**Video Testimony of Whitt Oates**

**THE WALKING DEAD…Acts 20:7-12**

*How are we to deal with tragedy in our lives?*

**7**On the first day of the week, we gathered with the local believers to share in the Lord’s Supper.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2020%3A7-12" \l "fen-NLT-27597a" \o "See footnote a)] Paul was preaching to them, and since he was leaving the next day, he kept talking until midnight. **8**The upstairs room where we met was lighted with many flickering lamps. **9**As Paul spoke on and on, a young man named Eutychus, sitting on the windowsill, became very drowsy. Finally, he fell sound asleep and dropped three stories to his death below. **10**Paul went down, bent over him, and took him into his arms. “Don’t worry,” he said, “he’s alive!”**11**Then they all went back upstairs, shared in the Lord’s Supper,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2020%3A7-12" \l "fen-NLT-27601b" \o "See footnote b)] and ate together. Paul continued talking to them until dawn, and then he left.**12**Meanwhile, the young man was taken home alive and well, and everyone was greatly relieved.

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Eutychus

**It was a tragedy, and worse than that it was a tragedy that could have been prevented. But really isn’t that the way of most tragedies?**

Other miracles could have been used this morning is the **10 lepers** who were healed and given their lives back. Lepers were the walking dead, when they were diagnosed they were declared legally dead, their spouse was allowed to remarry and their estate was divided among their heirs.

Jesus miraculously intervened and literally gave them their lives back.

**Lazarus** was another walking dead man he had been dead for four days when Jesus called him out of his tomb and gave him his life back.

For many he would always be one of the walking dead,

How about **Ezekiel’s Valley of the Dead Bones**??? Amazing!!!

All are stories from the Bible where people have been given their lives back.

**It’s easy to minimize these stories, but they aren’t normal.**

**Dead men aren’t called out of their tombs; people with incurable diseases aren’t suddenly and miraculously healed, valleys full of dry bones don’t suddenly begin to move.**

*The sermon title comes from a Television show that set in a world populated by Zombies or Walkers as they are called in the show.*

*The hero of the show is Deputy Sheriff Rick Grimes who joins with a small band of survivors who are trying to stay alive while at the same time solve the mystery of what has happened to the world as they knew it and whether or not they will be able to reverse the Zombie Apocalypse.*

**THE STORY**

**It was a tragedy, and worse than that it was a tragedy that could have been prevented. But really isn’t that the way of most tragedies?**

Paul is on his last missionary journey and he ends up making a brief stopover in Troas. After being there a week Paul is ready to move on to Assos. Before he leaves we are told **Acts 20:7 On the first day of the week, we gathered with the local believers to share in the Lord’s Supper.**

Paul was preaching to them, and since he was leaving the next day, he kept talking until midnight.

It is interesting to note that the church has gathered to celebrate communion.

Because he was leaving the next day Paul wanted to spend as much time as possible bringing the church up to speed and teaching them all they would need to know as believers.

So that he talked until midnight.

Paul was downloading as much information as possible for the believers.

And as we continue on in the story we read **Acts 20:8-9 The upstairs room where we met was lighted with many flickering lamps. As Paul spoke on and on, a young man named Eutychus, sitting on the windowsill, became very drowsy. Finally, he fell sound asleep and dropped three stories to his death below.**

So it’s easy to visualize what’s happening.

It’s late, people have worked all day and now that have come weary but eager to listen to Paul. They meet in a room crowded with people, probably hot and stuffy to start with, lit with oil lamps and not just a few, the author here, who was an eye witness, makes sure we understand that there were many flickering lamps.

This isn’t just a detail he throws in, we are told that the author, Luke, was a doctor and I’m sure he seeking to isolate or at least identify some of the causes for what would happen.

And the hero of the story begins to nod off, but instead of slumping asleep in his chair he tips back through an open window and falls to his death.

I understand that there are those who would suggest that Eutychus wasn’t dead that he was just knocked senseless. But remember that this was a doctor who witnessed what had happened.

Luke seems pretty sure of himself…the boy was dead!

**Eutychus fell asleep and woke up dead.**

**It was a tragedy, and worse than that it was a tragedy that could have been prevented. But really isn’t that the way of most tragedies?**

Tragedies are something we all have in common, the degrees of our tragedies may differ but it’s very doubtful that we will escape this life without experiencing a loss.

