

### WEC 09 Bible Talk 3: Fate vs. Guidance

Good evening. So- you're still here, still breathing, right? Why?

Suppose you really had to answer that?

Suppose you were on an island by yourself, with no expectation of escape.

One of the things that struck me when I watched the movie was the sound of the surf. It was almost the only sound on the island. There seemed to be no animals but crabs - which aren't very noisy - not even any birds. Occasionally there was thunder and wind, but always, always the sound of the surf. It could only be a reminder of dreadful isolation; the endless ocean, and the near impossibility of escape through its vicious turbulence. It reminded me of the closing words of Robert Louis Stevenson's book, *Treasure Island*. As the hero, Jim, thinks of the vast treasure still on his desert island, he says ;

"Oxen and wain-ropes would not bring me back again to that accursed island; and the worst dreams that ever I have are when I hear the surf booming about its coasts or start upright in bed with the sharp voice of Captain Flint still ringing in my ears: "Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight!"

Chuck was a prisoner: the pounding surf pounded that home to him every day. Many people think of tropical islands as a kind of paradise, but it didn't seem that way to him! Whatever had he done to deserve this?

Did you notice the angel wings? There is no real mention of God in this movie - other than some inappropriate expletives - but the angel wings raise a question. Is Chuck's misfortune just a cruel accident of blind fate, or is there some larger, unseen force at work behind it all?

Chuck is a very modern man, in the sense that he is not spiritual. He is practical; he is scientifically minded, he gets things done in the real world and doesn't worry about things he

can't see. When there is a problem, he runs in and solves it. Even if he has to "borrow" a child's bicycle to do it. Even if he has to spoil Christmas and put off proposing to his fiancée, he will be there; he will get it done; he will solve the problem. Then suddenly, he is stripped of everything; he has control of nothing. How will he react?

As the story progresses, we see him struggling to make sense of things. He rushes to pull the body of the pilot from the sea- then doesn't know what to do with it. After an awkward burial, he writes a note on a rock on the off chance that someone who cares will see it someday. He looks at the grave, and says "So. That's it." Not a very profound eulogy over the body of a man who had a life, a job, children, friends. He can make no sense of it. He carefully piles the sodden FedEx packages on the beach; it is his duty to deliver packages! Once they are safely piled up, they become "home base", the focal point of his activities. Then it dawns on him that he's not going to make the delivery this time. A line is crossed when he opens them for his own use. Only one package escapes; the one with the enigmatic angel wings. What can they mean? This is a tenuous suggestion that there might be something bigger than blind fate behind all that has happened to him. This image becomes very important to him as time passes.

And, time passes. Four years, in which a techno-geek becomes a cave man. Hope rises and falls; escape is attempted, and fails; disaster looms and recedes. Suicide is contemplated, and rejected. Then, one day, when life was reduced to "just breathing", the tide brought a gift. Fate, or design? Determined to risk all on the chance of escape, Chuck is galvanized into action. Time becomes important again; he has his first deadline in 4 years. And, his risk pays off. Against all logic, a tiny speck on the vast Pacific Ocean is found and rescued by a ship.

Chuck has a second chance. Why? His greatest hope; his fondest dream, the vision that kept him going was Kelly. She is beyond reach. FedEx isn't as compelling a motivation

as it once was. But, the angel wing package remains. It links his 3 lives: pre-island, island and post-island. It is a task to finish; “to deliver his package”, as he did in his old life, and to deliver his thanks for the hope he received on the island. And there, on the vast Texas plains, at a crossroads, he ponders. He has a new life; possibilities stretch out before him in every direction. But, has the angel wing package guided him to the angel wing lady? Or, is it all just blind fate?

All of us have faced suffering of some sort, and we will probably face more. All of us ponder the strange twists and coincidences in our lives. Is Someone trying to tell us something?

The Romans 8 passage you studied this morning paints an astounding picture. In Eden, all was well. Then Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and sin came into the world. Suddenly, everything was changed. Every part of creation was affected. A process was begun which has stretched across the millenia to today, and beyond until the Day of Judgement. The events of our lives are caught up in a vast plan, God’s plan of salvation. In all the twists and turns of our lives, God is at work to reveal Himself to us. The question is, are we looking for His guidance, or are we too busy feeling sorry for ourselves, and all the things that have befallen us? Or, are we “too smart” to believe there is a Power behind the events we see played out around us?

The world looks very different when you come to see that it is not ruled by blind chance. When you learn that we do not die and cease to exist. When you realize that our lives become important, not when we force our will on others, but when we work for the good of all, because that is what our Creator wants us to do.

All of us are busy people. Perhaps some of you just keep on breathing, waiting to see what the tide will bring. We are not likely to be cast up on a desert island any time soon, but I hope that during the brief time you have been at this camp, you have had time to think,

and will ask yourselves if the world is only what you see, or if there is Someone unseen calling your name; Someone Who will give you a good reason to keep on breathing.