

Approaching God

Read Psalm 28 and use it as a basis for your opening prayer

Praise be to the LORD, for he has heard my cry for mercy. The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him. The LORD is the strength of his people, a fortress of salvation for his anointed one. Save your people and bless your inheritance; be their shepherd and carry them forever. (Psalm 28:6-9)

Start with an opening prayer: “Father, I know that you listen to me - not because I deserve it but because your Son, Jesus, my great high priest, brings my needs before your throne and you hear them all for his sake. I lift my empty hands to you and ask that you fill them with your grace and help. Amen.

Acts 14:19-28

Passage Introduction: Return to Antioch

Verse 19 is a shattering scene as Paul goes from denying the claim that he is a god to being dragged out of the city and almost stoned to death. Indeed, here Luke says that the Jews won over the crowds and so exposed the fecklessness of the Gentiles’ hearts. The Jews from the previous city, still enraged at Paul and Barnabas, seek them out and hope to execute Paul in the most humiliating way. They drag him outside of the city to stone him to death and then to leave his body for the dogs and the birds to feast on. How do you expect Paul to respond?

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 14:19-28 - 19 Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. **20** But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe. **21** They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, **22** strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said. **23** Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

24 After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, **25** and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. **26** From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had

been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. **27** On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. **28** And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- Paul and Barnabas go back through several cities where they had faced severe opposition. What do you think is their purpose in returning?
- First the crowd hailed Barnabas and Paul as gods. Then suddenly they want to kill them. Why do you think the crowds turn against the apostles so abruptly (vv. 19-20)?
- Read back through vs. 23 & 26. Sometimes we think of Christian work as “my ministry,” “our ministry,” “his ministry” or “her ministry.” What practical differences does it make to think of it as the Lord’s ministry?

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:

Thank God for open doors of the Lord’s ministry. Entrust yourselves and others to the Lord in whom you have believed (Acts 14:23).