It’s tough to prepare for them, nobody in Eutychus’ family would have been expecting him to go to church and die.

**Ecclesiastes 9:12 People can never predict when hard times might come. Like fish in a net or birds in a trap, people are caught by sudden tragedy.**

So… How Do We React to Tragedy?

My title at first was “The Church, boring people to death for 2000 years.”

**Probably the most common response to tragedy for most is that We Question We ask, why did this happen? Or more often why did this happen to me?**

That’s tough to answer. Often there is no answer or the answer is one we don’t want to hear and that is: Why not you? Is there someone who is more deserving of the tragedy?

It would be more comforting for tragedy to only happen to bad people, but who gets to determine who is bad enough to be subjected to the loss of a child or the loss of a spouse.

Who gets to pick the person who should get cancer or should lose their job because of a bad economy?

If not Eutychus was there someone else in the room who was more deserving of falling to their death? Would another family have been more deserving to lose their son?

*The answer to “Why?” Often is no answer. There is no reason. It wasn’t because you were bad, it wasn’t because you needed to be taught a lesson, it wasn’t because God knew you were strong enough to stand it.* **It happened because you were a person.**

We could ask you to look around and see how others have suffered more than you, but really would that do any good? Would that make you feel any better?

And once we are done questioning the next thing we tend to do is:

**We Blame: If we can’t figure out why it happened to us than we need to find someone to point the finger at.**

In the story that we have we find lots of opportunity to pin the blame on, and often when we are faced with tragedy we seek the usual suspects.

Perhaps it was **Satan’s Fault** as Christ Followers this seems to be our first stop when we play the blame game. We feel that we are under attack by the forces of evil. And I would never want to minimize the power of Satan. We are warned in 1 Peter 5:8 Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

In this case you could see how Satan would benefit from what happened. The early church is starting to gain traction in Asia, people are coming to know Jesus, leadership is being developed, and the message is poised to spread into Europe. A little distraction might be what is needed. So it would be easy to picture Satan giving Eutychus a little shove backward.

Sometimes when troubles come to us personally or in our church we want to blame Satan for what’s happening. “After all” we say “Look at Job.” True enough, the central theme of the book of Job seems to be what Satan did to Job. Actually the central theme of the book of Job is how Job stands up to those attacks. And remember what qualified Job for Satan’s wrath, Job 1:1 There once was a man named Job . . . He was blameless—a man of complete integrity. He feared God and stayed away from evil. Probably most of us are safe. When we focus on Satan being the author of our problems often it causes us to be looking in the wrong direction.

***The Devil is our enemy, but he is a defeated enemy***. That fact is reiterated time and time again in the New Testament. **1 John 4:4 But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.** That is your promise for today: You have already won the victory.

Well if it isn’t Satan who caused the tragedy then Perhaps it was **God’s Fault** Ultimately God could have prevented Eutychus’ fall and subsequent death. He could have nudged him to wake him up, he could have provided an angel to catch him on the way down, or he could have just done a God thing and the kid could have fallen and not been hurt.

And it’s easy to blame God for all the things he doesn’t do. Why didn’t he prevent the accident? Why didn’t he cure the cancer? Why didn’t he keep my spouse from cheating? Why didn’t he keep our child from rebelling? And sometime those questions are valid, but in many instances they move into the realm of removing our free will.

Some go further instead of blaming God for not interceding that have been those who would say that maybe God had a direct hand in what happened. That maybe he gave Eutychus the nudge that sent him hurtling to his death.

**Matthew Henry writes “Others think that God designed it for a warning to all people to take heed of sleeping when they are hearing the word preached; and certainly we are to make this use of it. . . Let us watch and pray, that we enter not into this temptation, and by it into worse. Let the punishment of Eutychus strike an awe upon us, and show us how jealous God is in the matters of his worship; Be not deceived, God is not mocked.”**

Seriously? A kid falls asleep in a service and God pushes him out a window? Not the God I serve. Not the God who told Jeremiah in **Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”**

Or maybe we are just stretching it to the supernatural. It would be easy to look around for someone with skin on them to cast the blame on. So Perhaps it was **Paul’s Fault**

If Paul hadn’t preached so long, if Paul had of realized how tired Eutychus really was, and why didn’t Paul warn Eutychus that he shouldn’t be sitting in an open window. Bad Paul.

