

## Approaching God

Read this portion of Psalm 30 and respond to God with an opening prayer

*Hear, LORD, and be merciful to me; LORD, be my help." You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent. LORD my God, I will praise you forever.* (Psalm 30:10-12)

"In God's presence anger becomes favor. Weeping is exchanged for joy. Mourning is turned into dancing. The silent soul becomes loquacious with praise." (Eugene Peterson) Have you experienced that lately in any way? Thank God for those times. Ask God to bring new life today.

## Acts 15:22-35

Passage Introduction: Freedom for the Gentiles

After James concluded, the Jerusalem council concurred and chose men from among themselves as ambassadors for the council. These men would carry a letter throughout the region instructing the disciples and proclaiming the authoritative conclusion of the Jerusalem deliberations. Paul and Barnabas would be accompanied by Judas and Silas, leaders among the council, to deliver the letter (Acts 15:22). Our passage today contains the important contents of that letter.

## Bible Reading, Study & Meditation

Start with Engaging the Text: Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words.

Use the space in the margin to jot down notes, or themes/ideas that stand out as important.

**Acts 15:22-35 - 22** Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, men who were leaders among the believers. **23** With them they sent the following letter: The apostles and elders, your brothers, To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings. **24** We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. **25** So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul— **26** men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. **27** Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. **28** It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: **29** You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. FAREWELL.

Notes:

**30** So the men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. **31** The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. **32** Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers. **33** After spending some time there, they were sent off by the believers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them. **35** But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, where they and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord.

## Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- What does this passage today show me about God for which I can thank or praise him?
- What does this passage tell me about people, myself, my neighbor, or perhaps humanity in general?
- How would you characterize the way Paul and his team communicate and share the news of the council's decision? How would it help if, in church and ministry, discussions were conducted in the spirit of this chapter and decisions were communicated as clearly?

## Key Takeaway:

What truth do I most need to remember from today's passage? How would this truth change my life if I took it seriously? If this truth were fully alive and effective in your inward being? Why might God be bringing this truth to your attention today?

## Close in Prayer:

1. **Rejoice:** - What did God show me today that I can **rejoice in**?
2. **Repent:** - What did God reveal that I need to confess or **repent of**?
3. **Requests:** - What prayer **requests** do I have as a result of my time with God today?