

# Words of Life

(June 21, 2007)

*And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat. Then they were all encouraged, and also took food themselves. And in all we were two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship.*

*Acts 27:35-37*

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*The apostle Paul had been arrested and was on a ship headed for Rome. The ship was loaded with 276 men consisting of Roman soldiers who were guarding Paul, Alexandrian sailors, and a small band of Christians. It was a time of year when the weather was unpredictable, and as they set out they headed straight into a violent storm. They had gone several days without seeing the sun or moon or stars, and now the storm had become so violent that the ship was literally being torn apart. In an attempt to keep from capsizing, they had thrown all the supplies overboard to lighten the load and save the ship. They had gone fourteen days without eating any food and had lost all hope of being saved. Exhaustion had settled in. Then, in the midst of this hopeless situation, the Lord spoke to Paul through an angel and told him no one would be lost. So Paul spoke to the others and encouraged them to eat.*

*It is interesting to note that Paul was in the storm right along with everyone else. He would have been hungry and exhausted just like the rest of them. He would have been cold and weak from the lack of food. Just because Paul was a Christian didn't mean he wouldn't experience the same hardships. When we come to Christ, we are not guaranteed freedom from difficulties. As a matter of fact, we are promised hardship as followers of Christ. However, it is even more interesting to me that God did not send His angel to encourage Paul until AFTER all hope of being saved had been lost. We usually want God to speak encouraging words to us BEFORE all hope is lost, and sometimes He does. But not in this instance. I believe Paul had lost hope of being saved right along with everyone else. He had not lost hope in God, for he knew God would take him to heaven, but he most likely felt this was the time that would happen. The trial had become so severe that hope of getting out of it alive was given up. Then God spoke to Paul. To me the lesson here is to not assume that because God has waited so long, He will not speak. Sometimes His words of encouragement come AFTER hope in any worldly means of deliverance is given up on.*

*It is also interesting to me that the man who had the most influence when all hope had been lost was this little Jewish preacher man. It wasn't the ship's captain, nor was it the Roman centurion, both of whom had tremendous authority. It was the man who had a relationship with Christ. As we continue to live for Christ and stand up in the midst of the storms of our lives, people will take note. Then when the time comes to speak into their lives, they will listen.*

*Lastly, Paul gave thanks for the food they had. They didn't have much at this point, but what they had, he gave thanks for. We must always be thanking God, even in the most difficult storms of life. These men all thought they were going to perish in this storm. It was a big one! Yet Paul gave thanks in the midst of it. If we can find things to be thankful for in the midst of the storms of life, it will set us apart from the rest of the world. ....If you are in the midst of a storm that is driving you, take courage from this passage. Continue to listen for God's voice, and be thankful for the things you have.*

*Pastor Ted*