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# Article VIII. The Lord's Day

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The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

*Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.*

(Sermon Title)

## **Acts 20:7-12**

Let us open our Bibles to the book of Acts, chapter number 20. My assignment today is to preach about the topic: the Lord's Day. To be honest with you about ten o'clock last night I thought that I might go by Dr. Jumper's house or Dr. Rathel's house. I thought about the President's house, but I would lose my job and just share with them my displeasure over this topic assignment. It was not the assigning of the topics, but I drew the short straw. They have given me a good assignment; I love to talk about the Lord's Day. However, did you know the Bible says very little about the Lord's Day? I am an expository preacher and I want to do an expository message. I went through all of the supporting texts and thinking all the while some of these texts were taken out of context to talk about the Lord's Day. So, I chose one that has within it a hint of humor; I like that. Also it has a very deep and abiding message. I want to turn your attention to Acts 20:7, but first, I want to read the article from the Baptist Faith and Message of the Lord's Day.

Would you pray with me before the message? Father we are grateful for the privilege to celebrate you. Lord we are so thankful for the institution of the church and the privilege we have to corporately gather and to worship, to be exhorted through the word, to be built up in our faith, to be given practical instruction, and to be encouraged to live what we are taught. What a privilege it is to be a part of your body? Father, I pray that today we would see your glory and your honor. Lord, I pray that we would see you, and pray that we would see the day that the church gets to celebrate you as just that, a day when we will rejoice in the miraculous . . . a day where we would rejoice in spending time with other believers . . . where we would rejoice in the privilege to worship our Savior. Lord, thank you for the cross, thank you for the resurrection, thank

you that you are now our ascended, and Lord, thank you for your intercession right now. Lord, help us today? I pray this in Jesus name. Amen!

Well, you might be wondering why I chose this story. Whenever you deal with a historical narrative text you need to ask why is this story placed here in its canonical position. Why did Luke want to record this story at this time? You need to ask all these questions; so, I have a few statements. You can help me make a decision about why this story is here. OK? Let us think about this why is this story here. Is it to tell of the dangers associated with long sermons? Well, I don't know, but I can tell you there is a result here we can look at. Is the text here telling us where to sit or where not sit in church? Well, I think we could receive some practical instruction, like do not sit in the window on the third story. Or is it to give us instructions on how to deal with the death of a church member during church? I think be neat to try this methodology, but probably not. Some say there is spiritual meaning here; they would spiritualize the text. They would say, "Well Paul, in this text is a type of God who is longsuffering pleading with his people to come alive and do right. Eutychus, that is a hard name, is the church that has fallen asleep or is dead." Last night I decided I would change Eutychus' name to make it easier on me. I am going to change his name to Dustin. So, is it Paul represents God and his longsuffering and Dustin is the church, sleepy and almost dead? Well that would preach would it not? Well, I don't think the answer is any of those; however, we could probably make a case for some of these views. Then, what is this story about? I believe this story is placed here for the purpose of reminding us that church meets regularly on the Lord's Day to do several clear things. Now, this is not how you ought to always study the Bible, but there are elements here I want us to look at and focus on.

Notice with me first of all, this text reminds us that on the Lord's Day we corporately interact with each other and God through worship. Notice in the beginning of verse number seven, he says, "...on the first day of the week..." which literally this means "between the Sabbaths." On the first day of the week we assemble to break bread; I like that part. I do not know about you, but I like the idea of eating. The connotation here has several implications. Here is the background; Paul is in Troas and is trying to make his way to Jerusalem and ultimately to Rome. For whatever reason, Paul is in Troas for awhile. He may be taking on supplies or waiting for the winds to be like they ought to be for the ship to move on. Whatever the case, Paul is lingering here for about a week or so, and the Lord's Day happened to be the day before the departure. The church met regularly for worship, for edification, for exhortation, and most importantly, on the Lord's Day they would get together and have a meal, the Lord's Supper. They would have times of exhortation and edification from the Word. They would mull over the things that God was saying to them. It was a whole different deal than what you and I do in our normal worship routine. I believe this text is here to

