

Series: **The Original Church Planter**
Today's Title: ***"The Danger of Sermon Sleep"***

July 16, 2023 – Acts 20:1-12

Objective: To encourage believers to serve with others in confidence due to God's power.

Opening Prayer

We're on the home stretch...nearing the end of this sermon series.

Turn to Acts 20:1-12

Paul is on his 3rd church planting trip – and he's been on this trip for probably close to 3 years.

Luke recorded the beginning of this 3rd trip in **Acts 18:23**

"After spending some time there (In Antioch), he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples."

This would have taken at least a few months.

Next, Luke records Paul's arrival in Ephesus starting in **chapter 19**.

He starts to minister – and Luke tells us that he "reasoned" in the synagogue for 3 months – until the Jews rejected him and the gospel – and he makes the decision to leave the synagogue – and teach in a place called "the hall of Tyrannus."

Acts 19:9-10

"...reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.

This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks."

After being in Ephesus for about 2 years – Paul is ready to move on.

He's ready to visit the churches in Macedonia and Achaia – modern-day Greece.

Read vs. 1-3

Obstacles and delays do not mean a lack of God's blessing.

vs. 1-3

There are 2 main obstacles Paul faced in this passage.

vs. 1 - "After the uproar ceased" – which is a reference to the riots in Ephesus (see last week's sermon).

And...

vs. 3 - The "...plot...made against him by the Jews".

We don't know the details of the plot – but the easiest thing to think of is they were going to throw him overboard after setting sail across the Mediterranean.

Some believe those behind this plot were Paul's enemies in Corinth. If you remember, the last time Paul was in Corinth there was a group of Jews who "...made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal..." (18:12)

They accused Paul in the tribunal (court) and Gallio – the proconsul (judge) dismissed their claim outright – and the devout Jews were so upset they beat up the ruler of the synagogue – Sosthenes (18:17).

The existence of this plot to harm him forces him to change his travel plans.

Instead of setting sail from Corinth to Syria (where his home church was located – in Antioch), he decides to go up to Macedonia – and depart on a ship from the area around Philippi.

A lot of times we believe something is God's will – and has His blessing – then it will run smoothly – no problems.

We don't typically talk about how difficult something is – and all the problems we are encountering – and then talk about God's will in those things.

We think of something being in God's will when the path is smooth, and the road is straight.

Problems / difficulties – we attribute to Satan, to our own mistakes.

But here, we see Paul - clearly in God's will – yet he is dealing with some major difficulties.

A mob in Ephesus wants to tear him apart – and a group of devout Jews in Corinth plot to kill him!

Do you easily lose heart – lose motivation – when you encounter problems?

Do you interpret problems or difficulties as a sign from God that you're on the wrong path?

Or...Do you see them as a sign that the enemy is trying to stop you – hamper and minimize your gospel efforts – which probably means you're on the right path?

Look at what Peter says.

1 Peter 3:16-17

“...when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.”

Do you see that? “...if that should be God’s will...”

When you’re “slandered” and your “good behavior in Christ” is reviled and when you “suffer for doing good”.

Being “slandered” and suffering “for doing good” - and other good things like them – can actually be “God’s will”!!!

We don’t like that.

Why would this be God’s will?

I’m not sure – but I am sure that I can trust His plan – even when I don’t understand it and I can’t make sense of His plan from my perspective.

God doesn’t have to get our approval for His plan!

Ministry – every kind of ministry can run into problems / difficulties.

Music / worship ministry – tech problems – guitar strings break – someone scheduled to play / sing gets sick.

Children’s Ministry – those serving call in sick – kids arrive but they’re having a tough day – there are ants in a classroom because of crumbs left from another class.

All sorts of things can be a distraction / disruption.

Planting a Church – Funding challenges – it may take longer than expected to find the right pastor to lead the plant – people uncertain about their role in the plant – difficulty finding a place for the new church to meet – technology problems with equipment – the labor involved with setting up church each week – finding key leaders for the core team – budget issues – cost of starting up – cost of advertising / promotion in the community, etc.

These are normal – and they don't mean we are not in God's will – or that God isn't blessing our efforts.

These are normal problems in life – and may also be the result of the enemy working against us!

Ministry is a team effort. vs. 4-6

We've seen this a number of times in our study of Acts. Even the great Apostle Paul needed help.

- He couldn't minister on his own.
- He needed others to help in all sorts of ways.
- He had a unique role for sure.

God had uniquely gifted him, but he still needed others to serve and use their spiritual gifts to plant churches throughout the eastern Mediterranean.

Here – in **vs. 4** – we see a partial list of some who helped Paul – beyond the names of Timothy, Silas, Barnabas, and Luke – that we’re so familiar with.

Read vs. 4

The 7 men listed are from numerous Gentile churches. They are traveling to Jerusalem with Paul – to deliver the money collected – from the Gentile Christians – to aid the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

To our modern, 21st century ears, this statement doesn’t jump out at us. But if you lived in the 1st century – it would stop you in your tracks!!! Gentiles helping Jews??? Jews accepting help from Gentiles????

This was a wonderful picture of the unity between the two ethnic groups.

The ethnic differences were not preventing them from working together and helping each other.

It’s a beautiful picture of love – in practice.

Read vs. 5-6

The others sail from Corinth – across the Aegean Sea - over to Troas.

Due to the threat (vs. 3), Paul walks up to Philippi – from the area around Corinth.

He celebrates Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread in Philippi.

Luke was in Philippi – and joins Paul there – notice the “us” in **vs. 5**.

After the Feast, Paul, Luke, and those with him, sail to Troas.

