



## Approaching God

Read this portion of Psalm 44 and begin with an opening prayer

*“Awake, Lord! Why do you sleep? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever. Why do you hide your face and forget our misery and oppression? We are brought down to the dust; our bodies cling to the ground. Rise up and help us; rescue us because of your unfailing love. (Ps. 44:23-26)*

Opening Prayer: “Lord Jesus, in the boat during the storm your disciples accused you of not caring - but you were never out of control and you saved them. I confess that to me, at times, you also seem to not care, to be doing nothing. That is wrong. The cross proves incontrovertibly, eternally, that you do care. I praise you and rest in you for that. Amen.” (Keller - *Songs of Jesus*)

## Acts 21:27-39

### Passage Introduction: A Riot in Jerusalem

It seems that everywhere Paul goes, there is a riot. That is because he is being loyal to the true, if extraordinary and dangerous, purposes of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the creator God who will one day call the whole world to account. Riots in Antioch, stoning in Lystra, beatings in Philippi, more riots in Thessalonica, run out of town in Berea, court cases and anti-Jewish violence in Corinth, and then that escapade with thousands of chanting pagans in Ephesus. The leaders in Jerusalem, therefore, had a good idea what to expect when Paul visited them.

## Bible Reading, Study & Meditation

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

### vs 33 - “tribune”

Tribunes in the Roman army were often young men on their way up the ladder politically and perhaps socially. But nothing in the Roman system could have prepared this tribune for the intricacies of first-century Jewish political and religious life. The tribune would have been in charge of the guard in the fortress Antonia, which the Romans had built overlooking temple compound precisely so they could keep an

**Acts 21:27-39** - **27** When the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, **28** crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." **29** For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. **30** Then all the city was stirred up, and the people ran together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut. **31** And as they were seeking to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. **32** He at once took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. And when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. **33** Then the tribune came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He inquired who he was and what he had done. **34** Some in the crowd were shouting one thing, some

an eye on this kind of disturbance. It is a miracle that Paul survived. If a crowd is intent on killing someone, they can often succeed before the time it would take for an officer upstairs in the fort to notice, to call reinforcements and to hurry down to intervene. That was the last time Paul would see the inside of the temple. In only another fifteen years or so, it would be destroyed, never to be rebuilt.

another. And as he could not learn the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. **35** And when he came to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd, **36** for the mob of the people followed, crying out, "Away with him!"

**37** As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the tribune, "May I say something to you?" And he said, "Do you know Greek? **38** Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?" **39** Paul replied, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city. I beg you, permit me to speak to the people."

## Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- What are 2 or 3 things you observe about God the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit in this passage?
- How well does the church leaders' plan for Paul work? What happens in 21:27-36? As much as possible, put yourself in the place of Paul in this passage. What would you be trying to do and say?
- What can we learn about how Paul gets command of the situation in vs. 37-39?

## 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:

Often times the things we say believe as Christians can be twisted to mean things that we don't mean at all. (vs. 28) Pray that we would not be afraid when those moments occur. Pray that the Spirit would bring about clarity to those who want to hear the gospel from us.