



Approaching God

Read this portion of Psalm 48 and use it as a basis for your opening prayer

Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love. Like your name, O God, your praise reaches to the ends of the earth; your right hand is filled with righteousness. Mount Zion rejoices, the villages of Judah are glad because of your judgments. Walk about Zion, go around her, count her towers, consider well her ramparts, view her citadels, that you may tell of them to the next generation. For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.

Acts 24:1-23

Passage Introduction: Paul's Defense Before Felix

In the Roman Empire, a prison not only housed convicted criminals but also held individuals awaiting their impending judgment. Although an initial judgment (the beating) has occurred, the fact that Paul and Silas have been thrown into prison implies that more judgment is coming. Such judgment could entail exile, additional beatings, or execution. Since Paul and Silas are accused of trying to subvert the Roman Empire by means of sharing the gospel, the consequence would likely be capital punishment. And yet, at this precise moment, a remarkable turn of events occurs.

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 24:1-23 - **1** Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor. **2** When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix: "We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you, and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation. **3** Everywhere and in every way, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude. **4** But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly. **5** "We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect **6** and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him. **8** By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him." **9** The other Jews joined in the accusation, asserting that these things were true. **10** When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: "I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so I gladly make my defense. **11** You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. **12** My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the

Notes:

synagogues or anywhere else in the city. **13** And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. **14** However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, **15** and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. **16** So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man. **17** “After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings. **18** I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance. **19** But there are some Jews from the province of Asia, who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they have anything against me. **20** Or these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin— **21** unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: ‘It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.’ ” **22** Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned the proceedings. “When Lysias the commander comes,” he said, “I will decide your case.” **23** He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs.

Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- Several specific charges are made against Paul in 24:2-8. Why might they carry so much weight with the Romans and with the Jews?
- How does Paul deny some of the charges, and what does he admit to (24:10-21)?
- What are 2 or 3 things in this passage for which you can thank or praise God?

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:

Is your heart’s desire to be able to tell people around you what Paul told the jailer? Why / why not? What do you need to pray about?