

Approaching God

Read all of Psalm 54 and begin with an opening prayer

Save me, O God, by your name; vindicate me by your might. Hear my prayer, O God; listen to the words of my mouth. Arrogant foes are attacking me; ruthless people are trying to kill me— people without regard for God. Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me. Let evil recoil on those who slander me; in your faithfulness destroy them. I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you; I will praise your name, LORD, for it is good. You have delivered me from all my troubles, and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes.

Acts 28:1-16

Passage Introduction: Paul to Malta and Rome

In Acts 27, Paul and the naval crew survived the shipwreck because of God's sovereign plan. The final chapter of Acts concludes on a similar note of God's providential care for his apostle and the spread of the gospel. Chapter 28 serves as the climatic end to this account of God's work in the early church and its great expansion, and leaves us looking forward, recognizing that God is still moving in and through his church, which is exactly what the rest of the New Testament and all of church history proclaim.

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation

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

Notes:

Acts 28:1-16 - **1** Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. **2** The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. **3** Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. **4** When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, the goddess Justice has not allowed him to live." **5** But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. **6** The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead; but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god. **7** There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and showed us generous hospitality for three days. **8** His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. **9** When this had

vs. 7-10

The sea and the snake have done their worst and are overcome. New creation is happening, and the powers of evil cannot stop it. Paul may arrive in Rome a more bedraggled figure than he would have liked, but the gospel which he brings is flourishing, and nobody can stop it.

happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. **10** They honored us in many ways; and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.

11 After three months we put out to sea in a ship that had wintered in the island—it was an Alexandrian ship with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux. **12** We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days. **13** From there we set sail and arrived at Rhegium. The next day the south wind came up, and on the following day we reached Puteoli. **14** There we found some brothers and sisters who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we came to Rome. **15** The brothers and sisters there had heard that we were coming, and they traveled as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. At the sight of these people Paul thanked God and was encouraged. **16** When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him.

Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- Besides saving the lives of Paul and the rest of the people on board, what opportunities does the shipwreck on Malta provide for Paul?
- When has God given you unexpected opportunities to serve him? What are some opportunities for service which you might be overlooking right now?
- What evidence do you see that the gospel has already had an impact in and around Rome?

Key Takeaway:

What truth do I most need to remember from today's passage? How would this truth change my life if I took it seriously? If this truth were fully alive and effective in your inward being? Why might God be bringing this truth to your attention today?

Close in Prayer:

Take some time to think about what God is up to in the community around you. Ask God to help you see opportunities to serve him and to have the courage to step into those. Praise God for how the gospel is moving in the community you live in.