

Robinson Crusoe and the Bible

Few tales have captured the imagination like the story of Robinson Crusoe. Daniel Defoe, "the Father of the English novel," tells his famous tale in the form of a Diary in which, over a period of almost thirty years, the ship-wrecked mariner is supposed to record his adventures.

Three times a verse of Scripture comes to Robinson Crusoe in an hour of special need.

The first came in a spell of sickness. Recalling that the Brazilians used tobacco as a medicine, he searched in one of the chests for a roll of tobacco - and found a Bible. This he opened casually and the first words that came to him were, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." (Psalm 50:15).

"The words," he wrote in his diary, "were very apt to my case, and made some impression on my thoughts at the time... though not so much as they did afterwards. . . . Before I lay down I did what I had never done in all my life: I kneeled down and prayed to God to fulfil the promise to me."

The second occasion was during a sense of sin. Recovered from his sickness, he began reading in the New Testament with the not uncommon result that he had found himself more deeply and sincerely affected with the wickedness of his past life. "Now," he records, "I began to construe the words mentioned above, 'Call upon me, and I will deliver thee,' in a different sense from what I had ever done before; for then I had no notion of anything being called deliverance, but my being delivered from the captivity I was in... the island was certainly a prison to me... but now I learned to take it in another sense.

Now I looked back upon my past life with such horror, and my sins appeared so dreadful, that my soul sought nothing of God but deliverance from the load of guilt that bore down all my comfort...And I add this part here, to hint to whoever shall read it, that whenever they come to a true sense of things they will find deliverance from sin a much greater blessing than deliverance from affliction."

The third occasion was caused by the sight of savages. The knowledge that savages could come to his island put Robinson Crusoe into a perfect panic. "Never frightened hare fled to cover, or fox to earth, with more terror of mind than I to my retreat." Many and elaborate were the defences he made for his safety, "not forgetting seriously to commend myself to the divine protection and earnestly to pray to God to deliver me out of the hands of the barbarians." The answer to that prayer was freedom from fear, and a friend for his loneliness in Man Friday.

He sets down the outcome of it all: "My grief sat lighter upon me, my habitation grew comfortable to me beyond measure. . . I had not only been moved myself to look up to heaven, and to seek to the hand that brought me hither, but was now to be made an instrument, under Providence, to save the life, and, for aught I knew, the soul of a poor savage, and bring him to the true knowledge of religion, and of the Christian doctrine, that he might know Christ Jesus, 'to know Whom is life eternal.'"

The story of how God so fully and particularly answered Robinson Crusoe's prayer may become the experience of all who, cast upon some desert island of doubt and despair, turn, with all their hearts and in true repentance, to seek Him from Whom alone deliverance can come.

I know not where His islands lift

Their leafy palms in air;

I only know I cannot drift

Beyond His love and care.