



Approaching God

Read this portion of Psalm 49 and begin with an opening prayer

No one can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for them— the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough— so that they should live on forever and not see decay. For all can see that the wise die, that the foolish and the senseless also perish, leaving their wealth to others. People, despite their wealth, do not endure; they are like the beasts that perish. (Ps. 49:7-12)

Are there any places where you catch yourself imagining how much greater life would be if you just had a little bit more? We all do! It can also be easy to quietly or secretly “boast” (Ps 49:6) in our hearts when we are able to afford certain things or go to certain places. Ask God to redeem you today from the shallowness and foolishness of centering life around material prosperity.

Acts 24:24 - 25:12

Passage Introduction: Paul & Festus

In Acts 25, Luke never mentions the name of God. The hand of God, however, runs throughout the entire narrative. His providential hand orchestrates every event in this chapter. He protects his servant Paul and sets the apostle on a trajectory toward proclaiming the gospel before the most powerful and influential people in the empire. God may seem absent; indeed, it may even seem that God has abandoned Paul. His grace, however, continues to empower Paul and give him the wisdom and strength to meet his adversaries with poise, peace, and conviction.

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation

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

Notes:

Acts 24:24 - 25:12 - 24 Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. **25** As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, “That’s enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you.” **26** At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him. **27** When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison. 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!”

Note: 25:10-12

Paul knows his rights. Once again he protests his innocence. He insists not only on justice but on properly constituted officials doing their properly authorized job, just as he insisted on getting his public apology from the magistrates at Philippi (Acts 16). The appeal to Caesar was not like an appeal today, when a verdict has already been reached. The case against Paul has still not been tried and has still not reached a verdict, far less a sentence. What Paul is appealing for is for the case to be tried elsewhere, in the highest court in the empire.

25:1 Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, **2** where the chief priests and the Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul. **3** They requested Festus, as a favor to them, to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem, for they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way. **4** Festus answered, “Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. **5** Let some of your leaders come with me, and if the man has done anything wrong, they can press charges against him there.” **6** After spending eight or ten days with them, Festus went down to Caesarea. The next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. **7** When Paul came in, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him. They brought many serious charges against him, but they could not prove them. **8** Then Paul made his defense: “I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar.” **9** Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?” **10** Paul answered: “I am now standing before Caesar’s court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. **11** If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!” **12** After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: “You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!”

Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- How would you describe Felix’s response to the gospel? Why would justice, self-control and the coming judgment be such disconcerting subjects (24:25)?
- Paul was kept in custody by Felix for two years, then was left in prison when Felix left office. Imagine yourself in Paul’s position during this time. What conflicting thoughts and feelings would you be having? ?

Key Takeaway:

How would you briefly summarize your observations and meditations for today?

Close in Prayer: Sometimes God feels absent. Where do you feel that right now, especially as it relates to something God has called you to, a place where you’re trying to serve?