, a member of Congress was droning on and on and in the midst of his message he turned, rather pompously, to Mr. Clay and he said, “You, Sir, speak to the present generation; but I speak to posterity.” And Mr. Clay spoke out and he said, “Yes, and it seems to me, you resolve to keep on speaking until your audience arrives.” [Laughter] Paul preached till midnight. I also heard the story of an individual who came into the service a little late. It’s been done at Believers Chapel, so it’s nothing unique. He walked in late, he sat

down by someone and he said, “How long has he been preaching?” And the person looked at him and said, “Thirty or forty years I think.” And he said, “I’ll stay. He must be nearly done.” [Roaring laughter] So Paul preached until midnight.

Some years ago, I visited a couple, not far from the Chapel here. A young boy, about twelve or thirteen, was going to be baptized, and I was going by to talk to him in order to hear his testimony. And while I was there, we engaged in a little conversation over his Christian faith and, somehow or another, the question came up, since they had come from another church, what was it about Believers Chapel that particularly you liked? And this young boy, about twelve years of age, astounded me. He said, “Well, Dr. Johnson, I would like to say that first of all, the church in which I have come from was a church in which the preacher preached for 15 minutes.” And he said, “The thing I like about Believers Chapel is that we have a real sermon.” Well, forever in my mind, he’s one of the young saints. [Laughter]

So Paul followed in that tradition, continuing his speech until midnight. And now Luke describes the sleep of death, which Eutychus experienced. And so in verse 8, we read, “There were many lights in the upper chamber where they were gathered together.” And that, therefore, we should not blame Eutychus too much for falling asleep because it’s easy to understand. It was crowded, Paul was there, people were anxious to hear Paul. It was a relatively confined place, no doubt. And there were many torches and we all know that when the atmosphere is smoky and the hours go on, and this young boy’s bedtime was probably before midnight. I can understand why he began to be a little droopy, nodding a bit. Calvin, incidentally, in his commentary, defends his sleeping. He talks about the room, he talks about the people, he talks about the torches. And I can understand. But it does seem difficult to sleep during an apostle’s preaching. But Eutychus managed it. I’ve heard of people being bored to tears and bored to death, but here’s a person who was preached to death.

And Eutychus, incidentally, Luke describes this in a way and very vivid. He describes him beginning to fall to sleep and then sinking into a deep sleep. Some of you have the New International

Version. You can notice that change in tenses that is found in the original text, if you'll follow their translation. They're trying to represent it as sinking into a deep sleep. And then having fallen sound asleep, I know exactly what he was experiencing I've had that experience before. He didn't have any wife by his side to punch him like this, or a husband. He's a young boy. And so as Paul went on and on, those low windows and that smoke in the air and he began to nod. And they didn't have “no-doze” tablets in those days. And he didn't have any. So he would droop, his eyes would close. I have some friends who close their eyes before the sermon begins. That's very comforting because I know I'm not responsible. They just come in the room, this is a dormitory for some people, you know [Laughter] and so, they come in and their eyes close before the preaching begins. So he nodded and then he finally, he drooped; and finally he collapsed and as he fell out of the window, on the way down, he no doubt awakened at that point and he let out a very loud shriek. Luke forgets to tell us that, but I'm adding that. And then there was the horrifying thud on the court floor. Now, no doubt some low moans and then silence. And then, the individuals who were there, his family and his friends, began to wail because they thought that he was dead. And, as a matter of fact, Luke says, “After they went over to him, he was taken up, dead.”

Now, some have thought that we do not have here an instance of a person restored to life by the apostle, because Paul will say in the 10th verse, “Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him.” I would like to suggest that while there may be some doubt about this and I wouldn't want to speak authoritatively until I get to heaven and Luke can say, “You're right, Lewis, he was dead.” But I just remind you of this, that Luke was a physician. And he's writing this, and he says, “He was taken up, dead.”

And, secondly, I'd like for you to notice that when Paul says, “Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him,” it's after Paul has gone down and has fallen on him and has embraced him as, and here are the names of the two prophets, as Elijah and Elishah had done; Elijah with the widow of Seraphat's son, and Elishah with the woman of Shinema, the Shinemite's woman's son. Both of them fell down upon the bodies of the young men, and they were restored to life by the Lord God through

the prophetic work in Old Testament times in I Kings 17 and 2 Kings 4, I believe. So Paul had fallen upon him, then as a result of that, the young man was brought to life. And they were not a little bit comforted.

