

## CONFessions OF AN ARMY CHAPLAIN

Tonight I am simply giving my testimony as an army chaplain. The ideas are strictly personal; you can take them for what they are worth.

It is possible that some of my observations are not valid; my experience might not be typical of other chaplains; my conclusions may not be justified.

These things I admit at the beginning.

But this is my experience; this is the way I feel about these things; this is the way I see it.

All I ask is that you listen to me sympathetically, that you pray for me, and that you consider seriously what I have to say. You can later on ask other military chaplains what they think, and what has been their experience, about the same things.

I have the feeling that they would come to just about the same conclusions.

We military chaplains can learn much, and we do learn much and profit greatly, by listening carefully to what our local churches, our denominational leaders, our Southern Baptist Chaplains Commission, and our Baptist publications are saying to us. But there is just a slim possibility that our Baptist churches and people might benefit somewhat by listening to the voice and experience of our military chaplains.

### I. Great Opportunities are open to us.

A. I Cor 16:9 "A wide door for effective work has opened to me"

B. Opportunities to reach and touch many lives that we could not otherwise touch or influence.

C. To witness for Christ & lead people to Him.

D. To represent our denomination

E. To travel and learn much about other people & places in the world.

("many adversaries")

II. Heavy Challenges are Pressing upon us /

- A. To live a consistent & dedicated & consecrated Christian life.
- B. To make a dent in the formidable wall of indifference & unbelief of a great cross-section of American life.
- C. To deal honestly & faithfully with the great issues of war & Peace, of killing, of loyalty to country and loyalty to God.

III. Sharp Insights are Burning Within Us (see ch 2)

- A. We see the implications of a wider witness in a rapidly changing modern world.
- 1. In an era of mass communication media, millions of people know about our weaknesses & failures & inconsistencies almost immediately.
- 2. There is no room today for narrow denominationalism
- 3. It is ridiculous to be obsessed with a psychotic fear of the ecumenical movement.  
It is not all bad.  
There is something wholesome and scriptural about the effort for removing some denominational walls and working for more unity among Christians.
- 4. There is no room for ancient medieval religious ideas that are no longer relevant or valid for us today. Baptists have ever been rebels against the status quo of religious power structure, and in favor of a clean, fresh breath of air blowing through our Convention and through our local congregations.
- 5. It is foolish to limit our religious approach to traditional & out-moded methods.

B. We chaplains see the shallow influence & effect of our local churches on the lives, morals, habits, attitudes & practices of thousands of young servicemen who grew up in Baptist churches & Sunday Schools.

C. We see the American Home shaken to its foundations

1. Marital problems; divorces; separations

2. Violence in the home; hatred, fighting, quarreling

3. Children become delinquents & get into trouble

D. Yet we see great & shining hope, encouragement, and satisfaction.

1. Lives ARE transformed by the power of the gospel of Christ.

2. We see Baptists that are not narrow minded but appreciate & cooperate with other Christians of other denominations without compromise or loss of respect, and are a credit to our denomination.

3. Some fine young Christian men ARE of great credit to their local church & Christian family back home that gave them something real & solid in their young spiritual experience.

4. We see Christian marriages that DO endure in spite of great stress and strain

1st BC, Gto. 1973. 1 Oct 67