

From Pearl Harbor to Calvary: A Japanese Pilot's Radical Journey to Salvation

Read Time: 3 Minutes 52 Seconds

Note: Much of the information for this article was taken from an essay on titled, "Mitsuo Fuchida: A Forgotten Story of Faith."

Captain Mitsuo Fuchida was "disgusted by the idea of war trials." He believed that everyone should know that "war was war and that cruel acts occurred on both sides," and the idea of testifying as to the events of Dec. 1941 angered him greatly.

Little did the man who led the attack on Pearl Harbor know one day he would accept Jesus Christ as his savior, and that testimonies from an American prisoner of war would inspire him greatly.

The attack on Pearl Harbor, a complete shock to an unsuspecting United States, killed 2,403 people—68 of whom were civilians. The attack destroyed 19 Navy ships, eight of which were battleships.

The attack motivated the US to enter the war, turning the tides of history.

Fuchida led the first wave of 183 attack aircraft on Pearl Harbor. His plane was hit 21 times by anti-aircraft fire, but it did not crash. The success of his mission granted him an audience with Emperor Showa.

It was after the war, however, that Fuchida was summoned by American Gen. Douglas MacArthur in Tokyo. He also met with his former flight engineer, Kazuo Kanegasaki, who told him that,

as a prisoner of war, he was treated well.

Kanegasaki told Fuchida of the story of Peggy Covell, who cared for Japanese prisoners and whose parents were captured by Japanese soldiers. Before the soldiers beheaded them, her parents asked for and were granted 30 minutes to pray for their executioners.

When Fuchida heard the story, he was dumbfounded. He couldn't understand why they would pray to a god who "could not save them from the sword. Why would the Covell parents pray for their enemies who would shortly behead them?"

Kanegasaki could not answer the question. Fuchida couldn't reconcile Peggy's forgiveness or "a higher obligation to love someone, especially an enemy."

He would soon discover why.

Summoned again to testify, he met an American soldier named Jacob DeShazer, who handed him a pamphlet titled, "I Was a Prisoner in Japan," which recounted the story of DeShazer, who was one of General Doolittle's Raiders whose B-25 planes bombed Japan in 1942 and he was held captive for 40 months, included 34 months in solitary confinement.

DeShazer was beaten and malnourished and watched as three of his crew were executed by firing squad. During his captivity, however, he asked his guards for a copy of the Bible, which he was allowed to have for only three weeks. He read the Bible in the POW camp, and he accepted the message of salvation through Jesus Christ, which transformed his life.

He learned Japanese and learned to treat his captors with respect. The guards responded positively, which DeShazer says probably saved his life, and he resolved someday to bring the gospel to Japan, which he eventually did, establishing a church in Nagoya, a city which had been bombed 10 years earlier.

The stories of Covell and DeShazer intrigued Fuchida so much that he wanted to more about this "Christian God." In 1949, Fuchida purchased a Bible in the same city where he had received the pamphlet from DeShazer.

As he read the gospels, the Lord pierced Fuchida's heart and helped him to understand why Covell and DeShazer could show forgiveness to those who had hurt them. It was Jesus' crucifixion and his words in the Gospel of Luke, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing," that penetrated Fuchida's soul.

"That's when I met Jesus," Fuchida said. "Looking back, I can see now that the Lord had laid His hand upon me so that I might serve Him."

And, on April 14, 1950, Fuchida accepted Jesus as his savior. The following month, he sought DeShazer out and said to him, "I have desired to meet you, Mr. DeShazer. My name is Mitsuo Fuchida." DeShazer soon recognized the name, and the former enemies embraced as brothers in Christ.

Fuchida would spend the remainder of his life as a world-traveling evangelist. He even became good friends with the Rev. Billy Graham.

Fuchida's booklet, *From Pearl Harbor to Calvary*, explored Fuchida's long journey to faith in Jesus. He eventually succumbed to diabetes in 1976. {eoa}

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