There are some interesting things in Jewish literature, concerning death and concerning physicians and doctors. You know, I was talking in the eight thirty service, we have two of our elders as you know are surgeons, so I was talking about the relative benefits of having an apostle near at hand and having a medical doctor at hand. Now, Luke was there, but he evidently was unable to do anything. The apostle, however, was able to do something. And I commented simply on the fact that in Jewish literature there is a statement to the effect that it is difficult for the angel of death to kill everybody in the whole world, so he appointed doctors to assist him. And someone also said, in Jewish literature, if your time hasn't come, not even a doctor can kill you. But then, since the doctors have ministered so wonderfully to me, personally, I had to get myself out of the difficulty in which I'd put myself. And so I reminded the congregation, also, of the fact that Jeremiah was much kinder to physicians. He said, “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?” And so, it's not when we read in this particular instance, that it's through Paul that this man is restored to life. It's not because doctors are not useful to us. They are very useful to us and we cannot really get along without them. And we appreciate them all, especially, when they're Christian doctors.

But the healing takes place through the Apostle Paul, and the reason for it is simply to give testimony to the truthfulness of the Christian movement. That's why in the early church, the miraculous gifts were given: gifts of speaking in tongues, gifts of miracles, gifts of healing and that is why they ceased with the ceasing of the apostolic age. When Paul writes, in the Corinthian letter, the signs of an apostle I have wrought in your midst, he was talking about those very things, those signs, those miraculous gifts that the apostles exercised as testimony to the fact that this movement is of God. That's the way the Lord affirmed and authenticated the Christian movement.

Now, when that has taken place, there is no further need for that; and the history of the Christian church reflects that. For centuries and centuries and centuries, no claims whatsoever, of any

significance, regarding the miraculous, until the 20th century really, and Asuza Street in Los Angeles when claims that I think are really false, in the light of the New Testament, have arisen and today we find the charismatic movement claiming the gifts that the apostles exercised.

Now, I know and I say this because I don't want to falsely criticize some of my Christian brethren. I do not in any sense of the word affirm that there are not the blessings of God manifest in the movement that we know as the charismatic movement. But I would suggest and I suggest this from the study of the Word of God that the reason for the blessings does not lie in the charismatic gifts, but in the fact that there is a preaching of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And God honors the preaching of the gospel. And that's one reason too, why more middle-line or mainline Christian denominations are not being blessed as they should be blessed, because they have abandoned the preaching of the gospel not because they have abandoned the charismatic manifestations.

So this was the time of such. Paul exercised the gift. And now, we read, the sequel in verse 11 and 12, “When he therefore was come up again and had broken bread and had eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.” He finished, evidently, the observance of the Lord's Supper. They had food together. He'd been there for a long time. This rude interruption of the apostle's preaching did not deter him in his continued ministry. He talked on for a long while afterwards. In the original text, the word translated “talked a long while” in verse 11, is different from the word that describes his preaching earlier. It's the more familiar term. In fact, we get the term “homiletics” from it. It means to engage in conversation. And so he engaged in conversation; there probably was informal communion in the atmosphere of this new life, new life from Christ, new life for Eutychus. And the fact that they were not a little comforted suggests that he spoke to them concerning the way in which the Lord Jesus Christ delivers us from fear and, particularly, the fear of death.

It's rather interesting isn't it that fear began in the Garden of Eden with sin. When man sinned, and then the Lord God came down into the Garden of Eden, we read that “They were afraid and sought to hide themselves.” Fear is one of the products of the original sin of Adam and Eve,

against the Lord God. The first mention of it is in the context of the Garden of Eden. The whole story of the Bible, in one sense, is an appeal from God to “fear not.” And so, over and over again, we have that expressed. In fact, the Bible tells us how the Lord Jesus Christ has died and has dealt with fear.

We are not afraid because the Lord Jesus Christ has died and has been raised again and, as a result of what he has done in his saving work, our sins are forgiven. They are blotted out. They have been forgotten. They are removed. They are cleansed. They are cast into the depths of the sea, to use some of the biblical expressions regarding them. And, as a matter of fact, the Lord Jesus now lives, in order to deal with fear.

