



Approaching God

Read Psalm 43 and use it as a basis for your opening prayer

Vindicate me, my God, and plead my cause against an unfaithful nation. Rescue me from those who are deceitful and wicked. You are God my stronghold. Why have you rejected me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy? Send me your light and your faithful care, let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight. Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

When we put our trust in the living God, we know nothing can come into that stronghold without permission, limitation, and purpose. Learning to rest in God instead of in human approval or personal vengeance is the key to slowly but surely raising our spirits. Read Psalm 43 and simply connect with the Lord with honesty about where you sense your need for Him today.

Acts 21:15-26

Passage Introduction: Paul and the Jerusalem Leaders

The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem welcome Paul and his travel companions as they arrive in the city (v 17). Paul's travel companions were Christians from Asia Minor and thus were Gentiles. For them to be welcomed by these Jewish believers reveals the impact of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 and the unifying power of the gospel. One of the chief leaders from that council was James, the half-brother of Jesus. James became the leader of the church in Jerusalem following the persecution that caused many disciples and believers to disperse. Here in Acts 21, Paul meets James and the elders of the church

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation

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

Note on vs 20-21

The church leaders in Jerusalem described the thousands of new Jewish Christians as "zealous for the law." Apparently they were righteously indignant for God's honor, for the eternal and unbreakable law of Moses, for the sanctity of the temple and the land. People also had been spreading rumors that not only had Paul been telling Gentile
(cont. next pg)

Acts 21:15-26 - 15 After this, we started on our way up to Jerusalem. **16** Some of the disciples from Caesarea accompanied us and brought us to the home of Mnason, where we were to stay. He was a man from Cyprus and one of the early disciples.

17 When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters received us warmly. **18** The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present. **19** Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. **20** When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. **21** They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children

converts that they don't need to be circumcised but he had been telling Jews to abandon their ancestral traditions and customs as well (21:21). That latter is something Paul has neither said nor done. But as far as they are concerned, it's all or nothing. Either you say that circumcision matters, in which case every Christian has to be circumcised; or you say it doesn't matter, in which case no Christian—including Jewish Christians—should be circumcised.

or live according to our customs. **22** What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, **23** so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. **24** Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everyone will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law. **25** As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality.” **26** The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them.

Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- What are 2-3 things you learn or observe about God in this passage?
- After an initially enthusiastic welcome to Jerusalem, what concerns do the believers express over Paul's arrival?
- How does Paul respond to their concerns, and what do you think motivates him?

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:

- What can I **REJOICE IN** as a result of today's study?
- What do I need to **REPENT OF** as a result of today's study?
- What do I want to **REQUEST FROM** God today?