

DUNKIRK

and the mighty hand of God on our nation

The Warner Bros. film *Dunkirk* is vivid and dramatic, focusing as it does on the real life drama of over 300,000 British and Allied troops being rescued from the beaches of Dunkirk in 1940. What many people may not know, however, is the vital part that prayer

played in the miraculous rescuing of so many soldiers.

We need to understand just how serious - strategically and militarily - the situation was in the Spring of 1940. The Low Countries and France were being quickly overrun by Hitler's troops and the British Expeditionary Force, comprising the main body of the British army, was located in western Belgium and becoming trapped, with only one possible port to head for and escape from, namely Dunkirk.

On Monday 27th May the German High Command asserted that "The British Army is encircled and our troops are proceeding to its annihilation" ¹. So serious was the army's predicament that Prime Minister Churchill initially expected that only some 45,000 men would be rescued from the beaches.

However, this nation was blessed with a God-fearing king, George VI, who called for a national day of prayer on Sunday 26th May. All across the country vast numbers of people desired to join in earnest prayer, and churches were packed. The nation was being dreadfully humbled by a powerful enemy, but many, who had perhaps been careless spiritually, were at least now willing, in the nation's hour of need, to cry out for help to the God who is the Ruler of all the nations.

The operation to rescue the British and Allied forces began on Monday 27th May, the day after the national day of prayer. A large German tank

division was under 15 miles from Dunkirk, where over 300,000 British and French soldiers were either heading or congregating. Hitler did not order his tanks to advance, thinking that the Luftwaffe on its own could prevent the soldiers amassed on the beaches from escaping. However, on Tuesday 28th May a violent storm broke out over Flanders, preventing the German Air Force from taking off. This enabled the British soldiers heading towards the beaches to reach them without coming under attack from the air.

On Thursday 30th May fog was still grounding the Luftwaffe, facilitating the evacuation of thousands of soldiers onto waiting naval vessels. There was a further remarkable occurrence regarding the weather. The storm in Flanders notwithstanding, the English Channel during the period of evacuation became as calm as a mill pond. This enabled large numbers of “little ships” to cross the Channel to aid the rescue process, ferrying troops from the beaches to the destroyers offshore. By May 30th 126,000 soldiers had already been rescued ².

The evacuation would continue over 9 days until 4th June, and this enabled altogether a total of 338,226 soldiers to be rescued ³. This outcome was nothing less than the one true Trinitarian God answering the prayers of a humbled nation. The success of the rescue mission shows us that when a people realise their need and sinfulness and cry out to God for mercy, remarkable things do indeed happen.

Contemporary Britain in all its God-rejecting political correctness should consider the truth that its national well-being is determined by the hand of the Lord. God judges nations which defy Him. Each individual must examine his or her own heart, and turn in repentance and faith to the only Saviour of men, the Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the Cross bearing the penalty for sin, so that all who believe in Him might be acquitted and saved. Christ’s salvation of sinners is the greatest rescue mission that this world will ever know.

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¹ The Trumpet Sounds for Britain, Jesus Is Alive Ministries, David E. Gardner, Vol. 2, p48

² http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/dunkirk_spinning_01.shtml

³ <http://www.evangelical-times.org/archive/item/4265/News/Operation-Dynamo/>