

A Choice for Righteousness

During World War II, Dr. Ernest Gordon – who later became chaplain of Princeton University – was a prisoner of war in Thailand.

In his book, *Through the Valley of the Kwai*, he reflects on the difference between two Christmas seasons he spent in prison. In Christmas 1942, he said there were thousands of American soldiers in that prison who robbed the sick among them, mistreated one another, and did not care whether the other prisoners lived or died.

During the following year, a healthy American soldier began giving his rationed food to a sick buddy to help him get well. In time, the sick prisoner recovered, but the buddy who had given him food died of malnutrition.

The story of the man who sacrificed his life to save a buddy made the rounds of the camp.

Some of the prisoners remarked that he was a lot like Christ. Some of the soldiers began to recall passages from the Bible they had learned years earlier under far different circumstances. One of the passages stated, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:12-13 NKJV).

Some of the soldiers who were Christians took heart and began to witness to other men. The prisoners began to ask about Christ and to meet for Bible study. When they began to know Christ as Lord, the entire atmosphere in the camp changed from despair and desperation to hope and compassion.

When the Christmas of 1943 arrived, Dr. Gordon said 2,000 prisoners assembled for worship. They sang carols and someone read the story of the birth of Jesus from a Gospel account.

And much more was different than the previous Christmas. In spite of their hunger, prisoners who were well shared food with the sick to help them gain strength faster. They cared for one another. They agreed that the difference came about because of faith in Christ, and people who lived His love in the midst of unloving circumstances.

The choices they made were for righteousness and not for evil.

What a remarkable story of a man who was willing to sacrifice his life for a buddy! Because of one man’s devotion to God and his love for another, thousands of lives were saved. He became an example to fellow prisoners.

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We don't have to die a physical death to show the depth of our compassion and love through the sacrifices of our time and talents for others. It happens in the pursuit of our mission in Life Care and Century Park. It is noticed, and it leads to change.

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies – in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 4:10-11 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter