

## Approaching God

Read this portion of Psalm 46 and begin with an opening prayer

*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. (Ps 46:1-4)*

“The supposedly “solid” things of the world - whether mountains or nations - are flimsy. We need (and get) something more substantial than either nature or civilization can provide - a secure habitation in God.” (Eugene Peterson - *Praying with the Psalms*) Take a moment to connect with the Lord as you meditate on these verses from Psalm 46.

## Acts 22:30 - 23:11

**Passage Introduction: Paul’s Defense Before the Sanhedrin**

Acts 23 begins with Paul’s trial before the Sanhedrin. Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles stood at the center of the controversy surrounding his preaching. As the chapter unfolds, we see that this is what Paul must also address before the Sanhedrin. Paul’s own life hangs in the balance—his answers could mean life or death. He stands trial not just to defend his theology but to be judged as to whether or not he should be executed. This is the drama of Acts 23.

## 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 22:30 - 23:11 - 30** The commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews. So the next day he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the members of the Sanhedrin to assemble. Then he brought Paul and had him stand before them. **23:1** Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, “My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day.” **2** At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. **3** Then Paul said to him, “God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!” **4** Those who were standing near Paul said, “How dare you insult God’s high priest!” **5** Paul replied, “Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: ‘Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.’ ”

**6** Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, “My brothers, I am a

### Notes on Vs. 11

vs. 11 is a key turning point in Luke's story. Paul is not, after all, going to die in Jerusalem. His sense of vocation, to go to Rome, was genuine. He isn't promised a comfortable ride. But he will get there, and he must do there what he has done here: to bear witness. And the word for *witness*, as we have seen before, is the word from which we get *martyr*.

Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead.” **7** When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. **8** (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things.) **9** There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously. “We find nothing wrong with this man,” they said. “What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?” **10** The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks. **11** The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “**Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.**”

## 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?
- How in 23:6-10 does Paul get to the heart of the issue while once again showing himself to be wise as a serpent and innocent as a dove in dealing with the political powers at work? What can we learn from Paul in this?

## Key Takeaway:

What are 1 or 2 main takeaways from today's reading & study? Briefly summarize your thoughts.

## 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?