Christian...do you realize God has gifted you with a spiritual gift?

He did that so you could serve and through your service you will help strengthen and build up the local church.

Other than taking a short sabbatical from serving – every person who is a Christian should be serving in some capacity in the church.

Are you serving?

What is your spiritual gift?

Throughout the year, we will highlight the ministries of the church – we will ‘spotlight’ various ministries.

A few weeks ago, we ‘spotlighted’ AWANA – our mid-week ministry to kids.

We need people to help in our:

Welcome Ministry / Next Gen Kids / Security Team / Tech team – Audio, Video, Lights, Media / Choir / Praise Team / Guitar players / Drummers / Bass guitar players / Singers (Men???) / Small Group Leaders and Host homes for small groups / Meals ministry / Kitchen ministry / Outreach ministry

Those are just a few of the more obvious ministries – and we’re looking to build those teams.

Especially as we move closer to planting a church.

We need these teams filled out to full capacity – so we can maintain ministry through the planting process.

There are some groups and events we have to say ‘no’ to – because we don’t have the ‘margin’ in our ministry teams to say ‘yes’.

It would be too much of a burden on our current paid and volunteer staff – and we have to protect our people. But the only way to expand our reach – our impact – is for more people to say ‘yes’ to serving!

Ministry requires all of us.

This is not ‘MY’ ministry – it is our ministry.

God has brought you to this church – not just to receive – but to give – to offer yourself in service – to the Body of Christ - for the cause of the Gospel!

God’s power brings us comfort. *vs. 7-12*

The power of God certainly brings us comfort – knowing He is sovereign – wise – kind – omnipotent (all-powerful) is a huge comfort to each of us.

The power of God – in the ministry of the Apostles – was a sign of confirmation of their message about Jesus.

The miracles performed by the Apostles were a sign that God was with them – a sign that confirmed that their message was from God – not from them.

Paul had sailed to Troas – and he joins the rest of the church planting team who had arrived before him.

Read vs. 7-9

vs. 7 – “On the first day of the week...” – this is the first mention of Sunday being the day for worship.

They “...were gathered together to break bread...” – this would be a meal (pot-luck?), communion, and teaching.

Since Paul is in town, he is the one who will teach.

He is departing the next day – on the long journey back to Syria.

vs. 7b - “Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.”

No more comments about me preaching 5-10 minutes too long!!!

Paul teaches until midnight!!!

vs. 8 – The Holy Spirit inspires Luke to include this detail. “There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered.”

The lamps – in this crowded room – obviously gave light – but they also gave carbon dioxide – smoke from the oil – and the room would have been hot and stuffy.

vs. 9 – “And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead.”

Application: Never fall asleep during my sermons – or God may take you out!

This “young man named Eutychus” – he finds a seat on a windowsill – probably trying to get some fresh air. Notice the 2 references in the verse to him falling asleep.

“...sank into a deep sleep”

“...being overcome by sleep”

In the Greek – the 1st mention indicates his is struggling – fighting – trying to stay awake.

His had probably dropping – and suddenly waking himself up – as he tries to stay awake.

The 2nd mention indicates he has lost the battle – he is gone – sound asleep.

I’m sure none of you can relate in the least bit with this – so we’ll move on.

He falls out of the window – they are 3 stories up – 30 feet – and he is killed by the fall – or the sudden stop.

Luke – a doctor – tells us he “...was taken up dead.”

Some who deny the miracles of the Bible – will say, *‘He wasn’t really dead – just unconscious.’*

But Luke was a medical doctor – and the guy just fell 30 feet – and Luke is very clear – he is dead.

Read vs. 10

The power of God – through Paul – brings this “young man” back to life.

This is a resurrection miracle.

Don’t think that it’s any less of a miracle than if he had been dead longer.

This is a dead body – brought back to life – by the power of God.

Read vs. 11-12

They all go back up to the room – they all have a quick bite to eat – and Paul keeps on preaching!

All the way until sunrise!!!

I bet they listened more intently to Paul after he resurrected the boy back to life!!!

These people in Troas didn’t really know Paul through personal experience. They must have heard about him – but he never spent extended time in Troas.

But now they were eyewitnesses to the power of God – displayed through Paul – in a resurrection miracle – and I’m pretty sure they were more intent to hear what this guy was saying – after witnessing the power of God through him!!!

Paul spends as much time as he can with them – before his ship is ready to sail from the port in Troas.

vs. 12 – “And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted.”

By the way, the meaning of the name “Eutychus” is

‘Lucky one’. (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Acts, by Darrell L. Bock, p 620)

Apply it...

1. Problems in ministry are normal.

Don't think problems indicate a lack of God's blessing.

Problems may be due to poor decisions / inexperience.

But God's will may include the problems you encounter.

Don't be discouraged, keep serving and rely on God's wisdom to solve / work through the problems.

2. Be encouraged in your serving – begin serving now!!

If you're already serving on a regular basis – Thank You!!! You are making a difference.

If you're not serving, it's time to start...Here's how.

Analog: Use the connection card in the bulletin – tear it off – fill out your contact info – write down, *“I want to serve in _____”*.

Digital: You can do the same thing in the church app.

Not sure where to serve / what you want to do?
Just let us know that – and we'll help you.

Never complain about long sermons.

3. Take comfort in God's power.

We may not experience miracles like they did in the early Church through the ministry of the Apostles, but we can experience the power of God today through:

- The power of God's Word...
- The power of His Spirit in you...
- The power of the gathered church...
- The power of your testimony!!!

Close in prayer