

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Acts: The Continuing Earthly Ministry Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Part VI: The Ministry Of The Universal Church In Its Spread To The Ends Of The Earth, Acts 8:26-28:31

E. Christ's Use Of The Apostle Paul To Spearhead Worldwide Outreach, Acts 14:4-28:31

23. Christ's Use Of Paul To Guard His Testimony Before Fellow Believers

(Acts 20:6-12)

I. Introduction

- A. It is vital that other believers **trust** God's work in a believer God wants to use to minister to them. If this trust fails, the Lord's work will suffer harm as the people disbelieve God's servant and thus his ministry!
- B. Christ guarded the testimony of Paul's ministry before believers to whom he ministered when a crisis threatening that trust arose, and He used Paul's following Old Testament precedents to do so (as follows):

II. Christ's Use Of Paul To Guard His Testimony Before Fellow Believers, Acts 20:6-12.

- A. Paul's ministry to believers at Troas in Acts 20:6-7 was interrupted by a startling tragedy to a young man:
 1. Paul was preaching in a room three stories high where there was probably a lack of oxygen in a room lit by many lanterns, and filled with many believers who had come to hear him give the final address they knew they would ever hear from him, Acts 20:7a,b, 8 with Acts 20:22-23, 25.
 2. Paul spoke long, preaching until midnight, making some of his hearers drowsy, Acts 20:7c.
 3. Consequently, a young man (*neos*), Eutychus, who had crawled up to sit in a window for air became so sleepy, he drifted off to sleep and fell out of the window to his death, Acts 20:9!
- B. This event was more than tragic for the young man, for it challenged Paul's trustworthiness before the relatives and close friends of Eutychus (as follows):
 1. The fact that Eutychus had been allowed to crawl up into a window to sit there three stories up indicates he was an older child, possibly eleven or twelve years of age shortly before his bar mitzvah!
 2. As such, his crawling into the window, though unwise, had been caused by the evident lack of oxygen in the room, the numerous people gathered and Paul's long sermon.
 3. With all these circumstances, Paul stood to be partly blamed by those present the boy's death, for had he not been there, the packed room, the many lights, the low oxygen and the long time involved would not have led an immature Eutychus to climb into the precarious window from which he fell and died!
- C. Eutychus' death, as presumably harmful to Paul's testimony to fellow believers at Troas, was similar to the effects of the deaths of two other youths on the testimonies of two of God's servants in the Old Testament:
 1. In 1 Kings 17:17-18 when the son of the widow of Zarephath with whom the prophet Elijah was staying happened to die, she questioned if Elijah had come to punish her for her sins through the death of her son! There was a strain in the woman's trust and confidence in Elijah and God at this point!
 2. In 2 Kings 4:20, 28 NIV when the son of the Shunammite woman in whose house the prophet Elishah was staying also later died, the boy's mother complained to the prophet, "Did I ask you for a son, my lord? Didn't I tell you, 'Don't raise my hopes?'" She reflected on the past where she had given birth to a son by Elishah's promise at her unbelief that she would not have a son, and now that he had been born and died, she was upset that Elishah had raised her hopes only to dash them! (2 Kings 4:11-17)
- D. In both of these cases, God's prophets had prostrated their bodies on the bodies of the respective deceased children involved to raise them to life by God's power, cf. 1 Kings 17:19-22 and 2 Kings 4:32-35.
- E. Consequently, in both of these cases, the critiquing, complaining mothers had had their faith renewed in God and in the ministries of the respective prophet involved, cf. 1 Kings 17:23-24 and 2 Kings 4:36-37.
- F. Accordingly, Paul followed this Old Testament precedent, prostrating his body over the body of the deceased youth, Eutychus, and God raised him to life to the great comfort and edification of all, including to the defense of Paul's ministry before the fellow believers who were present, Acts 20:10-12!

Lesson: *When the tragic death of a youth threatened to hurt Paul's testimony before fellow believers, and thus to hurt God's use of him to disciple these believers, as Paul responded by heeding Scriptural precedents, God preserved his testimony so he could complete the ministry God had for him.*

Application: *If our testimony with fellow believers is threatened through no intentional cause of our own, may we simply follow Biblical precedents to respond to them, and let God guard our testimony!*