After all, listen to what Paul himself writes in **2 Corinthians 10:10 For some say, “Paul’s letters are demanding and forceful, but in person he is weak, and his speeches are worthless!” So maybe if Paul had of been a better preacher. . .**

I’ve been preaching for thirty plus years I’ve copped the blame for all kinds of things. Kid’s rebel, must be the preacher’s fault. You aren’t getting enough out of church, you aren’t being fed spiritually, must be the preachers fault. Your spouse just doesn’t’ get it, must be the preachers fault.

And if it’s not the preacher it must be someone else. We don’t want to blame ourselves or the ones we love so we look around to see where the blame should go. Your kid’s not doing well in school, blame the teacher, it couldn’t possibly be that your child isn’t interested in learning and has behavioral issues. You can’t seem to catch a break at work and then you lose your job, must be because your boss is a jerk and the other employees are out to get you.

**Every once in a while there will be story on the news of a police chase that ended tragically, for whatever reason the police attempt to pull over a car and the car decides they can outrun the police they miss a turn, hit a tree or whatever and then we hear the hue and cry in the media blaming the police. Really? When I’m driving and the lights and siren come on behind me I pull over.**

Maybe Paul could have been a little more engaging but I’m sure it wasn’t his fault.

Or Perhaps it was **Eutychus’ Fault** What was he doing going to sleep while Paul was preaching? And then what was he thinking sitting in an open window three stories up? Why didn’t he think? The truth is in **Billy Sunday’s words “Sinners can repent, but stupid is forever.”**

It wasn’t the wisest move to sit in an open window, but hey the room was hot and he was trying to stay awake. You at least have to give him credit for that.

Sometimes when tragedy hits, people blame the person involved. We play the “If only” game or “What were they thinking?” Reality, they probably weren’t. They didn’t do it hurt you, or ruin your life, they were probably as surprised as anyone when the accident happened, or they got arrested, or fired or discovered they had lung cancer.

The truth of the matter if we are looking to cast blame

*All of the Above and None of the Above If Satan didn’t cause it he probably enjoyed it, God could have prevented it, fallen in a wagon full of hay, could have nudged the kid and woke him up before he fell.*

*Eutychus what were you thinking? It’s an open window! And Paul wouldn’t be the first preacher to have put someone to sleep. And while bad preaching seldom kills anyone physically I would hate to think of those my preaching has caused to reject the gospel.*

*The reality is, the hour was late, people were tired, regardless of how good Paul was when he started to preach it’s hard to maintain people’s attention forever. The room was probably too warm and because of all the lamps that were lit it was probably stuffy and the CO2 was probably a factor.*

**So if it’s not Questioning or Blaming what should our response be to tragedy?**

**As Christ followers We Need to Learn to Trust.**

This can be tough, to be able to say, I may not understand it, I may not like it, I might not even agree but I will believe that you can be trusted.

Why trust God? Listen to what we are told in **1 John 4:16 We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.**

We need to trust God. Why? Because we need to trust his love. How much does he love us? **John 3:16 “For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.**

**Let’s go back and pick up the story of Eutychus**, remember he’s fallen asleep and fallen three stories to his death, **Acts 20:10-12 Paul went down, bent over him, and took him into his arms. “Don’t worry,” he said, “he’s alive!”**

Then they all went back upstairs, shared in the Lord’s Supper, and ate together. Paul continued talking to them until dawn, and then he left. Meanwhile, the young man was taken home unhurt, and everyone was greatly relieved.

And I know, it doesn’t seem fair that Eutychus was raised from the dead but your loved one wasn’t. but ultimately Eutychus died again, and that time he stayed dead, just like the rest of us. And if his parents or other loved ones were there when he fell then they would have to experience the loss of Eutychus not once but twice.

**Maybe we need to understand and embrace the words of Samuel Johnson who wrote:**

**“When any calamity has been suffered, the first thing to be remembered is how much has been escaped.”**

**Do you trust God today?**