

Forgiveness: "Love has replaced the hate I had for you."

To Mutsuhiro Watanabe,

As a result of my prisoner war experience under your unwarranted and unreasonable punishment, my post-war life became a nightmare. It was not so much due to the pain and suffering as it was the tension of stress and humiliation that caused me to hate with a vengeance.

Under your discipline, my rights, not only as a prisoner of war but also as a human being, were stripped from me. It was a struggle to maintain enough dignity and hope to live until the war's end.

The post-war nightmares caused my life to crumble, but thanks to a confrontation with God through the evangelist Billy Graham, I committed my life to Christ. Love has replaced the hate I had for you. Christ said, "Forgive your enemies and pray for them."

As you probably know, I returned to Japan in 1952 and was graciously allowed to address all the Japanese war criminals at Sugamo Prison... I asked then about you, and was told that you probably had committed Hara Kiri, which I was sad to hear. At that moment, like the others, I also forgave you and now would hope that you would also become a Christian.

Louis Zamperini

Laura Hillenbrand, *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption*, (Random House, 2010), 396-97.

<https://oliveslifeandletters.blogspot.com/2011/01/love-has-replaced-hate.html>