remind us this great truth: we are corporately to interact with God through worship. Sometimes, we think that worship is all about us, and we have our worship wars about preferences. Every person in the room today has a preference when it comes to worship style and even translation of text. If you are reading the King James today they translate in verse seven the word as teaching instead of talking or dialoging. Here with use all kinds of different translations we have all certain preferences. When we come together in the corporate interaction of God through worship, it is all about him and for his Glory. We read that on the first day of the week they assembled to break bread. Paul spoke to them and said was about to depart the next day, so he extended his message until midnight. Now you may have pastored or maybe pastoring or have spoken at the church like I used to speak at. There was one particular church that had an interesting layout. The way the sanctuary was laid out Dr. Hammock, was about the third pew from the back there was a little floor outlet with a cover on it, and ole brother Roy Smith, he is dead and gone on to be with the Lord now, he kept his foot on that switch like a gas pedal. About my second Sunday there, he said, "hey preacher, this is where I sit, right here every Sunday." I said, "Yeah Brother Roy, I noticed that." He said, "You see that down there?" I said, "Yes sir." He said, "Do you know what that is?" I reply, "Well, it is an electrical outlet with a cover over it." He said, "No, it is the lever that works the trap door behind the pulpit. At twelve o'clock I go slam, and you fall into the abyss." He was a wise man. He was also the guy that told me, one day, Dr. Jumper, every church should have only one pew in the back of the church, and when it filled up immediately would come down some rails and would come right to the front. Then, another one would pop-up in the back. That way you could fill up a church from the front to the back. Very wise he was, way beyond his years. Now listen to me dear folks, preaching and its length is an important topic. However, we see here Paul's desire to preach so long because he is about to depart the next day, so he extended his message. Now, we don't know the topic he was preaching on. This man is moving to another place and who knows in his heart and his mind that he will probably never get this opportunity again. It is a once in a lifetime thing, and he wants to impart to them all that God has shared with him. That is was a preacher does; he comes and delivers his heart to the people through the text. That is what is happening here in corporate interaction with God through worship.

Notice all my major divisions here today have to do with corporate interaction. You see the Lord's Day is an amazing, wonderful, glorious thing that you and I participate in. It was made the Lord's Day because of the glorious resurrection of Jesus. Early in the New Testament period people stopped worshipping on the Sabbath and started, that is believers started worshipping on Sunday. It was called the Lord's Day. Revelation 1:10 is the only place where the Bible records that. John says that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and heard those things and wrote them down. So, for you and I to come together on the Lord's Day is ultimately part of the Christian life. They met

to break bread, and Paul spoke to them. The word *spoke* here, translated in the King James Version as *preached*, can be found as *dialogue* in many other translations. He spoke to them. Therefore, what I am doing today should be a dialogue. You may say, "We do not talk back in church." However, normally we do, and if somebody does talk back we respond, "Whoa, we don't do that here, right? We don't talk back much, now you're talking back with nonverbal communication. For example, some of you are already asleep. You are talking back to me. It should be a dialogue, right? A Sermon simply cannot be a monologue! I don't just get up, do my thing, and hope you understood what I said. It is dialogical, or at least I hope so. What you and I must see in this text is Paul's desire to communicate with them. Communicating is part of the corporate interaction with God through worship. God is speaking to us through God's appointed man, God using his word to pierce our cold hard hearts. Paul spoke with them, and he extended his message until midnight. Whoa! I believe that this story is in place here to remind us that the church meets regularly on the Lord's Day to corporately interact with God through worship. We don't know if they did any singing. We don't know if they passed the plate and took up an offering. We don't know a lot of details. Not all of the events are recorded here, it's just a summation. But one of the things that we do know is that when you and I meet together and worship, God speaks. You might be thinking to yourself, "Oh no; not in my church he does not. My preacher is so dry." Hello?! Have you ever been there? I have been that guy by the way. Some of you are laughing; you know what I am talking about. God does not speak at my church, we got together and we wanted to get out of there, get over with it. Well one of the things we see here is that the focus is not on particularly the preacher, but it's on the people to engage on what is going on, corporately interacting with God through worship.

