

Surviving On An Island

by Dr. Rosalie de Rosset

In the great seventeenth century classic, Robinson Crusoe, British novelist Daniel Defoe presents the doctrine of sovereignty in the most beguiling and complex way. In fact, the book is so memorable that many people who have never read it recognize the name of the title character and picture him with his huge animal skin hat, a parrot on his shoulder, and an oversized umbrella in his hand. Most people, however, mistakenly believe that this is just the adventure story of a man stuck on a desert island. Instead, what God does with the wayward Crusoe, who against his father's injunctions keeps jumping on ships because he has the wanderlust, is to allow him to be shipwrecked on a remote tropical island where he must work to survive and where he meets God in a stunning and personal way. Ironically, the confines of the island and the discipline of work and hardship, of terror and uncertainty teach Crusoe more than he ever learned in his vast travels around the world. Beyond learning how to survive physically (an amazing process), Crusoe also becomes a grateful Christian who depends on His maker for all his needs. Listen to his words in a key quote from the book: *So little do we see before us in the world, and so much reason have we to depend cheerfully [sic] upon the great Maker of the world, that He does not leave his creatures so absolutely destitute, but that in the worst circumstances they have always something to be thankful for, and sometimes are nearer their deliverance than they imagine; nay, are even brought to their deliverance by the means by which they seem to be brought to their destruction.*¹

That God is sovereign in history is also the great theme of the Old Testament and one of the most profoundly comforting doctrines in Christianity. As one reads through the books of Kings and Chronicles, the behavior of those in charge of the nation of Israel takes one on a rollercoaster. One king does evil in the sight of the Lord; another does good –up and down, down and up. Through it all, God is ultimately in charge of His nation and of His world.

Probably the most important thing American Christians must come to terms with in the modern political climate is that we cannot ride the waves of our historic faith, lulled by the presupposition that we live in a Christian nation which is friendly to our theological and moral conclusions or even just indifferent to our claims. We must acknowledge the reality that we live in a post-Christian nation which, for two or three decades, has been growing more and more hostile to the idea of objective truth because of the invasion of an ideology of tolerance which has shown particular intolerance to conservative Christians. Perhaps, like Robinson Crusoe, we are metaphorically shipwrecked, unable to follow our wanderlusts of material comfort, worship as entertainment, and intellectual laziness any longer. In order to survive as sturdy, compelling Christians, we may have to put some work into survival and in that discipline develop passionate and grateful hearts toward God, certainly a kind of deliverance into true faith. That's my perspective.

For Moody Radio, this is Rosalie de Rosset

¹ Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, New York: Penguin Classics, 1985, p. 251.