



Approaching God

Read this portion of Psalm 31 and begin with an opening prayer

For I hear many whispering, "Terror on every side!" They conspire against me and plot to take my life. But I trust in you, LORD; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me. Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love. Let me not be put to shame, LORD, for I have cried out to you. (Ps 31:13)

Sometimes when we are driven to the end of our own resources and abilities (and the resources and patience of others), we find that the world can look and sound very much like an enemy "out to get us." The same experience can drive us to a deeper trust in God, whereby we can say, "My times are in your hand." Make that your quiet prayer to start today.

Acts 15:36 - 16:10

Passage Introduction: The Gospel Mission to Europe

The joy and fellowship which permeate the previous verses comes to an abrupt halt in verses 36-41. Paul decides, after some time of preaching in Antioch, that he needs to return to the churches he planted on his first missionary journey. Paul asks Barnabas to accompany him (v 36). This makes sense given that the elders of Antioch commissioned and set apart both Barnabas and Paul for the missionary task. Barnabas makes a suggestion, however, which leads to a bitter quarrel and argument between himself and Paul.

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation

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

Silas: is also known in the NT Epistles as Silvanus. He had a faithful ministry with the apostles and served as Peter's scribe in writing 1 Peter (1 Peter 5:12)

Paul never abandoned his Jewish heritage, and so he circumcised Timothy. It was all the more necessary if

Acts 15:36 - 16:10 - 15:36 - Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." **37** Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, **38** but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. **39** They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, **40** but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. **41** He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

16:1 Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek. **2** The believers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. **3** Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they

Timothy was to join his mission. He did not want to fight on nonessentials. (1 Cor. 9:19) Paul always began in the synagogues, and to have an uncircumcised Jew with him would have made any witness to Jews much more difficult. (Timothy had grown up in this region, the Jews would have known of his mixed family background.)

all knew that his father was a Greek. **4** As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. **5** So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers. **6** Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. **7** When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. **8** So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. **9** During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” **10** After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- What are 2-3 things you learn or observe about God in this passage?
- What are 2-3 things you learn or observe about you, other people, humanity in general?
- Are there any commands to obey in this passage? Are there any examples to follow or avoid? What in this passage applies to your life today?

Key Takeaway:

As you read today’s passage, what are 1 or 2 main takeaways that you wrote down in the margins? How would you briefly summarize your observations and meditations for today?

Close in Prayer:

Pray for grace and wisdom in settling arguments, whether ones where you are directly involved or ones in which you are called to play the role of mediator. Pray for anyone with whom you are in conflict.