



Is God offering eternal life to the whole of humanity through the victory over sin and death which Jesus wins on the cross?

Or is the promise of eternal life only for some people, based either on their willingness to follow Jesus or their ability to live righteous lives?

I think you can make either case by carefully selecting certain texts and not others.

Many of us are drawn to a particular answer and I must acknowledge that it is my prayer that all humanity is saved and I am comforted by all the evidence in Scripture that I can find that supports my hope in this.

Today's text is one of those that sustains this hope in me.

All the people aboard the ship were brought safely to dry land. The Christians and the non-believers. The righteous (like the centurion who protected Paul) and the sinful (the soldiers who planned to kill the prisoners and the sailors who planned to leave the others and save only themselves)

Furthermore, Paul always had faith that all would be saved.

Just before they eat their food and throw the rest into the sea to make the ship lighter, Paul says, *'Today is the fourteenth day that you have been in suspense and remaining without food, having eaten nothing. Therefore, I urge you to take some food, for it will help you survive; for none of you will lose a hair from your heads.'*

Paul had faith that they would all be saved and persuaded his companions to stake their lives on this belief. This is also why he alerted the centurion to the plan of the sailors to escape the threatened ship in the small boat. And so the centurion ordered that the boat be set adrift thus ensuring that the sailors had to help the whole ship's company survive the danger. Everybody was to remain on board until all were saved.

Paul's faith was infectious. When the ship was breaking up in sight of land, the centurion prevented the soldiers from killing the prisoners and distributed the wooden floats where they were most needed so that all would make it to the beach.

All were brought safely to land in the same way that all things are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. As Paul wrote to the Colossians, possibly after the shipwreck occurred, *'In Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to*

*reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross'.*  
(Col 1: 19-20)

Here is my prayer:

Loving Father, you rejoice in reconciling all things on earth and in heaven to yourself, through your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ; strengthen our faith that all people will be brought safely to land. Keep us from the temptation of cutting lose in small boats and leaving others behind. In all our relationships with others, may we always trust in the power of your love. Amen