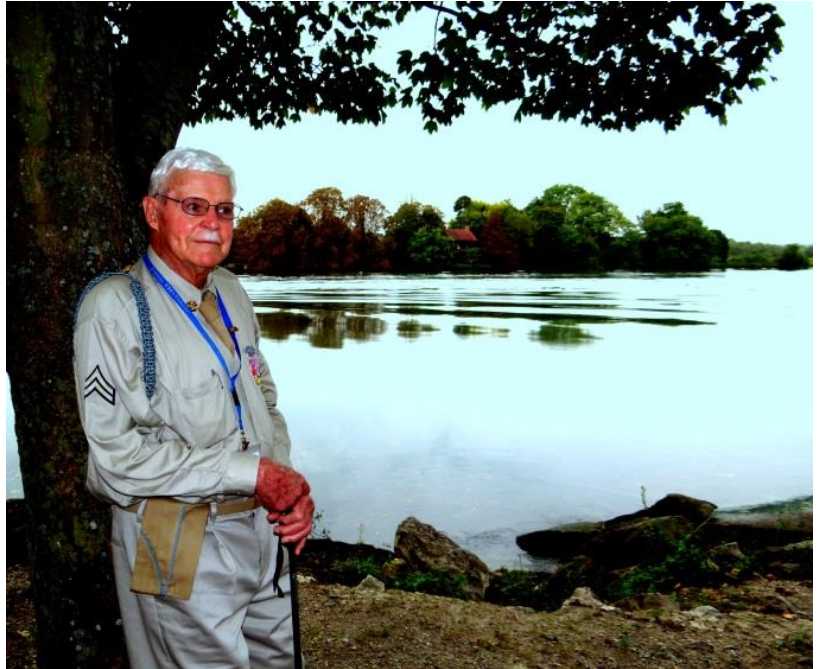


## The Saving Power of the Bible

True story. It was late afternoon on a cold November 13, 1944. The place was near the French village of Ancerville. The setting was World War II. Foot soldiers from the 315<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Company G were on a mission to reach the Vosges Mountains, in an effort to retake Paris from the Nazis. The infantry foot soldiers were accompanied by a French tank when they were ambushed. A young American soldier named William H. "Doc" Long was part of that regiment. Long saw a bazooka shell headed for the tank, and was able to alert the tank to the origin of the heavy artillery fire. At about the same time Long was hit in the right shoulder by gunfire, falling to the ground under the French tank. Only through quick, evasive action was Doc Long able to push his body free of the tracks of the tank as it repositioned to return fire. Lying on the ground Long was hit again by shrapnel, this time to his left arm.

Doc Long would spend the next 18 hours lying completely still as other wounded soldiers screamed for help. Gradually those screams lessened as many of his fellow soldiers succumbed to their injuries. Once daybreak came movement would alert the Nazi's there were still Americans alive in the battlefield.



Doc Long on the banks of the Rhine River, near where he was attacked in France

Throughout the night Long would recite the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, *"Yea though I walk through the shadow of the valley of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thou rod and staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies...Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."*

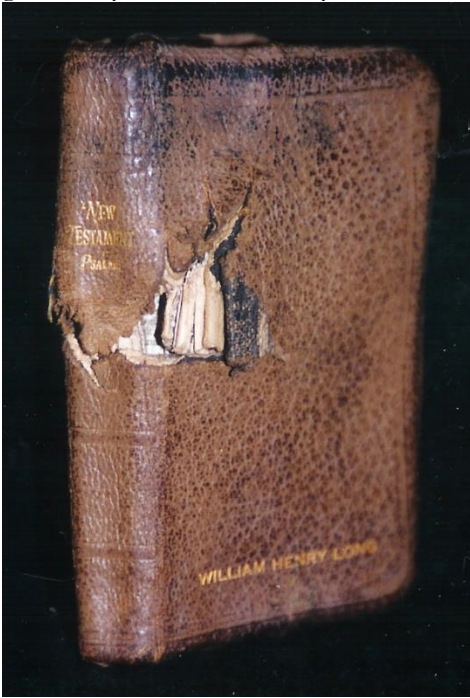
Even though Doc Long was literally in the shadow of the valley of death, God was with him. Faith brought Doc comfort, even in the presence of the nearby German enemies. God saw to it this wasn't to be Doc Long's last day on this earth.

There is more to the story that illustrate God's protection of Doc Long, so that we might better understand God's power. Long had in his pocket a Bible given to him by his Aunt May. When he was first entering into the service his aunt told him, "Please read this every day and carry it over your heart." Doc Long did read it daily and he placed it in a shirt pocket, over his heart. After being rescued and taken to the first aid tent, his personal effects were returned to him. One of those personal items was his Bible. The Bible had a hole blown almost all the way through by shrapnel from enemy fire. The Bible literally saved his life.

Fortunately, most of us are not risking our lives fighting on a battlefield with our nation's freedom at stake. We are not on the front lines of World War II with enemy fire constantly all around us. Instead, we are on the front line of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We live in a fast-paced world that is at war in so many ways. Instead of a Bible we carry cell

phones in those pockets. Instead of Nazi snipers ambushing us, the Christian faith is under attack, seemingly from all sides. The unchanging values of the Bible are being challenged by a world with different values. Instead of love meant to unite, we are a nation and world of division that separates us. The Bible is the force our world needs to guide us yet it is constantly under attack. God will be with us as we stand up to the challengers of our faith. Jesus

assured us by saying, *And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:20).*



*The Bible that saved Doc Long's life*

The Bible is our protection, illuminating the path God wishes for us, and the forgiveness we need when our humanness causes us to fall short. Even more than that, our Bible shows us the way to salvation. Salvation is the eternal life that we seek as Christians. It is the life beyond the earthly battles we face. Doc Long also sought eternal life. His Bible was the guide to his human life, and also his hope for eternal life. Reading it was a natural part of his daily life. Doc Long was willing to put his life on the line to protect the freedom of people throughout the world. He kept his Bible over his heart, because he had a heart for God. God demonstrated his love for Doc Long by using the very instrument of his faith to physically save Doc's life. God's message was clear. Believe in me and you will live.

Is reading and living by God's word important to you? Do you carry God

close to your heart? If you do, God will reward your faith now and forever more. Doc Long's Bible protected him and saved his life. Our Bible is our protection and leads to us being saved.

**Closing Prayer:** Heavenly Father. We thank you for people willing to sacrifice for the freedoms we enjoy. We thank you for giving us the strength to do the right thing because we know you are with us, just as you were with Doc Long. We thank you for the protection of Doc Long and other people of faith, and we know that protection is available to us if we place our complete trust in you. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

**Editor's note:** *The details and drama of Doc Long's brush with death is much more dramatic than space allows with this brief devotional. For the fuller story read the July issue of Kernersville Magazine, pages 8-10. Doc Long is a true American hero who risked his life for the free world. God used this situation to clearly show how the Bible can save your life, as well.*