Then the second thing we see in the text modeled by the church is corporate fellowship. These people were coming together to break bread. Maybe the idea is here of an agape feast, the feast of the believers coming together, but also with the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, included as a part of this glorious Lord's Day participation and cooperation. This was corporate fellowship. You and I think of fellowship, we think of food, we think of spending time together with people that we care about. We think of hanging out, we think of doing all these things that you and I naturally do as a part of being the body of Christ. There are times when we just don't really want to hang out. There are times when we should want to be kind of the Lone Ranger. But we know that corporate fellowship is of upmost importance. They assembled for the purpose of fellowship. But in the midst of that fellowship there was worship. There was preaching and dialogue; there was exhortation from the Word of the Lord from God's man. When we read this story, it is not just to tell us the dangers of long sermons, nor is it not to tell us where or where not to sit in church. It is not to give us some instructions on how to deal with a death during the church service. It is to exemplify to us when we meet on the glorious Lord's Day, there are things that happen that only the church can experience.

I used to be a member of a civic organization back in the day. And it was a good organization; it was the Sertoma Club: Service to Mankind. We sold Christmas trees to help people with problems and that sort of thing. It was good deal, and we met at the Holiday Inn or the Ramada Inn on Lane Avenue in Jacksonville, Florida. I cannot remember all the details, but I can remember the food though. I wasn't even a Baptist at the time, but I was preparing to be one. Charles, there was a buffet with eggs and grits and bacon. I mean it was good stuff. Now, I am not saying I was part of the organization just for the breakfast, but there were many times I went just for the breakfast, because we got there, and some ole boy would get up and say: "now we got our service project that we are going to be doing in the next few weeks. . ." and ahhhh! He was about ninety, nothing wrong with the age, but wow! There were a lot of others there that could have moved the thing along. It was a long meeting and all we talked about was the service project that was coming, and then we sold the Christmas trees and hopefully somebody would get help. That was a neat experience; we had good food, more good food, lots of good food, and a buffet. We had a great time together, conversation, we had exhortation, and the president or whatever he was would be exhorting us to do what we did. It was a pretty neat experience, and when it was over, I felt good. I got in my vehicle and drove to my office, and thought man I am doing well with this service stuff to mankind. You know what; after I got saved I had an experience a lot like that but totally different. You see I got involved with a group of folks that wanted to get together and share a meal and somebody would exhort us, not in how to eat the meal, not in things that we need to do, but would exhort us to know and to understand more of this person called Jesus. While that person was talking whether they were young or old, somebody else was speaking to me, and it was not my mind going crazy, but it was something coming up within me saying, "Yes this is right . . . Yes this is good . . . listen and learn." It was the spirit of the Lord. You see only the Church has the presence of the Holy Spirit. When these people were meeting God was speaking. There was corporate interaction through worship, and they were corporately fellowshiping with one another. They were spending time together, breaking bread together, and experiencing only what the church can experience. Now I know that not every church has that kind of fellowship, but have you ever been to one of those eating times at the church where there was a division within the congregation? It is one of those situations where there is somebody sitting at our table we would not be caught dead sitting at a table with. Does this ever happen at any church you know of? Well, if not, then follow me awhile and you will see it. Can you believe the people of God dividing and picking sides against one another? To combat this I would to go and sit with this group one time and with that group the next, trying to keep myself evenly distributed. Guess what would happen? When I sat with these people I got the stares and the leers from over there, so I would sit with the ones staring. Unfortunately, it would be the same thing from the other I group that got the stares in the first place. It will go back and forth unceasingly. I

know that the topic I am preaching today is idealistic, but friend, we need to know the ideals in order to help the broken, sinful system we live in to what God intended for the church. It is the Lord's Day, not man's day. Because of this fact, we are to meet in corporate worship and corporate fellowship with one another.

