

# CHRISTIAN HOPE HAD CHANGED HIS LIFE

1 THESSALONIANS 2:9-13

Some years ago a military airplane crashed at Sonderstrom Air Force Base in Greenland. Twenty-two people were killed. The runway and the nearby fields were strewn with bodies. It was a tragic and horrible moment. There was only one chaplain on the base at the time... and the entire burden was laid on him to bring comfort and the Word of Christ to a shocked community staggered by the horrendous accident. But there was little time to mourn that day. The grisly task of gathering up and identifying the bodies needed to be done.

And so, the chaplain, along with a young lieutenant who had been assigned the duties of a mortuary officer and a group of volunteers went about the awful business of picking up the mutilated bodies and trying to identify the dead, so that their families and loved ones back home could be notified. It was a heart-breaking and exhausting task, but it had to be done. The people worked in shocked silence well into the night until they almost dropped from fatigue. When every last remnant of death had been picked up, they each went silently to their individual rooms.

That night, after midnight, there was a knock on the chaplain's door. Outside stood the young lieutenant, the Mortuary Officer. He said nothing. He just stood there and wept. After some moments, the young lieutenant spoke through his tears and he said to the chaplain, "As we were picking up the bodies today, I realized something. I realized that the only other people out there with us were the people who go to church here. I have always been an unbeliever, and I used to ridicule these same people who were out there with us. Yet they are the only persons who would, or perhaps could, do what we had to do today. It must have been their Christian spirit that could help them see beyond the horror to the hope."

That tragic day turned around the life of that young lieutenant. As he had admitted, he had never been religious, had seldom gone to church except for weddings and funerals, but from that time on he was a new man. Christ was born in his heart. From that time forward, he took an active part in the Christian ministry of that base. Then he did an unheard thing – he extended his tour of duty in Greenland for an extra year. He was the first person in the history of that base to do that. He did it because he wanted to be able to tell others the story of how the power of the Christian Hope had changed his life.

If you want to give your loved ones a great present, give them the gift of Christian Hope. On page after page of the New Testament we find it: the Good News that God will win, that nothing can defeat Him; that ultimately God and goodness will have the victory and that when we put our hope in Him, nothing, not even death, can separate us from His watchful care and His love and His triumph. May we turn to scripture to renew our hope and to remind us that the darkness of this world cannot overcome the light of the world.

God bless,

Pastor Barbara