

TESTIMONY OF RONALD W. BENZING

About a year after my dad was converted in 1952 he took me to an evangelistic meeting in the High School auditorium in Hamilton, Ohio. The evangelist preached from the Bible showing that all men were sinners and needed to be saved. I was deeply moved by hearing the truth and knew as a twelve year old I was separated from God by my sins. I left that night fearful that I might die and end up in Hell.

We returned the next night and when the preacher gave an altar call at the end of his message, the Holy Spirit convicted me and I responded. I was met by a kind man who knelt with me and showed me from the Bible how to repent and receive Jesus. I wept the whole time and asked Jesus to forgive my sins and be my Savior. I followed some months later in baptism at the First Baptist Church. I am grateful to Dad and Mom who led our family to follow the Lord, so I grew in my faith through their godly example and influence and the teachings from our local churches.

At age 15 God called me to His work. When I shared this with my dad, he said to me, *You ought to be an Army chaplain. I never met one while I was in WWII who lived a Christian example.* I changed from seeking scholarship at General Motors Institute to enroll at Bob Jones University, Greenville, SC in 1959. Upon Completing the Bachelor of Arts, I remained for another four years for Graduate School and completed Bachelor of Divinity. God brought Hazel Joyce Miller into my life and we were married in June 1962. Our first son, Joel, was born in November 1964 at the campus hospital. In my last year of Seminary, God sent Dr. W. O. H. Garman to the chapel service where he challenged the student body concerning military chaplain ministry. I felt moved to speak with Dr. Garman afterwards. As Hazel and I prayed and learned more about military ministry, we were convinced this was the Lord's will for us. I joined the Associated Gospel Churches for endorsement into the Army Chaplain ministry in 1966.

Following seminary, I was ordained at Southside Baptist Church and commissioned into the Army as a chaplain (1st Lt.) on June 27, 1967. After my first assignment at Ft. Meade, Maryland, I deployed to Viet Nam in 1968 where I was assigned to the 3 Bn, First Infantry of the 11th Light Infantry Bde for a year. God gave me a wonderful ministry to preach the Gospel to young soldiers. Over 140 died that year and many were wounded. I returned to an assignment at Ft. Carson, Colorado and Ft. Ord, California. Our second son, Andy, was born at Ft. Ord, California in April 1972 and I was deployed to Korea for 13 months in November of that year. We returned to Ft. Campbell, Kentucky and had several other assignments across the USA, ie, Ft. Wadsworth, NY, Ft. Riley, KS, Ft. Gordon, GA, and Ft Dix, NJ. While in Germany I had the privilege to serve as Chaplain for the Special Forces at Bad Toelz as well as units in Hanau, Heidelberg, and Grafenwoehr.

The military sent me for further education to earn a Masters in Counseling and Guidance from Long Island University, New York, and Master of Theology from Western Baptist Conservative Seminary, Portland, Oregon. I was Director, Chaplain Family Life Center, Ft. Gordon, Georgia for three years where I provided pastoral counseling to scores of people.

God gave many opportunities to preach the Gospel and disciple soldiers and their families. I retired as a Colonel 1 March 1995 at Grafenwoehr, Germany, after 28 years of active duty. We began ministry under Army contract as the community chaplain for Garmisch, Germany immediately. God richly blessed His work in Garmisch with several people saved until September 2005 when we returned to our home near Hendersonville, NC. The Lord provided Hazel and me with ministries at Bethany Bible Church and Spring Haven Retirement Village as well as serving on the staff of the Associated

Gospel Churches, Greenville, SC four years.

In September 2009, we answered God's unusual call to return to Germany as the Pastor for the Bible Church of Stuttgart. We are especially blessed at this time of our lives to serve our Great Shepherd in spiritual leadership of God's people in the Stuttgart Community.