Listen here is this third thing from this passage. I believe the missing element in our worship today is time. Now I do not want to stay till midnight on Sunday night. I cannot stay up that late anymore. I do not want to do that, but I believe that we are missing the time. We do not allow any quiet, and we do not allow any extended period of reflection. We do not allow anybody to ask a question. We do not allow it. We get through our order of worship and we are done worshipping. We do not read anything anywhere about the early church rushing through the worship service and getting out at the right time so that the members can be in the front of the line at the restaurant. I believe one of the great missing elements is time.

There is also another great missing element in the church today, and it may even be in this room. We have forgotten that when the church meets regularly on the Lord's Day, we are there to corporately experience the miraculous. We have forgotten that, haven't we? Shaun Miles, do you really expect when you preach this Sunday for the Lord to do a miraculous work within your people? If not then you need to repent, and so do the rest of us if we ever enter corporate worship with that mindset. If we preach without expecting the power of God to pierce the hearts of the hurting people in the pews, then you and I will not be effective. So, how do you lead your people to come with expectancy for the miraculous? I am not talking about the goofy manifestations people have concocted in order to hijack the miracles from the Holy Spirit. I am not talking about pitching babies from the balcony, jumping over the pews, feathers falling, gold dust, barking like dogs, and all that craziness. I refuse to acknowledge that the Spirit removes us from the control over our faculties. The most miraculous thing that we could ever experience happens when the God of the universe steps out of heaven, into the heart of a person, and miraculously revives them through new birth of the Spirit. That is the most miraculous thing to ever happen. The truth is you and I will attend worship this coming Lord's Day probably because it is the right thing to do or what we have always done. Honestly, if you are a student here and do not attend church and become active in it, then you had better examine yourself, because to be in ministry you must be in love with the church of God. However, I wonder will there even be a hint of expectation of the miraculous work of God.

Look at this story. Ole Dustin came to church. I don't know if he was expecting it or not, but God was going to use him as an example in the life of this church. Now, ole Dustin comes in and gets the best seat in the house. Dustin Malphurs, you here? Where is he at? Oh there he is, asleep. You know, I asked him this morning if he would he come to chapel. Are you wearing those flip flops Dustin? Not the whites though . . . okay

good. We got a little thing going on in class. I love him to death, but, by the way preachers you should be excited, because if people fall asleep on the apostle Paul, then they will certainly fall asleep on you. Ole Malphurs, he sits in the front row, remember I love him to death, but I am up there spitting and carrying on and he fell asleep on me! Can you believe that? He will fall asleep, he will doze. Now, he tries to act like he is not dozing and will hide behind his computer. Dustin will you doze? Yes you will; remember I love you buddy . . . glad you came. He'll doze on me, now ole Dustin (Eutychus); he gets the best seat in the house. He gets up in the window seat probably to keep from being hot. It is probably crowded and dark, even though they have lamps.

Archaeologists tell us that these lamps gave off an odor of some kind, Dustin he has got the seat with the breeze with fresh air and everything. He has got the choice seat in the house, but he can't hang with Paul. Actually, the term here to refer to Dustin is that he was just a lad, probably about nine to fourteen years old. Dustin is hanging out in the window in the quiet, and it gets the best of him. He falls out baby . . . like a rock! It says in verse 8, "There were many lamps in the room upstairs where they were assembled and a young man named *Dustin* was sitting on a window sill and sank into a deep sleep as Paul kept on speaking. When he was overcome by sleep he fell down from the third story, and..." notice this, "...he was picked up dead." Now I am going to tell you something, if you are ever picked up dead that is not a good thing. It is good if you are a believer, because then you are in the presence of Jesus, but if you are picked up dead, there is going to be funeral. That is what it means when it says he was picked up dead. I mean dead as a door nail, lifeless, and cold. You would think there would be weeping and wailing and that would be the end of the story. Church would be over and we would all have gone down and mourned. We would go to the funeral of Dustin, but in verse 10 we see something different. Paul went down. I am getting scenes in my mind. He is preaching long, and then Dustin falls out of the window. Paul says to himself, "Hmm, that's bad." He probably is the only one in the room that within just a few seconds that says, "Hmm, I guess I had better go down and do something about that." So I can see the apostle Paul wading through the crowd. "This is worse than I thought." Paul went down and threw himself on him. Okay, I know God has given me some insight here; Paul was not built like me. If I had laid on him, he would be doubly dead. And so he lays down over him and it looks like two kids fighting in the dirt, okay. Paul went down and threw himself on him, embraced him, and said, "Do not be alarmed." I am sure the mother was greatly comforted. Don't be alarmed he just fell out of the third story and cracked his head open and his brain matter is on the ground. I don't know. He embraced him and said, "Do not be alarmed for his life is in him." This word "alarmed" actually harkens back to the beginning of chapter 20 where it says, "...after the uproar had gone down..." These people freaked out just like you and I would have. "Well, look Dustin is dead." "Why is Paul laying on him?" "Don't worry his life is in him?" So, you

