

February 20, 2021

*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. Proverbs 14:12*

During World War II in the country of Germany, Seventh-day Adventist Pastor, Franz Hasel, was conscripted into the Nazi army. His request to serve in the medical corps was denied, and the pastor-turned-soldier wrestled with how he could ever put God before country and survive. Franz Hasel chose to obey God first and trust in the promises found in scripture such as Psalms 91:7 *A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.* Afraid that he might be tempted to kill in the heat of battle, he secretly discarded his weapon and carried a painted, wooden gun in his holster. His complete story is told by Susi Hasel Mundy, in the book *A Thousand Shall Fall* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2001). You can find it here: <https://www.amazon.com/Thousand-Shall-Fall-Electrifying-Practice/dp/0828015619>

In the book, the following story is related from a time when his 1200-man unit was battling in Russia. Franz had been sent inside a house to clear the building, and while there discovered a young man hiding under a bed. Their eyes met for a long moment, and then Franz walked away, knowing that if he pulled this soldier out of the house, it would be to certain and immediate death. Several weeks later while on patrol alone, he was charged by a group of Russian Cossacks on horseback. There was no way to escape. The commander of the group immediately recognized Franz as the soldier who had shown him mercy. But this was war! Pointing his gun at Franz, he paused then said: "I could kill you now, but you were kind enough to save my life. So, I will spare your life!"

Franz was one of only seven soldiers to return to Germany from his 1200-man unit. He was prepared to die honoring God above military orders. His true commander was his Lord and Savior whom he put first in all things, even in things that were life and death matters.

"Just following orders" had for years been used as a defense for bad behavior during war, resulting in the acquittal of many military monsters. In 1945, however, at the famous Nuremberg trials, the London Charter of the International Military Tribunal removed "just following orders" as sufficient justification for the heinous acts conducted against civilians during World War II. "Just following orders," was something Franz Hasel never even considered when those orders dishonored God.

In a polarized world filled with misinformation, disinformation and political poison, be sure you are listening to the only Commander who can see you safely into His eternal kingdom. Jesus said: *What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Mark 8:36*