

LETTERS TO THE ARMY

June 2009

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

This is the 14th 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 FOURTEEN

LEADERS

Dear Fellow Salvationists,

This Pastoral Letter comes to you with my warmest greetings in the Lord Jesus Christ and with my prayers for each of you. The Lord is using the Army in wonderful ways. We seek to be faithful to the divine impulse to go out into the world representing Jesus Christ to all we meet. My constant prayer for you is that God will use you, just as he uses all who are faithful to him regardless of their denominational affiliation. My Fellow Salvationists, you are key players in a mighty Christian host of believers scattered across the globe. I hold you all before the Lord in prayer as I write to you. God has a part for you to play in his great plan of salvation.

The theme of this letter is Leadership.

There is a deep and true sense in which all Christians are leaders. Often we use the word 'leader' to mean a person in high position or with authority over others. This is a legitimate use of the word, but for now let me suggest that we can use it with a wider, more inclusive, meaning.

You are a leader just where God has placed you. You can influence other lives, leading people to consider the things of Christ. You can lead others into the realisation there is more to life than selfishness or the pursuit of pleasure. You can be the sanctified leader when someone suggests that you engage with them in some doubtful activity. You can lead when others do not sense someone's hurt, or another's need. You can take the lead when others stand by idly or are in confusion as to the way forward in a time of crisis.

To be a leader like this does not require a special rank or position, or any kind of formal authorisation. Each believer in Jesus is called to be a leader like this. All Christians are called to be leaders.

The very fact that we are known to be in the Army can sometimes make other people have expectations of us that mean we will often need to show initiative and leadership more than others. Our uniforms can result in expectations like this. There is a deep sense in which the wearing of Salvation Army uniform says to others that the wearer is ready to take responsibility in the unexpected moment, to take the lead in the unlikely situation.

In fact, there is a sense in which we are an Army of leaders. We each have a leadership function to carry out. Let us not minimise this or shrink from it out of shyness or fear. The Lord who calls us is able to accomplish through us everything he wills and wishes. The Holy Spirit is our guide and our helper.

Without diminishing in any way this 'leadership' role of all believers, let me also mention those who hold heavy leadership burdens in the Army because of their rank

or appointment as officers. On Tuesday, 7 July 2009 London will host a gathering of the Army's most senior officers. An International Conference of Leaders like this takes place every few years. I seek your prayers for those who will gather with me. They are spiritual leaders like you, in the deep sense I have tried to outline above, but they are also leaders in the organisational sense in terms of the senior responsibilities they carry within the Army.

We shall number about 140 and will be together for seven days. Let me mention the two most important things we will do in that week: we will pray together, especially for you and your fellow Salvationists, and we will study the Scriptures together, waiting upon God for his divine direction and impulse.

We will also take a warm-hearted but hard-headed look at the state of the world, at the readiness of the Army in 118 countries to engage with the modern world, and at the need to see far into the future to discern God's way forward for his Salvation Army.

Please, please pray about this gathering. Let me give you the dates again: 7 – 13 July 2009. Perhaps you can enter these dates into your prayer diary or into your devotional schedule so that you can influence the deliberations through prayer. That would be wonderful! Perhaps you could covenant with the Lord to hold a particular participant, perhaps your own leader, before the Lord each day of the conference. What a difference you could make in that way!

God bless you in your own local leadership, both in your community and in your corps. Every soldier is a leader for God and the gospel. I pray that you will be used to lead others into faith in Jesus as their Saviour. I pray that you will be used to lead others eventually to their eternal reward when we shall see Jesus in Heaven. What a day that will be!

I commend you to the perfect love of Christ.

I pray for you daily.

Sincerely in Jesus,

Shaw Clifton
General