could say that a revival broke out. People started getting right and said things like, "Dear Lord, God let me fall out of a window." "You know let's start lining up to jump out."

It picks up in verse 11...notice this, 'After going up stairs, breaking there bread, and eating Paul conversed a considerable time more till dawn.' There was absolutely no disruption what so ever except for this momentary problem of a boy dying mid-service. It is amazing to me that the story just picks right back up. Luke, the physician, wants us to know that he is dead, door nail dead, and now he is alive . . . really alive. Their response is they go about their business. I don't know what he did in the period afterwards, but I do know this they went back to doing what they were doing before. Evidently, this was not a great big deal to them, other than the comfort they received from it. They expected something like this. Now I know that you are probably thinking, "Honestly, they expected Dustin to fall out of the window, crack his head, for Paul to fall on him and then for him to get back up." No, not exactly, but they expected God to work in miraculous ways. It was not out of the realm of possibility for them. For me and you we are thinking, "Good Lord, there is no way I would do that, if John falls out of the window we'll leave him out there. We couldn't pick him up anyway." That is what we all would do. Understand, one of the things that this church was all about was meeting on the Lord's Day, Worshipping God, and fellowshiping with one another, and experiencing the miraculous. So you say, "Well John, how do we apply what you are talking about?" Notice this, I have got several ideas I want to give you toady as we leave here today and go about our daily lives. We are to celebrate the Lord's Day in such a way as to bring honor to God. Also, we are to celebrate the Lord's Day in a way that will build up and edify the church.

Foremost, if you're going to experience corporate worship . . . if you're going to experience corporate fellowship . . . if you're going to experience the miraculous . . . you have got to go to church. I know some of you are thinking, "No I don't; it can happen on my tractor. It could happen in my apartment in housing down here." Well, you can experience God by yourself, but there will be no corporate anything. So you say, "Yeah, but mama and the kids were the church." You are a part of the church universal, if you are a child of God, but you can't forsake your other brothers and sisters in Christ. "Well, I know there is going to be eating and breaking of bread, but I think we're going to stay at the house. It's raining." You got to go to church. Let me challenge you in this way? Remember the Lone Ranger and Tonto and the horse all died. Every one of the them. You and I will too if Jesus Christ tarries in his return. There are no Lone Rangers when it comes to the people of God. Now God may send you somewhere where you have to be a Lone Ranger for a little while, but you have to build up a church of Christ as you bear the gospel. The Christian faith is so designed that cannot be Lone Rangers. Friends, we need each other desperately. Go to church! So you respond, "I don't like church. I don't like churches around here. It aint my daddy's church, or it aint my

momma's church." No its God's church and never was your parents' church, and it is the Lord's Day. Go to church!

Next, you must engage yourself in the church. "I don't want to; it's boring." Yeah, well you are boring, because you are not exciting enough to find the good that God is saying through the boring preacher. Engage; do not sit and soak! Sit and savor what God is saying. Sit there and read the bible; listen to what the preacher is saying. "Yeah, but Dr. Thomas, his exegesis is all faulty, his points don't make any sense, and he is eisigeting. He is taking the passage out of context and spiritualizing." Maybe so, but the God of heaven will use His Words. You want the church to change for the better then engage!

