

THE TESTIMONY OF JACOB DeSHAZER

"I was a prisoner of Japan for forty long months, thirty-four of them in solitary confinement. When I flew as a member of General Jimmy Doolittle's squadron on the first raid over Japan on April 18th, 1942, my heart was filled with bitter hatred for the people of that nation. When our plane ran out of gas, and the members of the crew of my plane had to parachute down into Japanese-held territory in China and were captured by the enemy, the bitterness of my heart against my captors seemed more than I could bear.

Taken to Tokyo with the survivors of another of our planes, we were imprisoned and beaten, half-starved, and denied by solitary confinement even the comfort of association with one another, these terrible tortures taking place at Tokyo, Shanghai, Nanking, and Peiping. Three of my buddies, Dean Hallmark, Bill Farrow and Harold Spatz, were executed by a firing squad about six months after our capture, and fourteen months later another of them, Bob Meder, died of slow starvation. My hatred for the Japanese people nearly drove me crazy.

It was soon after Meder's death that I began to ponder the cause of such hatred between members of the human race. I wondered what it was that made the Japanese hate the Americans, and what we hate the Japanese. My thoughts turned toward what I had heard about Christianity changing hatred between human beings into real brotherly love, and I was gripped with a strange longing to examine the Christians' Bible to see if I could find the secret. I begged my captors to get a Bible for me. At last, in the month of May, 1944, a guard brought the Book . . .

I eagerly began to read its pages. Chapter after chapter gripped my heart . . . Suddenly I discovered that God had given me new spiritual eyes, and that when I looked at the Japanese officers and guards who had starved and beaten me and my companions so cruelly, I found my bitter hatred for them changed to loving pity".

After the war Jacob studied for the ministry, married a woman interested in missions, and returned to Japan to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jacob, Florence, and their infant son Paul, set sail for Japan on Dec. 14, 1948. The DeShazer family remained in Japan for the next thirty years, and founded twenty-three new churches.

Over thirty million copies of his testimony have been distributed all over the world in over twenty different languages. Thousands have come to Christ because of this testimony. Perhaps the most notorious convert was Fuchida Mitsuo, the lead pilot in the infamous raid on Pearl Harbor. During the war he was nationally famous, regularly speaking for crowds of cheering countrymen. When he read the testimony of Jacob DeShazer he decided to go immediately to the source of such love and bought a New Testament. Fuchida said that reading about Jesus was "like having the sun come up". Glenn Wagner, who ultimately led him to Christ, explained to the great Japanese hero that a Christian should read the Bible and pray every day (which Fuchida was doing already). Christians, he said, are also to bear witness of their faith every day, which Fuchida thought he could never do. After reflecting on this, however, he was ashamed of his cowardice. He therefore went to a major intersection in Osaka with a loud speaker, and preached Christ. Among other things, he said: *"I am Fuchida Mitsuo, a former navy captain who commanded the air attacking forces against Pearl Harbor on 8 December, 1941. But now I'm a Christian and I want to tell you how I became one. All Japanese want peace, I'm sure of that. No one wants war again, no one less than I, who engaged in war as a naval officer for almost four years. I know the brutality and the cruelties of war better than many people. Now I want to work for peace. But how can mankind achieve a lasting peace?"* Obviously, the answer to Fuchida Mitsuo, was Jesus Christ.

"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death." (Rev 12:11)

(This information was adapted from the book *"The First Heroes"* by Craig Nelson)