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The Power of the Gospel



Part 28 (010318AM)

[Return to previous Page](#) | [Print](#)

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LUKE 8 "THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL"

As we open to [Luke 19:10](#) may I remind you about this wonderful book of the Bible we call the Gospel by Luke? If ever a man wrote a book filled with the Best news anyone could ever get, Dr. Luke is that man. His key message is, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" ([Luke 19:10](#)). He presents Jesus Christ as the compassionate Son of man, who came to live among sinners, love them, help them, and die for them. In this Gospel you meet individuals as well as crowds, women and children as well as men, poor people as well as rich people, and sinners along with saints. It's a book with a message for *everybody*, because Luke's emphasis is on the universality of Jesus Christ and His salvation: "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" ([Luke 2:10](#)) [1].

This Gospel of Jesus is powerful. Have you shared it this week? As we turn back now to our opening text in [Luke 14:15-24](#) may I illustrate the power of the Gospel? Listen to Christ's power of salvation from this moving story from World War II.. Remember the Day of Infamy when we were attacked and drawn into the 2nd World War? It begins at [7:55](#) A.M. on Sunday, December [2] 7, 1941. In a daring surprise air raid, the Japanese attacked the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. In less than two hours, 2,403 American soldiers, sailors, and civilians were killed, and another 1,178 wounded. Aircraft losses totaled 188 planes, and much of the United States Pacific Fleet was destroyed or damaged.

The bombing raid against Pearl Harbor was actually led by a brilliant thirty-nine year old Japanese Navy pilot named Mitsuo Fuchida, whose idol was Adolf Hitler. Although his plane was hit several times by ground fire, he survived the raid. The attack on Pearl Harbor led to the United States' entry into World War II, and ultimately to the devastation of the Japanese homeland by American conventional and atomic bombs.

After the war, Fuchida was haunted by memories of all the death he had witnessed. In an attempt to find solace, he took up farming near Osaka. His thoughts turned more and more to the problem of peace, and he decided to write a book on the subject. In his book, which he intended to call *No More Pearl Harbors*, he would urge the world to pursue peace. Fuchida struggled in vain, however, to find a principle upon which peace could be based. His story is picked up by Donald A.

- Part: 27 [Seven Reasons Why I Believe the Bible](#)
- Part: 26 [Do You See Christ in the Old Testament?](#)
- Part: 25 [The Scriptures Are Christ-Centered](#)
- Part: 24 [Survey From II Thessalonians to Revelation](#)
- Part: 23 [Seeing Christ From Acts to Thessalonians](#)
- Part: 22 [Testimony-Have You Changed?](#)
- Part: 21 [Seeing Christ in the Book of Acts](#)
- Part: 20 [Christ in John](#)
- Part: 19 [Seeing Christ in the Gospel by Luke](#)
- Part: 18 [Seeing Christ in the Gospel by Mark](#)
- Part: 17 [Seeing Christ in the Gospel by Matthew](#)
- Part: 16 [Hearing Christ's Voice](#)
- Part: 15 [The Seven Greatest Days of Christ's Ministry](#)
- Part: 14 [Finding Christ in ALL the Gospels](#)
- Part: 13 [A Jet Tour of the Gospels](#)
- Part: 12 [Finding Christ Between the Testaments](#)
- Part: 11 [Seeing Christ Through the Prophets](#)
- Part: 10 [Seeing Christ Through the Books of Poetry](#)
- Part: 9 [Finding Christ in the Books of History](#)
- Part: 8 [Are You In?](#)
- Part: 7 [Do You Believe and Have This Life?](#)
- Part: 6 [Believers Are Word Receiving](#)
- Part: 5 [They \(OT Scriptures\) Speak of ME](#)
- Part: 4 [Good Hearts Accept the Word: Part II](#)
- Part: 3 [Good Hearts Accept the Word](#)
- Part: 2 [Seeing the Bible as Whole in Christ](#)
- Part: 1 [Christ - the Key to Scripture](#)

Rosenberger, an American naval yeoman who survived the Pearl Harbor attack. He writes,

Fuchida began looking for stories about prisoners of war that seemed to illustrate the principle for which he was searching. His first report came from a friend—a lieutenant who had been captured by the Americans and incarcerated in a prisoner of war camp in America. Fuchida saw his name in a newspaper, in a list of POWs who were returning to Japan. He determined to visit him. When they met, they spoke of many things. Then Fuchida asked the question uppermost in his mind. "How did they treat you in the POW camp?" His friend said they were treated fairly well, although they suffered much mentally and spiritually. But then he told Fuchida a story which, he said, had made a great impression upon him and upon every prisoner in the camp. "Something happened at the camp where I was interred," he said, "which has made it possible for us who were in that camp to forego all our resentment and hatred and to return with a forgiving spirit and a feeling of lightheartedness instead."

