

Robinson Crusoe's Decision and Yours

In 1719, Daniel Defoe wrote Robinson Crusoe. Most biographers would agree that much of what you read in this famous classic is to some degree autobiographical. In the tale of swashbuckling adventure of being lost at sea, encounters with Spaniards and natives, and trying his hand at entrepreneurship, we have a tendency to romanticize the bold undertaking of our main character, Robinson. As he comes to the end of fifty-four years abroad and traveling virtually around much of the then known world, we come to a happily-ever-after ending. In real life, this did not occur for Mr. Defoe. The young man many suspected headed for the ministry in the lineage of the Puritans, instead changed courses and became quite a man of the world. But at the end of his life, he died penniless. A sad ending to an illustrious writing career. Perhaps we can catch some insight to his own life that may have been revealing for the hearts and eyes that are open.

In the first chapter of Robinson Crusoe, we find the eighteen-year-old Robinson wanting to go off to sea. He is going against the will of his father. And his father, with tears, pleads with him not to follow the prodigal steps of his older brother who died in a wayward state. Defoe tells it like this: "...yet he would venture to say to me, that if I did take this foolish step, God would not bless me, and I would have leisure hereafter to reflect upon having neglected his counsel when there might be none to assist in my recovery.

I observed in this last part of his discourse, which was truly prophetic, though I suppose my father did not know it to be so himself; I say, I observed the tears run down his face very plentifully, and especially when he spoke of my brother who was killed; and that when he spoke of my having leisure to repent, and none to assist me, he was so moved, that he broke off the discourse, and told me, his heart was so full he could say no more to me."

The father in our story pitifully laments, "...there might be none to assist in [his] recovery." Those chilling words, are sadly more prophetic of other young peoples' lives in the 289 years since the original release of this classic in literature, than we would care to calculate. I remember in my youth hearing Dr. Warren Weirsbe say, "Classics are classics for a reason." He went on to explain that there is a common truth that plays upon the soul of man that runs through a true classic. In the age of living your own way, following your own path, the subtle warnings of an old classic are often not only heeded, but seldom repeated. The thought is there shall come a time when you are ready to repent, but the damage has been done, and there will be "none to assist." Let's talk about this.

1. Conviction is real.

I like looking up the same word in a variety of dictionaries. Many of the modern dictionaries bypass a certain alternate definition of "conviction" altogether. Some modern dictionaries merely define conviction as a firmly held position or belief or, in a legal sense, one who has formally been declared guilty of criminal offense. I had to go Noah Webster's 1828 edition to really get the definition I want for this point: the act of convincing of sin or sinfulness; the state of being sensible of guilt, the act of compelling to acknowledge his error, or truth of what is alleged. In the actual space of definitions, Noah Webster placed this sentence: "By conviction, a sinner is brought to repentance. Men often sin against the conviction of their own consciences." This definition seems as antiquated to some as the admission of the reality of its existence.

Read carefully these inspired words, the last words of the apostle Paul about the days we are living in: II Timothy 4:1-3, "*I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they*

will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.” oday men’s ears are itching and they are heaping teachers to themselves who will scratch those itching ears and say what they want to hear. It was this same apostle who, on the road to Damascus, was converted. Notice please the words of Jesus to him that blessed day: *“And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks”* (Acts 26:14). Paul (Saul) was fallen to the earth; conviction, when heeded, stops you from going in the direction of self-destruction. Paul was addressed in his native tongue. Although most of the world was speaking Greek and in the area of Israel and Palestine, Aramaic was predominant. Christ, however, talked to Paul in the language of his youth: the Hebrew language from the Torah (Inspired Scripture) that he memorized. It was the language that had not been defiled in his ear by blasphemy. Conviction brings you back to the basic understanding that God is talking and He reveals it in such a way that you know it is He. Christ informed Paul that it was hard to kick against the pricks. The pricks were the goads that were used to inflict discomfort and pain to the ox to get him moving. Conviction like those sharp sticks makes you miserable.

May whoever reads these words stop in his or her tracks, obey the unmistakable voice of the Lord and give in to the sticking, discomforting ways of God’s conviction. Christ was there, ready to assist Paul, help Paul turn his life completely around for the glory of God. God’s conviction is always temporary, to bring you to repentance. The outcome is glorious: *“For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it”* (Galatians 1:13). Now look at the contrast as revealed to Ananias: *“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel”* (Acts 9:15).

2. There is a time limit to God’s longsuffering mercy.

“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him” (Psalm 103:8-11).

If we do not eventually respond positively to God’s conviction, the inevitability shall happen. One of the most sobering passages of Scripture is found in the New Testament: *“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it”* (I John 5:16). There is the possibility that when a child of God goes headstrong into their sin, that the Lord finally says, “Okay, that’s enough.” At this moment, salvation is not lost, but life is. Think of this: there are two types of death for the unrepentant: the cessation of life itself as defined here in I John, then there is another equally miserable existence akin to the cessation of the abundant life granted to us by grace through faith: *“But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth”* (I Timothy 5:6). The “pleasure” mentioned here is referenced in Hebrews 11:25: *“...the pleasures of sin for a season”* (Hebrews 11:25). Sin’s pleasure lasts only for a season, but also, while involved in it, there is the conviction that what you are doing is wrong, for *“she is dead while she liveth”* (I Timothy 5:6). So the pleasurable sensation is even shorter than you might have already anticipated. While you have the ability to receive assistance, turn now, before it’s too late!

3. While assistance can be received, respond.

Again, I return to the words of Defoe’s character who is about to defy his father: *“...if I did take this foolish step, God would not bless me, and I would have leisure hereafter to reflect upon having neglected his counsel when there might be none to assist in my recovery.”* A parachutist who has jumped from an airplane has a back-up emergency parachute ripcord. Perhaps you have already missed a number

of opportunities to repent and receive assistance. This article may be your final offer, your emergency ripcord still available for you. Hear God's tender and kind voice say, "*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool*" (Isaiah 1:18). God is waiting; the friends of God, His children, are there to assist. You're just a step away. Step up!

-Pastor Pope-

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