Also, you must dialogue with one another. You and I need to recap to discover the depth of what God is saying through the preached word. Too often we have fried preacher and fried deacon for lunch, when we really need to be digesting with one another what God is saying to us through the service. How about at lunch this Sunday when you are with your brothers and sisters in Christ say, "You know what God said to me through the message today. You know what will happen; somebody else will say, "I had that very same thought, or I had that very same feeling." Some may say, "Well God said to me that but also something different." Dialogue!

Fourth is you need to hangout. There needs to be a time factor; do no rush the process on Sunday. "Well, I don't want to stay in church until midnight and have church till morning." To be honest with you, I do not either. But in their particular circumstance, it was the best option for the people of God. Hangout; don't rush the process. You need to stay and build up one another. How can the people of God ever build up one another, if we do not spend time with one another?

Next you need to practice. "Practice? Practice what?" Put into practice and apply the lessons from the sermon. Most pastors will give you applications in their sermons that you can put into practice. If we do not practice what God is teaching us, it will be worth nothing to the world around us. You and I will soak it all up like a big fat sponge, but unless we practice what God is saying it is of no benefit to the people around us. We live too much like I got mine; you get yours'. No sir, let us give it all away. Practice!

Lastly we must rejoice. Look again at verse 12. To me it is almost comical where it says, "They brought the boy home alive and were greatly comforted." The King James Version puts it in the negative form for emphasis; it reads, "...were not a little comforted." Now think about that with me. They brought the boy home alive. He was alive when he got to church, and he certainly did not expect to die and then come back to life. "The boy came back home alive, and they were greatly comforted." Could you imagine what it would be like if we have a literal death and resurrection at my church on

Sunday. We all would go away rejoicing, but the truth is there will be some walking dead where you go this Sunday. They will be hurting so bad, and you will not be able to see it on the outside because they will go to extra lengths to look like their fine. You will have people at you church who are dead and slaves to their sins. They will come into the house of God on the Lord's Day. They'll be among the people of God, and they will look just like all the people of God. However, they may be there sitting there, thinking as soon as this is over I am going to kill myself. I know some of you are thinking, "There is no one like that at my church. Everybody is happy. Come on John lighten up a bit." You are a fool if you think that. There will be walking dead amongst us this Lord's Day, and we will get in there and preach, sing, pray, and give. We will do all the things that encompass New Testament, modern worship services. We may just be going through the motions. We will not realize that we are doing that or that it is happening to the person next to you in the pew. We must rejoice to lift the spirits of those around us. Perhaps the single greatest missing thing in the church is encouragement. Rejoice!

I believe great comfort comes to those we do these things: go to church, engage, dialogue, hangout, and practice. Then we will go away rejoicing in great comfort, knowing God is a God who is alive and working. One of the things I want to challenge you with today is this: The Lord's Day is coming; those of us who have to preach know it well. What a privilege we have to corporately gather and to hear the Word of God preached and prayed. What a wonderful privilege we have to come together and fellowship with Christian brothers and sisters. What a privilege we have to come together and expect the miraculous and to see it before our eyes. The writer of the book of Hebrews challenged the people of that day. He said, "Do not forsake the assembling of your selves together as some are doing." I paraphrase it as, "Get together more as we see the day approaching." The darkness of the hour around us is bleak, but we serve a God whom we rejoice in and worship on the Lord's Day, who is a miracle working God. Let's celebrate Him!

Would you pray with me: "O Lord Jesus, I know I am speaking to some today that have given up on the church? Lord, I have heard there testimonies, and I have heard them speaking discouraged about the condition of the church where they attend and about what they see around. Lord, many that give up on the church have also given up on what the Lord's Day can be. So father, I pray that this week that all of us in this room would go to church. That on this Lord's Day that we would go and engage in what is said and sung, and may we learn from you, following your Spirit. Lord, I pray that we would have some dialogue not only with the preacher, but with other about what you are saying to us. Lord, I pray that you would help us hangout with others and spend time with people to get to know them, and then help us practice what we are taught this Lord's Day. May we too go away being greatly comforted, because we have

experienced the hand of a miracle working God in our lives? Lord, this is our prayer and plea for our churches on this Lord's Day. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen!

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