

LETTERS TO THE ARMY

February 2008

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

This is the sixth 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 SIX

ONWARD

Dear Fellow Salvationists,

I send you warmest greetings in Christ as we move onward into 2008. You are held daily in my prayers. I am deeply conscious of your prayers for me and my family at this time of health concerns. Your prayers are making a difference and I express thanks to God for your love and faithfulness.

For those of us glad to be called Salvationists there can be no standing still in the war against sin and darkness. By 'standing still' I do not refer to taking needful rest, or to finding time to reflect and strategise. I have in mind instead the temptation to rest on our laurels, to settle for less than the best for Christ. We hear the trumpet call: 'Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war!' The cross of Christ leads us onward.

Onward also means outward, widening our sphere of influence. Taking new ground for Christ means first moving onward in our personal faith and trust even in the hardest times. Every cloud has a silver lining put in place by God to provide new opportunities. I am finding, for example, that when we are disrupted by illness chances to witness come thick and fast. Many of you have discovered this for yourselves.

Each of us holds in his or her heart a sacred longing to be as useful to God as possible. We want to see his holy Kingdom grow, moving ever onward. Thus we move onward in our personal service, offering ourselves sacrificially for God in the world according to our gifts and abilities so that each is fully used.

As we think of service, some of us are called to full-time service away from secular settings. Some readers of this Pastoral Letter are presently candidates for officership or are now cadets in training. We need even more candidates and cadets. I hear very encouraging reports from across the world about candidates. Is God calling you to be an officer in the Army? If so, let me urge you to choose the sacred path of holy obedience. Obedience is the key to moving onward in our walk with the Lord.

All of us can move onward in our understanding of the Scriptures so that we might use more and more skilfully the 'sword of God'. Also we must move onward, you and I, in deepening that gentle spirit of loving-kindness that comes only from Jesus, growing in tenderness toward all, being changed more and more to become like our Saviour. This is at the heart of the holy life.

Let us ask God also in our prayers to plant within each of us a strong desire to move onward in our passion for souls, in our longing to win others for Christ, feeling more

keenly the dreadful consequences of remaining unsaved. Heaven awaits us when we belong to Jesus. It is our natural destiny as children of God.

So my prayer for you is that 2008 will be a year of progress in every way, a year of moving onward under God's guiding hand.

I send you my love in Christ and my constant encouragement.

I commit you to the perfect love of Christ.

Shaw Clifton
General
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