

LETTERS TO THE ARMY

June 2007

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

This is the second 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 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 a Pastoral Letter 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 will 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 TWO

PURITY

Dear Fellow Salvationists,

Warmest greetings to you all.

‘The Lord your God has chosen you ... to be his people, his treasured possession’ (Deuteronomy 7:6).

Therefore, according to the same Scripture verse, we are called out with all true believers to be ‘a people holy to the Lord your God’.

Salvationists are summoned by God to be a Salvation Army and a Sanctification Army. This twin calling, this sacred balance of being saved and sanctified, is ever before us. We are called to be a pure people for God.

This calling has not fallen upon us because we are large in number, or high in social standing, or very learned, or powerful in the secular world. Like the Christians in Corinth (see 1 Corinthians 1:26, 27) not many among us are wise by human standards, not many influential, not many of noble birth. In his unsearchable wisdom God chooses to work through the ‘foolish things of the world’, ‘the lowly things’, ‘the despised things’. He does this so that no-one working for him can boast, except for boasting in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:27-31).

We cannot purify ourselves.

The Holy Spirit is given to us, and he is the Spirit who cleanses.

Therefore we can ‘live by the Spirit’ who desires ‘what is contrary to the sinful nature’ (Galatians 5:16). You and I can be ‘led by the Spirit’, with the incomparably attractive ‘fruit of the Spirit’ steadily growing in us. In this way we will be kept ‘in step with the Spirit’ (Galatians 5:18-26).

Dear Fellow Salvationist, I do not know if your personal life is in need of cleansing. I do not know if you need to be freed from some besetting sin that is holding you back. But God knows these things and will, even as you read this letter, be speaking into your heart to tell you how good and glad he is when his children are pure. ‘Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy”’ (1 Peter 1:15).

From time to time it is a good thing to look inward upon our own souls and to ask before the mirror that is Christ if we are indeed pure for his sake. I do not recommend that we become obsessive with introspection, but there is a healthy way to examine our lives before God to see if we are pleasing him as we should. We can place before him our bodies, our minds and our spirits asking him to reveal anything there that holds us back from deeper holiness, from enhanced purity.

Our bodies are his temple (1 Corinthians 6:19). Therefore we are not at liberty to abuse them or to use them for evil purposes.

Our minds too are his, and so we want them to be filled with whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable – with everything that is excellent and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8). This means keeping watch, remaining vigilant, about what we put into our minds when we turn to the screen or to printed materials.

Our spirits can be fit and strong like a trained athlete (2 Timothy 2:5) if we exercise regularly through the reading of God's word in Scripture, through prayer and through Christian service to others. Some of you are being called to serve the Lord full time. I am greatly encouraged to hear of increases in the numbers entering our officer training colleges.

So let us each be humble in asking God to make and keep us pure. We do not want to fall short. He can achieve wonderful things through a heart cleansed and made ready for indwelling.

I am on my knees with you all, seeking the same Saviour and asking, pleading passionately for a fresh cleansing from our loving, merciful and patient God.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

Shaw Clifton
General
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