There was a young American girl, named Margaret "Peggy" Covell, whom they judged to be about twenty, who came to the camp on a regular basis doing all she could for the prisoners. She brought things to them they might enjoy, such as magazines and newspapers. She looked after their sick, and she was constantly solicitous to help them in every way. They received a great shock, however, when they asked her why she was so concerned to help them. She answered, "Because my parents were killed by the Japanese Army!"

Such a statement might shock a person from any culture, but it was incomprehensible to the Japanese. In their society, no offense could be greater than the murder of one's parents. Peggy tried to explain her motives. She said her parents had been missionaries in the Philippines. When the Japanese invaded the islands, her parents escaped to the mountains in North Luzon for safety. In due time, however, they were discovered. The Japanese charged them with being spies and told them they were to be put to death. They earnestly denied that they were spies, but the Japanese would not be convinced, and they were executed.

Peggy didn't hear about her parents' fate until the end of the war. When the report of their death reached her, her first reaction was intense anger and bitter hatred. She was furious with grief and indignation. Thoughts of her parents' last hours of life filled her with great sorrow. She envisioned them trapped, wholly at the mercy of their captors, with no way out. She saw the merciless brutality of the soldiers. She saw them facing the Japanese executioners and falling lifeless to the ground on that far off Philippine mountain.

Then Peggy began to consider her parents' selfless love for the Japanese people. Gradually, she became convinced that they had forgiven the people God had called them to love and serve. Then it occurred to her that if her parents had died without bitterness or rancor toward their executioners, why should her attitude be different? Should she be filled with hatred and vengefulness when they had been filled with love and forgiveness? Her answer could only be, "Definitely not." Therefore she chose the path of love and forgiveness. She decided to minister to the Japanese prisoners in the nearby POW camp as a proof of her sincerity.

Fuchida was touched by this story, but he was especially impressed with the possibility that it was exactly what he had been searching for: a principle sufficient to be a basis for peace. Could it be that the answer for which he was seeking was a forgiving love, flowing from God to man, and then from man to man? Could that be principle upon which the message of his projected book, *No More Pearl Harbors* should be based?

At the train station on his way home, he obtained a copy of the New Testament in Japanese. A few months later, he began to read two or three chapters a day in the Scriptures. . . . Then in September 1949, Fuchida read Luke 23. This was the first time he had read the story of the crucifixion.

The Calvary scene pierced Fuchida's spirit. It all came alive in St.

Luke's starkly beautiful prose. In the midst of the horror of His death, Christ said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Tears sprang to Fuchida's eyes; he had reached the end of his "long, long wondering." Surely these words were the source of the love that Peggy Covell had shown. . . . As Jesus hung there, on the cross, He prayed not only for His persecutors but for all humanity. That meant He had prayed and died for Fuchida, a Japanese man living in the twentieth century.

By the time Fuchida finished reading Luke, he had received the Lord Jesus Christ. He did end up writing his book and entitled it *From Pearl Harbor to Golgotha*. His life verse, which he signed under his every signature, was [Luke 23:34](#): "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

Christ's offer of forgiveness has a tremendous power to affect the world. God knew it, Luke knew it, and this morning we need to know it. The Holy Spirit knew that all men and women needed to know it, and that's why the Gospel by Luke was included in Scripture. May we take its message to heart.

And to start join me in [Luke 14:15-27](#). Please stand as we read these verses.

