

Ernest Gordon Illustration

Ernest Gordon's tells a story in *Miracle On The River Kwai* about Scottish soldiers, forced by their Japanese captors to labour on a jungle railroad. Under the strain of captivity they had degenerated to barbarous behaviour, but one afternoon something happened.

"A shovel was missing. The officer in charge became enraged. He demanded that the missing shovel be produced, or else. When nobody in the squadron budged, the officer got his gun and threatened to kill them all on the spot... It was obvious the officer meant what he had said. Then, finally, one man stepped forward. The officer put away his gun, picked up a shovel, and beat the man to death. When it was over, the survivors picked up the bloody corpse and carried it with them to the second tool check. This time, no shovel was missing. Indeed, there had been a miscount at the first check point.

"The word spread like wildfire through the whole camp. An innocent man had been willing to die to save the others!... The incident had a profound effect... The men began to treat each other like brothers.

"When the victorious Allies swept in, the survivors, human skeletons, lined up in front of their captors... (and instead of attacking their captors) insisted: 'No more hatred. No more killing. Now what we need is forgiveness.'" Sacrificial love has transforming power.

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