

The Atheist

One of the most remarkable stories to come out of World War II is the story of an Air Force plane that crashed in the Pacific. On board were Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker, the famous World War I fighter pilot, Lt. James Whittaker, and a crew of six others. All eight survived the crash. For the next 21 days they floated in three tiny rubber rafts without food or water. Their only source of strength was a daily prayer service. It consisted of reading from a pocket Bible and praying spontaneously to God. Lt. Whittaker was the only atheist in the group, but not for long. On the sixth day the men were growing weak and needed food and water badly. After their evening prayer service, they fired off a flare, hoping it would attract a ship or a plane.

But the flare was faulty and fell back among the rafts. As it did, it attracted a school of fish. In their excitement, two fish leaped into one of the rafts. The men had their first food in a week. The next afternoon the men prayed for water. Shortly afterward, they were deluged by a rain storm. From that point on, Lt. Whittaker became a believer. On the tenth day something special happened. After their daily prayer service, the men confessed their sins aloud. It was a beautiful display of faith and humility in the presence of God and one another.

On the 13th day another remarkable thing happened. A heavy shower of rain passed by, missing the thirsty men by a thousand feet. For the first time Lt. Whittaker led the others in prayer. He prayed that the rain would return. What happened then he describes this way in a book he later wrote about the experience:

"There are some things that can't be explained by the natural law. The wind did not change, but the receding curtain of rain began to move slowly toward us against the wind. We drank, and caught a store of water." On the 21st day they spotted land. Lt. Whittaker manned the oars of his raft. Seven and a half hours later he reached land.

He later wrote, "Today, fully recovered, I would hesitate to tackle that stretch of water. Yet, exhausted from three weeks of thirst, hunger and exposure, I accomplished the feat".

As soon as they reached land, they knelt down and gave thanks to God. When Lt. Whittaker returned home, he wrote a best-selling book about the experience. He also toured the country, sharing his new faith with live audiences.

The man who started out as an unbeliever became the most ardent believer of all. When you reach this point, like Eddie Rickenbacker faith, you will know that...

YOU ARE LOVED,

Deacon Dan