- **YOU CAN BE ASSURED OF HEAVEN IF YOU ARE: CHRIST CONFESSING, GOD WEALTHY, KINGDOM SEEKING, AND HEAVENLY HEARTED** [Luke 12:8,21, 31, 34, 37-38](#) "Also I say to you, whoever **confesses Me** before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. [12:27](#) "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not **rich toward God.**" RICH TOWARD GOD [12:31](#) But **seek the kingdom** of God, and all these things shall be added to you. [12:34](#) For where your treasure is, there **your heart will be** also. HEAVENWARD HEARTS [12:37-38](#) It will be good for those servants whose master **finds them watching** when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. [38](#) It will be good for those servants whose master **finds them ready**, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. WATCHING The unsaved, the lost, the worldlings to the very end of time are exactly opposite this. Remember the sky is falling down literally in the Tribulation and the lost cling to their stuff! [Revelation 9:20-21](#) But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. [21](#) And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts. Or in modern English: The remaining men and women who weren't killed by these weapons went on their merry way—didn't change their way of life, didn't quit worshiping demons, didn't quit centering their lives around lumps of gold and silver and brass, hunks of stone and wood that couldn't see or hear or move. There wasn't a sign of a change of heart. They plunged right on in their murderous, occult, promiscuous, and thieving ways. [3]
- **JESUS DESCRIBES THOSE HEADING TO HEAVEN AS: SIN REPENTING, FRUIT BEARING, GATE ENTERING, GOD KNOWING, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS DOING** [Luke 13:5-6](#) I tell you, no! But **unless you repent**, you too will all perish." [6](#) Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to **look for fruit on it**, but did not find any. REPENTANT and FRUITFUL [13:24-27](#) "Make every effort to **enter through the narrow door**, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. [25](#) Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, '**I don't know you** or where you come from.' [26](#) "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' [27](#) "But he will reply, '**I don't know you** or where you come from. Away from me, all you **evildoers!**' WALKING NARROW ROAD – KNOWING GOD – DOING RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Note the contrast of the two ways first God's Way in *James*

3:17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

Then the way of destruction in

2 Timothy 3:1-5 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! Listen to a paraphrase: Don't be naive. There are difficult times ahead. As the end approaches, people are going to be self-absorbed, money-hungry, self-promoting, stuck-up, profane, contemptuous of parents, crude, coarse, dog-eat-dog, unbending, slanderers, impulsively wild, savage, cynical, treacherous, ruthless, bloated windbags, addicted to lust, and allergic to God. They'll make a show of religion, but behind the scenes they're animals. Stay clear of these people. [4]

- **SALVATION IS WHEN WE IMPOSSIBLY COME TO CHRIST**
Luke 14:26-27, 33 "If anyone **comes to me** and does not **hate** his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, **even his own life**—he cannot be my disciple. 27 And anyone who does not **carry his cross** and **follow me** cannot be my disciple. 33 In the same way, any of you who does not **give up everything** he has cannot be **my disciple**.
COMES TO CHRIST – LOVES CHRIST – IDENTIFIES WITH CHRIST – FOLLOWS CHRIST – GIVES UP ALL TO CHRIST.
- **GENUINE CHRISTIANS ARE SIN REPENTING** *Luke 15:7* I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance. 15:10 In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God **over one sinner who repents.**" REPENTING SINNERS
- **JESUS SAID THAT THREE EVIDENCES OF SALVATION ARE: LIGHT LIVING, GOD SERVING, AND WORD RECEIVING**
Luke 16:8 "The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are **the people of the light**. PEOPLE OF LIGHT *Luke 16:13* "No **servant** can serve two **masters**. Either he will hate the one **and love** the other, or he will be **devoted to** the one and despise the other. You cannot **serve** both **God** and **Money.**"
DEVOTED TO ONLY ONE MASTER 16:31 "He said to him, 'If they do not **listen to Moses and the Prophets**, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'" RECEPTIVE TO GOD'S WORD
- **A TRUE BELIEVER REALIZES THEY ARE MERCY NEEDING**
Luke 18:13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, **have mercy on me, a sinner.**' SEEKING GOD'S MERCY
- **A TRUE BELIEVER REALIZES THEY ARE HELPLESSLY COMING** *Luke 18:17* I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God **like a little child** will never enter it." HELPLESS CHILDLIKE RECEPTION
- **A TRUE BELIEVER IS LOST-KNOWING AND GOD-OBEYING**
Luke 18:19-27 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "**No one is good—except God alone.**" 22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "**You still lack one thing. Sell everything** you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then **come, follow me.**" 27 Jesus replied, "What is **impossible with men** is possible with God." KNOWING YOU ARE LOST-KNOWING GOD IS BOSS
- **A TRUE BELIEVER REALIZES THEY ARE FOUND BY CHRIST**
Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to **save what was lost.**" FOUND BY CHRIST
- **A TRUE BELIEVER IS REPENTANT AND FORGIVEN** *Luke 24:47* and **repentance and forgiveness of sins** will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. REPENTANT AND FORGIVEN

[1] Quoted from Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

[2] Adapted from Colossians and Philemon, MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983 quoting "What Happened to the Man Who Led the Attack on Pearl Harbor?" *Command*, Fall/Winter 1991, pp. 6-8.

[3] Peterson, Eugene H., *The Message*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress Publishing Group) 1997.

[4] Peterson, Eugene H., *The Message*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress Publishing Group) 1997.

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