I think, one of the striking passages in the last book of the Bible is that opening passage in chapter 1, in which the Lord Jesus appears to John in Patmos, a man, no doubt, afflicted with a great deal of fear, an exile. No telling what his future might be. And, in addition, he had the fear of death and everyone has a sense of the fear of death, all military men can tell you there is such a thing as fear of death. Wellington has made a simple statement with regard to it, that that is true of every soldier. That he fears death. And we fear death. It's perfectly natural to do it. So the Lord Jesus appeared to the apostle and he said, “Fear not! I am the first and the last, I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore. Amen. And have the keys of hell and death.” So He lives to deal with our fears. We do not need to fear. Any fear of going on in life, well we have the comfort of our Lord's statement, “I am the first and the last.” That means he is the eternal God; he was there before there was any beginning, he will be there before and after there is any ending, tragedy, disappointment, failure, disease, death, all of the things that afflict us, all of the kind of fears that affect our society as well, are dealt with effectively by the Lord Jesus Christ.

I love that little statement of a child, I should say. Children have an uncanny way of reducing the in explainable to their own terms. Witness the child explaining how God created people. He said, “He draws us first, and then cuts us out.” That's a good Calvinistic way of expressing the creation. He draws us first; that is, he has us in his mind first. And then, he cuts us out. And for a Christian to

realize that the Lord God has had us in his conscious mind from eternity past, and then has brought us into existence, and then has given the Lord Jesus Christ as the remedy for our sins, well, when he says, “Fear not!” we don’t have to fear going on living in whatever society we find ourselves. And that’s why, I must confess, that I cannot be so concerned over nuclear destruction. There will not be such according to the teaching of God. And the Lord Jesus Christ will take care of his saints. And if we have him first, remembering he’s the first and the last, he controls all of the affairs of men.

Now, as far as death is concerned, he says, “I am He that liveth, and I became dead.” So he’s passed through the experience of death. He has overcome death. And the one who has overcome death, and who has the life that overcomes life has given us life, the life that overcomes death. So I’m not afraid of that either. And what follows after death? Why, he says, “I am the first and the last,” that takes care of going on living. “I am He that liveth and was dead.” That takes care of the fear of death and what follows death. He says, “and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of hell and death.” If my closest friend, if my Lord has the keys of death and Hades, who’s going to lock me up? Who’s going to effectively harm me, in the ultimate sense? If the Lord Jesus, who has the keys of death and Hades, is for me then I have all of the encouragement that I need. As Mr. Spurgeon said, “The Savior has the giant’s head in His hand, and has carried the witness of victory to the city of God.” As we often sing, “Death cannot keep his prey, Jesus my Savior, He tore the bars away.” Like Samson at the city of Gaza, Jesus, my Lord.

May I conclude with just this word of exhortation and admonition? There is a sleep that is a million times worse than Eutychus’ napping in the church at Troas on Paul’s third missionary journey. And that’s the fatal and inexcusable slumber of the unsaved soul. And we can be asleep in religion, we can be asleep in the midst of the preaching of the gospel of Christ, we can be asleep in the conviction that we have done good works and that if we do the best that we can, then surely God will receive us in heaven. We can be asleep in the ordinances observing the Lord’s Supper, even Sunday after Sunday. We can be asleep in the conviction that we have been baptized and therefore are saved and still be lost. There are so many things in which we can sleep. And that fatal and in

excusable slumber is the sleep that fails to realize that we are lost, that only in Christ and the personal relationship to him is salvation.

I know that Believers Chapel is no different from other churches in this respect. There are people who attend our meetings, Sunday after Sunday, and some of them by the testimony of their friends, do not give any sure conviction that they have passed from death into life. The apostle had to exhort the Ephesians, “Awake thou that sleepest; and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life.”

May God help us to recognize our condition before him. And if we have never received the Lord Jesus as our personal savior, may God so work in our hearts as to give us the life that trusts in him, who has offered the atoning sacrifice and in whose merits alone we can trust.

I received a card just this morning as I walked in my office, it was a card from a listener in Nashville, Tennessee, to our radio broadcast. And he said, he’s a regular listener. He said, “Just heard your message this morning and was struck with one of the truths that was set forth; and that is, that the new birth comes before faith.” And that’s true! You see, it’s the work of God the Holy Spirit to give life and true life responds to Christ, in faith.

May God the Holy Spirit draw you to the Lord Jesus Christ, giving you the experience of life that you may trust in him who has died for sinners. We invite you as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus, we invite men universally to come to Christ! Believe in him who has offered the atoning sacrifice and pass from death into his marvelous life.

Come to Christ! Believe in him! Trust in him! Don’t leave this auditorium without that assurance of the forgiveness of your sins.

May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] We pray, Lord, that we may not sleep that fatal slumber of negligence in the reception of the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal savior.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.