

Approaching God

Read this portion Psalm 42 and begin with an opening prayer

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" - (Psalm 42:1-3)

The psalmist has lost not belief in God but the experience of meeting with the *living* God. We need the sense of God's presence and love as much as the physical body pants after water. Where do you sense that need today? Pray Psalm 42 in your own words to express your longing and desires to experience God's presence today.

Acts 21:1-14

Passage Introduction: Paul Goes to Jerusalem

In Acts 21, Paul's ministry takes on a different character. The beginning of this chapter concludes Paul's third missionary journey and begins the final phase of his life. Here, Paul reaches Jerusalem and begins his new ministry of defending his faith while on trial.

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation

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

Note on vs. 4:
 Luke is quite happy to report that the urgings of the disciples for Paul to stay were in the Spirit, without telling us how he reconciles that with the fact that Paul is clear that it is his vocation to go. Sometimes the Spirit gives people enough information to know what is likely to await them but leaves them with the responsibility of deciding whether or not to go anyway.

Acts 21:1-14 - 1 After we had torn ourselves away from them, we put out to sea and sailed straight to Kos. The next day we went to Rhodes and from there to Patara. **2** We found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, went on board and set sail. **3** After sighting Cyprus and passing to the south of it, we sailed on to Syria. We landed at Tyre, where our ship was to unload its cargo. **4** We sought out the disciples there and stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. **5** When it was time to leave, we left and continued on our way. All of them, including wives and children, accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach we knelt to pray. **6** After saying goodbye to each other, we went aboard the ship, and they returned home. **7** We continued our voyage from Tyre and landed at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and sisters and stayed with them for a day. **8** Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. **9** He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied. **10** After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. **11** Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said,

Notes:

“The Holy Spirit says, ‘In this way the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.’ ” **12** When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. **13** Then Paul answered, “Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” **14** When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, “The Lord’s will be done.”

Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- What are 2-3 things you learn about God in this passage and the mission of the Gospel?
- What urgent warnings does Paul meet as he travels? As far as we can tell, what was Paul’s mood as he traveled?
- Paul’s friends in Caesarea eventually accepted his decision to go to Jerusalem and said “May the Lord’s will be done” (21:14), echoing Jesus’ words in the Lord’s Prayer and in Gethsemane. What are some situations right now for which you may need to say “May the Lord’s will be done”?

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:

Take some time to ask the Lord where you might most need to say, “May the Lord’s will be done,” right now in your life. Spend some time asking that God might move you towards quiet surrender.