

# **LETTERS TO THE ARMY**

December 2008

## **PASTORAL LETTERS FROM THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL TO SALVATIONISTS ACROSS THE WORLD**

*This is the eleventh in a series of Pastoral Letters from the General to every Salvationist across the world.*

*The Pastoral Letters are intended to be distributed unchanged and entire to all Salvationists and may be shared also with others interested in the sacred purposes for which God raised up The Salvation Army.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ.

This comes to all Salvationists with my strong, ongoing affection in Christ for you, and with my prayers for your effectiveness in the sacred calling that God, in his supreme wisdom, has placed upon the peoples known as Salvationists.

It has been laid upon my heart that I am to take a step of obedience under God by reaching out to you all through Pastoral Letters written from time to time. I write therefore in order to obey the One who has created us all, and with a longing that what is written will affirm, encourage and inspire you.

The themes for these occasional Pastoral Letters continue to be the themes God reveals. His holy will is made known in many ways. I pledge myself to be mindful that his will is often revealed through interaction with members of the Body and not only or always in the seclusion of the place of prayer.

It is my deep hope that each Pastoral Letter will be read wherever Salvationists are to be found, whether in private or in public settings. The chosen themes may prompt discussion, prayer and – as appropriate – action.

All Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*, unless otherwise stated.

Shaw Clifton  
General

## PASTORAL LETTER ELEVEN

### MONEY

Dear Fellow Salvationists,

This Pastoral Letter comes to you close to the time when Christians everywhere are rejoicing in the birth of the Saviour.

With my wife, Commissioner Helen Clifton, I send you warmest good wishes and Christmas greetings. May the miracle of the coming of Jesus into the world fill us all with new wonder and new love as we go on witnessing to, and serving, others in his sacred name.

It may seem strange to use the title 'Money' for a Christmas Pastoral Letter. Let me explain. Our news bulletins and newspapers are filled these days with reports of a global financial crisis.

We hear about the worldwide 'credit crunch', caused by lenders failing to be self-restrained when lending to over-keen borrowers who could not afford the repayments. We hear about governments, who often refuse to spend a few millions on good causes or human need, suddenly being able to spend billions to prop up failing financial institutions and large businesses.

For most of us it is all baffling, but also deeply disturbing. Ordinary people are losing their jobs, and some are in danger of losing their homes. Despite this, we do not hear of many financial or political leaders accepting personal blame or apologising or offering to withdraw from public life because their economic policies have led to global recession and hardship for countless millions of people. Of course, it would take very great personal honour to shoulder the responsibility in this gracious way.

When Jesus entered the world he had nothing. His parents were not rich. His father, Joseph, worked with his hands, with wood and nails. When Jesus died he still had nothing. He was not at all interested in materialism, and yet he was immensely wealthy for he knew the meaning of true wealth. He told us that it is incredibly hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and he held up, as a shining example for us, the widow who gave all she had, a tiny coin, for the work of God.

During the recent presidential elections in the United States of America, both candidates were interviewed by Pastor Rick Warren and were asked to 'Define rich'. Despite offering sincere responses, neither really got it right, completely missing the point that true and lasting riches have nothing whatsoever to do with cash. Neither mentioned that the Lord Jesus Christ has told us to store up riches in Heaven where moth and rust do not corrupt and where thieves do not break in and steal. There is no 'credit crisis' there!

This Christmas, let us not go deeper into personal debt. Let us be restrained in our spending. Let us remember that in the 117 countries where the Army has been called

to serve most people are poor and that there is absolutely nothing glamorous or sentimental about poverty.

This Christmas, let us remember that we follow in the steps of a matchless Saviour who came into and who left the world penniless.

This Christmas, as we anticipate an upsurge in the number of those seeking and needing the Army's help, let us remember that even a cup of cold water given in his name is given as unto him, and that we are going to have many, many more opportunities to share Christ with others as they turn to faith, abandoning the false god of material security.

This Christmas, let us rediscover true riches: forgiveness in Christ, a sanctified life in the power of the Holy Spirit, obedience to the will of God, and our days spent in living for others.

You remain always in my prayers.

May 2009 be filled with blessings from God for you and all whom you love. May you be fruitful for the Kingdom of God.

I commit you to the perfect love of Christ.

God bless you.

Shaw Clifton  
General