

The theme of god's mercy in defoe's robinson crusoe

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As a shipwreck and the only crewmember to outlive a savage storm, the story of Robinson Crusoe delves into mankind's instinctual capacity to survive. The young man's search to cope illustrates the complexities of spiritual and individual truths, as he is suddenly "divided from mankind" and "cast upon a desolate island." Crusoe is tormented by his own faith and questions the prospect of divine intervention. At times, he views his remarkable escape from death as a blessing and actively exclaims God to be the source of this salvation. However, Crusoe approaches his fate with the notion that his circumstances were of no other cause than bad luck. He finds comfort in the rational pursuit of basic necessities but often falls prey to self-pity and torment. The daily records of his experience become an embodiment of the patterns that build a characterizing tone of constant change. Most prominent in the position of helplessness, the weak and desperate side of Crusoe is spiritual. The man's cries for help occur in instances of severe doubts towards his mortality and arise a sudden need for comfort through God. Forced to live with a constant reflection of himself and his circumstances thus far in life, Crusoe's adventure is the coupling of both biblical and existential considerations.

Crusoe's psyche repeatedly depends on utilizing mechanical distractions, as he is more focused on thoughts of his exterior challenges. As one characterizing mode of thought, he uses problem solving to his own advantage. The factual tone combined with a methodically organized timeline within his journal reveal his tendency to be logically driven, even going as far as making a pros and cons list to categorize his circumstances on the island. In moments of vulnerability, which often "forced tears from

(his) eyes,” the motives of his pains are self-serving. In one instance, he experiences a longing for “comfort and company,” as he is now alone in the strangeness of the seemingly unoccupied island. Instead of sorrowing for the lost lives of his crew, Crusoe mourns objectively, turning their tragedy into a mere inconvenience of his solitary lifestyle. Immediately, he feels lonely, complaining of being “wet... having no clothes... nor anything either to eat or drink to comfort” (41 Defoe). Eventually, he chooses the most rational course and “considers the next day.” Crusoe describes this mode of thought as using “reason” to “master” any “despondency” that inevitably found its way into his psyche (57).

Constantly questioning the truth behind his placement on the island, Crusoe succumbs to a religious foundation in multiple instances. When experiencing an overwhelming bout of sickness, Crusoe desperately calls for God’s help and cries, ““ Lord, look upon me! Lord, pity me! Lord, have mercy upon me!”” The sudden yearn for God’s aid and compassion is circumstantial, lacking the qualities necessary for true repentance. However, fleeting moments of triumph and relief are often accompanied with a spiritual origin, suddenly claiming God to be an active participant in his fate. The perspective shifts. The shipwreck is an act of God, which “wonderfully sent the ship near enough to the shore” so his “singled out and separated” condition is now blessing. Crusoe contains the capacity to view God in a virtuous; however, the thoughts are inconsistent and often followed by his abatement of their validity in opposing beliefs. If used as a last resort or bout of joy, prayers become a mere mechanism to ease the realities of his rigorous conditions.

The subtle reference to Jonah and the whale parallels Crusoe's conscience with the scripture's overall cautionary objective. Jonah is aboard "the ship of Tarshish" (15) and Crusoe is "on a ship bound for London" (9), both faced with a storm so strong it becomes a personification of God's wrath. Death for both was suddenly approaching; as the ocean's power provoked a terror so deep in body and mind that penitence overcame their thoughts. In a position of inner condemnation, the sins of their past were "overtaken by the Judgment of Heaven," now guided by desperate exclamations and promises to fix their sinful natures in the chance of survival. Jonah and Crusoe's motives differ slightly; Jonah is fleeing from God's demands while Crusoe is abandoning the boundaries of a life devoted to this higher power. As a means of religious intervention, the placement of Crusoe on an island without other human interactions is a consequence of his faltering faith, only prevalent when his demise is near. The cost of God's mercy is through repentance, only possible through a genuine conviction that one's punishment is just. Crusoe's fortune is the less fortunate of the two. His erratic appeals of self-serving intentions lead him into "the deepest Gulph of human Misery that ever man fell into." Crusoe becomes a prisoner to a jarring environment, filled with constant reflections of him and simultaneously overcoming the exterior obstacles of the natural world.

Crusoe begins his reflections describing himself as the "poor miserable Robinson Crusoe," inhabiting the most "dismal" and "unfortunate...Island of Despair," illustrating one aspect of his tendency to be childish and self-absorbed (60 Defoe).

The back and forth pledges to God by Crusoe begin his pattern of a constantly changing system of beliefs.