

## When Nazis Came Knocking

Philip Haille went to the little village of Le Chambon, France, to write about a people who, unlike other villages, had hidden their Jews from the Nazis. He wondered what caused them to risk their lives to do such extraordinary good.

He interviewed people in the village and was overwhelmed – not by their extraordinary qualities, but by their ordinariness. They were not an unusually bright, quick-witted, brave, or discerning people.

Haille looked for possible connections between the citizens' lives to find the reason they had done what no other French town had done. In the end, the author concluded that the one factor uniting them to do good was their attendance at their little church.



Sunday after Sunday, they heard the sermons of Pastor Edouard Theis and local minister Andre Trochme. Over time, they became people who knew what was right and obtained the courage from God to do it. When it came time for them to act boldly – as on the day the Nazis came to town – they quietly did what was right.

One elderly woman faked a heart attack when the Nazis came to search her house. She told Haille about her personal dramatic ploy. “Pastor always taught us that there comes a time in every life when a person is asked to do something for Jesus. When my time came, I just knew what to do.”

Jews were hidden in private homes, on farms in the area, as well as public institutions. Whenever the Nazi patrols came searching, they were hidden in the countryside. After the war, one of the villagers recalled: “As soon as the soldiers left, we would go into the forest and sing a song. When they heard that song, the Jews knew it was safe to come home.”

It is estimated that the people of the area of Le Chambon saved between 3,000 to 5,000 Jews from certain death.

There were two strong beliefs that gave the citizens of this town inner strength of steel. First, they knew their spiritual strength together in Christ was greater than any foe they faced. Even in times of war, they did not forsake gathering together. Second, they took the Word of God into their hearts in an active way, knowing God would bless them when the principles of their faith were reflected in their behavior.

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The strength and courage Haille discovered in the people of Le Chambon was a result of their simple obedience to God – never to stop meeting together to worship and hear His Word. When extreme difficulty came their way, their unity in the faith was a habitual part of their everyday lives.

Thank God today for a church where you can receive strength and courage. If you don't go to church, ask the Lord to lead you to the body of believers just right for you.

– Beecher Hunter