



## Approaching God

Read this portion Psalm 47 and begin with an opening prayer

*Sing praises to God!...For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise. God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne. The nobles of the nations assemble as the people of the God of Abraham, for the kings of the earth belong to God; he is greatly exalted.*  
- (Psalm 47:6-9)

Opening Prayer: "Your rule, God, is something to shout about! Help me in my praise to seek to express all I feel in joy and freedom, sharing with others the sense of celebration you bring, in the name of Christ my King. Amen."

## Acts 23:12-35

Passage Introduction: Paul's Escape to Caesarea

The next section chronicles a failed conspiracy to kill Paul. In 23:11, God has promised his protection and revealed his plan to take Paul to Rome. Now, he delivers on his promise. Nothing will thwart God's will. No man, no plan, and no plot can hinder the all-powerful God from accomplishing his purposes. When the world seems to have turned against the people of God and the flames of persecution burn, we can still know that God reigns.

## Bible Reading, Study & Meditation

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

### Notes:

**Acts 23:12-35** - **12** The next morning some Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. **13** More than forty men were involved in this plot. **14** They went to the chief priests and the elders and said, "We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul. **15** Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander to bring him before you on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about his case. We are ready to kill him before he gets here." **16** But when the son of Paul's sister heard of this plot, he went into the barracks and told Paul. **17** Then Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the commander; he has something to tell him." **18** So he took him to the commander. The centurion said, "Paul, the prisoner, sent for me and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you." **19** The commander took the young man by the hand, drew him aside and asked, "What is it you want to tell me?" **20** He said: "Some Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about him. **21** Don't give in to them, because more than

### Governor Felix:

Felix was born a slave. After being given his freedom he, with his brother Pallas, became favorites of the Emperor Claudius. This might have been because Claudius, naturally afraid as many emperors were of envious people in high places, preferred to employ and to trust people whose personal gratitude to him was so great that they would be less likely to rebel. We know his term in office in Judea ran roughly A.D. 52-59, not least because of coins which successive governors issued, with their own name and that of the emperor on them.

forty of them are waiting in ambush for him. They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent to their request.” **22** The commander dismissed the young man with this warning: “Don’t tell anyone that you have reported this to me.” **23** Then he called two of his centurions and ordered them, “Get ready a detachment of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at nine tonight. **24** Provide horses for Paul so that he may be taken safely to Governor Felix.” **25** He wrote a letter as follows: **26** Claudius Lysias, To His Excellency, Governor Felix: Greetings. **27** This man was seized by the Jews and they were about to kill him, but I came with my troops and rescued him, for I had learned that he is a Roman citizen. **28** I wanted to know why they were accusing him, so I brought him to their Sanhedrin. **29** I found that the accusation had to do with questions about their law, but there was no charge against him that deserved death or imprisonment. **30** When I was informed of a plot to be carried out against the man, I sent him to you at once. I also ordered his accusers to present to you their case against him. **31** So the soldiers carrying out their orders, took Paul with them during the night and brought him as far as Antipatris. **32** The next day they let the cavalry go on with him, while they returned to the barracks. **33** When the cavalry arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him. **34** The governor read the letter and asked what province he was from. Learning that he was from Cilicia, **35** he said, “I will hear your case when your accusers get here.” Then he ordered that Paul be kept under guard in Herod’s palace.

## Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- What are 2-3 things you learn about God in this passage and the mission of the Gospel?
- Just as Paul was receiving a word from the Lord telling him that he would make it safely to Rome, a boy happens to be at the right place at the right time, overhears the plot for murder and knows what to do (23:12-22). This is illustrative, perhaps, of William Temple’s famous saying, “*When I pray, coincidences happen; when I stop praying the coincidences stop happening.*” How do you understand or how have you experienced the relationship of prayer, “coincidence” and God’s work in the world?

## Close in Prayer:

Thank God for the times you have been rescued from danger, whether physical or spiritual or both. Pray about the ways in which you feel you are still waiting for God to act. Ask God for comfort, wisdom, patience, and the assurance that he is still working and still faithful to his promises.