

LETTERS TO THE ARMY

October 2009

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

This is the sixteenth 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 SIXTEEN

HEAVEN

Dear Fellow Salvationists,

I send warmest greetings in Christ to my fellow believers across the globe and especially to my fellow Salvationists in the 118 lands into which God has led us.

Thank you for your fidelity to the cause of the gospel. We remember you daily in prayer. Thank you for your faithful prayers for me and for Commissioner Helen Clifton. We need these prayers. They sustain us powerfully. I request that you intercede on my behalf for ongoing wisdom in all matters touching the worldwide Army.

We are all on our way to Heaven. The theme of this 16th Pastoral Letter is Heaven.

Recently we were privileged to be with our fellow Salvationists in Zambia and Zimbabwe. In both places we witnessed Salvationists marching past in vast numbers. Each and every marcher offered the Army salute, the right index finger pointed Heavenward. How happy we were to return these salutes! It did not seem to matter that our right arms grew tired as the cohorts of Salvationists paraded, for we were comrades together, bonded deeply by sacred ties, and in exchanging salutes we signalled that we were all on our way to Heaven by the grace of God.

The people of Jesus Christ in the Army are marching to Glory. Salvation Army soldiers are said to be 'promoted to Glory' when they take their final breath. We deck our flags with white ribbon for the funeral of a Salvationist, a powerful sign that though we feel keenly the pain of loss we do not wallow in despair for we know about Heaven.

Since taking office as the General in April 2006 my father, Major Albert Clifton, has been promoted to Glory and so too have Commissioner Helen's parents, my father-in-law Bandmaster Donald Ashman and my mother-in-law Betty Ashman. We know our parents are safe in Heaven. How do we know? The answer to that question is simple: Jesus has told us so. Just turn in your Bible to John 14. See there the rock-solid promises of Jesus about the life to come.

The Lord Jesus Christ offers deep and lasting assurance. He knows the natural fears and uncertainties of the human heart when the end of life is contemplated. That is why he offers special words of emphasis and comfort: '... if it were not so, I would have told you.'

He has made ready. All things are planned and prepared. He has told us all we can take in for now. There remains only the need to trust him for our loved ones and one day for ourselves. He is trustworthy.

In Romans 6:4 we are taught that 'just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.' Paul goes on to say in verse 5 that we

‘will certainly also be united with him (Christ) in his resurrection.’ This is another reliable promise from God.

So let us each live in a way that testifies to our sure hope of Heaven.

As I pen these few words, I see in my imagination the Army saints who have gone on before us to Heaven. I picture them gathered from time to time and leaning over the battlements of Heaven as the Lord affords them a glimpse of what the Army is doing today. They are cheering us on!

I thank God for each of you as we travel to Glory together. Until the Lord calls us Home let us journey with a real consciousness of Heaven as our final destination. Our journey thus has profound meaning and purpose.

I commit you each to the perfect love of Christ.

Yours in Jesus,

Shaw Clifton
General