

Be Encouraged

Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. “For the last fourteen days,” he said, “you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food—you haven’t eaten anything. 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.” 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. They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves.” (Acts 27:33-36 NIV)

In this life, it is a given that we shall encounter problems, calamities, troubles, and pandemics. We have been told that, “... In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33 NIV). I get comfort from this word every time I look at the news, every time I learn of the passing on of a loved one, and every time I am on the verge of giving up due to the pressures of workplace issues and family predicaments. Losing several relatives within a space of a year led me to reflect a bit, and reading this verse gave me courage to spare a minute or two to help students in similar positions of pressure and loss.

I encountered a user who came into the library heavy-laden and in tears, looking for information for his schoolwork. The user was battling a stormy situation at home and pressure to attend to a deadline at school. He needed just a word of comfort in order to endure. I learned that we all need encouragement at some point in time to go on in spite of the hardships. I know this for sure because as we go through the corridors of life, we encounter difficult situations that put us on the verge of giving up.

With the pandemic raging, bearing its ugly paws towards the rest of us, I am reminded of the journey of Paul enroute to Rome as a prisoner for preaching the gospel (Acts 27:33-36). I was encouraged by the fact that he never lost his footing during this difficult journey. He remained positive even for those who kept him captive. Instead of giving up due to his own pain of being kept prisoner and the fear of the stormy sea faced by everyone, he became the pillar of hope and encouragement to all of them. He could see that they were all losing hope, weak and afraid when they faced the stormy sea.

Even now, during this pandemic, Christians (just like Paul) have to be a source of strength for others, in spite of being in the same stormy situations as unbelievers. Let us encourage unbelievers to stand up and may we feed their souls and bodies with the Word of the Lord so they can survive. In this passage, Paul became their source of hope when he encouraged them to eat in order to survive. We note that Paul was in a worse position than the soldiers taking him to Rome as a prisoner. Everyone in the ship was hungry; Paul was in hardship; the journey was a stormy one, yet he kept his faith in God who has good plans for us all. They survived through Paul’s faith. May you also be one to survive from the encouragement of this passage as you reflect on the past difficult year.



The peace that surpasses all understanding, rest upon us all.

—Nomsa N Mathabela

Nomsa is the Assistant Librarian at the University of Eswatini in Mbabane, Eswatini. She has been an ACL member since 2015.