

Approaching God

Read this portion of Psalm 53 and begin with an opening prayer

“The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, and their ways are vile; there is no one who does good. God looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. Everyone has turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! When God restores his people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad! (Ps 53:1-3; 6)

Take a moment to start today by thanking God for awakening you to the reality of your need for God. Pray for 1 or 2 people that God brings to mind that you know do not believe in Christ. Confess and talk to God about the places where you tend to live as if there were no God.

Acts 27:27-44

Passage Introduction: Paul's Shipwreck

The Jews were not (except for some fishermen) a seafaring race. They left that to the Egyptians to the south and the Phoenicians to the north, not to mention the Greeks. For the Jews, the sea was a monster. Yes, the one God had made it just as he made everything else, and it was his, and did his bidding. But all the same the sea was seen as a dark force, a power in its own right and a place from which dark powers might emerge. Paul, unusually for a Jew, was a seasoned sea traveler. He would have been under no illusions about what might await him on the long voyage to get to Rome from one of its farthest outposts. He had lived much of the last few years in that in-between stage, knowing that the sea was still potentially a great enemy while believing that all enemies had been defeated by Jesus the Messiah.

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation

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

Notes:

Acts 27:27-44 - **27** On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea, when about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land. **28** They took soundings and found that the water was a hundred and twenty feet deep. A short time later they took soundings again and found it was ninety feet deep. **29** Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. **30** In an attempt to escape from the ship, the sailors let the lifeboat down into the sea, pretending they were going to lower some anchors from the bow. **31** Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved.” **32** So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it drift away. **33** Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. “For the last fourteen days,” he said, “you have been in constant suspense and

Notes:

have gone without food—you haven't eaten anything. **34** Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head." **35** After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. **36** They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. **37** Altogether there were 276 of us on board. **38** When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea. **39** When daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could. **40** Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. **41** But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf. **42** The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping. **43** But the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. **44** The rest were to get there on planks or on other pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land safely.

Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- What do Paul's actions and words in this passage tell you about his attitudes toward the others on the ship, toward his own destiny and toward the Lord?
- Some Christians have been taught that once they have faith everything ought to flow smoothly. What would Acts have to tell us about that?
- What are some ways that come to mind for how God has sustained and encouraged you in difficult times?

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?