

Bored to Death

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I'm often surprised by the stories we find in the Bible, although it's not always for the reasons you might think. We expect to read about dramatic conversions and life-changing miracles, but let's be honest—we don't expect those stories to be embarrassing or even, in some strange way, funny.

But it appears that God likes to remind us that, even after a couple of thousand years, people are still people... and even the legendary figures of the Bible aren't exempt from the same problems we have today. It's just that they handled them differently!

Even someone like the apostle Paul had "days like this." This particular story comes from Acts 20:7-12.

Troas was an old city, over 300 years old in Paul's time,
a major port on the northwest edge of Turkey,
just across the Aegean Sea from Greece.
It was the kind of city that attracted the apostle's attention because,
with so many crowds of people passing through
on their way to the rest of the Roman Empire,
anyone who became a Christian in Troas
would help spread the Good News when they went back home.
Paul and his group of missionaries had stopped in Troas once before;
now they were back
to check in on the church they had started there.

Five days after they finished celebrating the Passover
and Jesus's resurrection,
Paul and his companions arrived in Troas
for a week visiting and encouraging the believers there.
The Christians there were excited to see him
but the week passed so fast!
Before they knew it, it was Sunday
and Paul was leaving the next day.

They gathered in an upper room
and then Paul started preaching.
He had so much he wanted to tell them
that he just went on and on...
he talked until midnight
and the room was barely lit with a lot of flickering oil lamps.
The believers there hung on his every word...

Or at least they tried to.

There was one young man named Eutychus.
He wanted to hear everything that Paul said, he really did.
But it got darker and darker
and Paul preached on and on
and Eutychus had trouble keeping his eyes open.
He took a seat on the windowsill,
where the breezes from the ocean
would help him stay awake... but they didn't.
The day had been so long
and it was so exciting to see a legend like Paul
but Eutychus was getting so tired
and Paul kept droning on and on...

Until finally Eutychus fell asleep
and fell out of the window,
three stories to the street below.

To say his death ruined an otherwise wonderful day
would be an understatement.

But Paul simply got up and went downstairs
to where the young man lay in the street.
He took Eutychus in his arms and told the believers,
"Don't worry. He's still alive!"
And the young man started breathing again!
So the folks in the church rejoiced.
They all went back upstairs and took communion,
which was a full meal for them.
Then Paul preached some more,
all the way until dawn, and then he left.
Then the rest of the church took Eutychus home,
unhurt and very much alive,
and everyone was very relieved about that.

Nowadays we often laugh about people falling asleep during a sermon...
but it's not something we think about when we think of Paul.
After all, the Bible tells us that Paul's street preaching often caused riots.
How do you fall asleep during a sermon like *that*?

But maybe we're confusing *the reactions* to what Paul said with *how* he said it.
When Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians,
he was well aware that
not everyone was impressed with his preaching.
He quotes some of the Corinthians who said:

***"His letters are weighty and strong,
but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."***

Those people probably just didn't like Paul,
but the Bible never presents Paul as an impressive person.
Rather, he is just a man who is willing to be used by God.

Paul teaches us that you don't have to be the best
or the strongest
or the most impressive at what you do
in order for God to use you.
Rather, this is the man who told the Philippian believers,

"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me"

and who told the Corinthians that God said,

"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness."

If God could use a donkey to set Balaam straight,
he can certainly use you and your abilities,
no matter how limited you think they are.
So feel free to trust God to do great things through you.

But you might want to keep the windows closed...
just to be on the safe side, you know?