

AN INTERRUPTED SERMON

Acts 20:1-12

"After the uproar"--what? Will Paul take a month's holiday to recover from his nerve shock? Not at all. He does not know the secret of masterly inactivity.

1. He goes to Macedonia. 20:1.

Paul had sent Timothy and Erastus over into Macedonia, in preparation for his own speedy coming, when they were to go on to Achaia: and now he arranges with Titus to bring him prompt word from Corinth, and meet him at Troas, to which city he himself is about to depart on his way to Europe.

Having made these arrangements, and realizing that his work was now done in the capital of Asia, after the uproar in the theater had subsided Paul once more called together the disciples and comforted them with much exhortation; after which he set out on his projected journey to Macedonia. He probably went by some sailing vessel up the coast, landing at Troas, where he expected tidings of the state of things in Corinth, by the coming of Titus, as had been prearranged. He was disappointed in the failure of Titus to carry out the arrangement he had made. While waiting for his messenger, he found an open door in Troas and began at once the evangelization of the city. But he did not remain long in Troas, but crossed over to Philippi.

2. His last ministry in Macedonia. 20:2.

Paul's mind was set at rest by the news which Titus and Timothy brought; but he did not think it wise or best to go down to Corinth until some time had elapsed. His delay would afford the church an opportunity to correct the abuses and introduce the reforms called for in his letter from Ephesus. Meanwhile he seems to have visited the Macedonian churches founded six or seven years before. Then, thinking the time propitious, from some point in Macedonia he wrote a second letter to the church of Corinth.

3. His final work in Corinth. 20:3.

Of Paul's work in Corinth Luke tells us that he spent three months there. Some of this time was given to "setting things in order." He did not spare the troublers of the church, the defamers of his own good name, and the despisers of his apostolic authority. During the three months that he was in Corinth, Paul wrote Galatians and Romans.

4. The missionary deputation. 20:4-6.

It had been Paul's purpose to return to Asia by the shortest route practicable, i. e., directly across the Aegean Sea. But a plot against his life by the unbelieving Jews led to a sudden change in his plans; and accompanied by a number of his coadjutors he went back to Asia via Macedonia. The missionary deputation probably remained together till they reached Philippi. There they could leave their beloved leader in the company and protection of his friends. Paul hoped to reach Jerusalem in time for Pentecost. Buffeted by contrary winds, or detained by some other adverse circumstances, Paul and Luke were five days in getting across to Troas. The seven disciples met them at the dock on the following Sunday morning.

5. The week at Troas. 20:7-12.

The ten remained at Troas for a week. It was a blessed time of fellowship and evangelism. In the coming days of trial, separation and suffering, how often must they have looked back to those days of sweet communion, and taken courage from that memory for all that was still to come.

Luke gives us one little picture of the closing day and night of that memorable week. It was the evening of the Lord's Day. The meetings were held in the third-story room, and the windows were open, evidently for comfort and ventilation on

that mild spring night. They were going to celebrate the Lord's Supper, but Paul had many things to say before they did so. The service was for the double purpose of preaching and breaking of bread. The interest in the service was so unusual that it was not possible to dismiss it. The people were starving for spiritual food. The words of the preacher were as oracles from God.

The sermon attracted many people. Paul was the chief exponent of the Christian movement in his day. His coming was an occasion of unusual interest. The house, where the service was held, was packed to the doors and people were sitting in the windows. Paul's visit was one long to be remembered. His sermon was unusually long. Sermons are not measured by their length. It is not how long one preaches, but how much truth one crowds into the briefest space possible.

As was the case with all his sermons, Paul made Christ the center of his sermon. Whether people were old or young, sick or well, sorrowful or joyful, Paul held up Christ as their greatest need. Christ was the Healer and Saviour of their bodies as well as of their souls. He was the Giver of temporal as well as of eternal life. No case is too difficult for Him.

Let us notice some things about this young man who went to sleep, fell out the window and interrupted Paul's sermon.

1. His tardiness led to a poor seat.
He was a late-comer, evidently postponing his going to church as long as possible. Doubtless, to his way of thinking all preachers were alike--all long-winded and dull. When he arrived, there was no seat available except a window sill. It was in the late spring when the weather was warm.
2. His poor seat led to discomfort.
There is nothing like an uncomfortable seat to annoy when a service extends for hours.
3. His discomfort led to inattention.
Those in Paul's audience hung breathlessly on his words. He spoke with unction and power. He dealt with the great themes of our holy faith. He spoke with authority and telling effect. All, except one, were impressed with his sincerity and Spirit-directed presentation.
4. His inattention led to drowsiness.
While everybody else was sitting erect and drinking in Paul's sermon Eutychus was beginning to doze.
5. His drowsiness led to slumber.
"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." Acts 12:9. He couldn't take it any longer.
6. His slumber led to disaster.
Losing his balance while sleeping, he fell out of the window. He fell out because he was not in far enough. Like Eutychus, many church members arrive after the opening exercises, occupy a seat in the rear, and are always the first to leave the building.
7. His disaster led to deliverance.
Of course, the service was interrupted. Paul went down to the place where the young man had been killed. Through the intervention of God he was restored to

life again. This miracle was performed for the sake of others, not simply for that of the youth. Through a fall, he came to see his folly.

The service was resumed, and Paul continued to speak to the company till the break of day. Then the party caught their boat and proceeded on their journey.