

The Helmet of Salvation
Sermon by Pastor Joe Davis
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I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

Well, today, after taking a fairly extensive side trip into faith, we're going to return to our study of the armor of God in Ephesians, chapter 6. If you'll remember, we're closing in on the end of Ephesians and Paul is giving us his final instructions on how we can walk worthy of the calling we've received. And he tells us, beginning in Ephesians 6, verse 10, that the most important thing we need to do in order to walk worthy is to learn to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might...not to try to be who God calls us to be by our own willpower and self-reliance, but rather by learning to rely on God in everything, walking by his Spirit, and allowing his power to turn our weakness into great strength.

And Paul tells us that we become strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might by putting the full armor that he has made available to each person who has trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. When we learn to put this armor on, we become able to resist the most intense attacks of Satan and his forces and continue standing firm and immovable by God's power.

So far we've examined the first 4 pieces of armor, and today we're going to focus on number 5, found in verse 17 of Ephesians, chapter 6: the helmet of salvation. Let's begin by reading verses 10 through 18 of Ephesians, chapter 6:

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, 15 and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,...

May the Lord bless the reading of his Word.

II. VERSE ANALYSIS

So let's zero in now on the first half of verse 17, which says: "***And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION.***" That's a pretty simple statement, isn't it? Six words are going to be the focus of our study today, and you might be wondering, "How in the world is he going to talk for 30 minutes about 6 words?" Well, believe it or not, it's not going to be a problem! I do sometimes wonder the same thing when I'm starting to work on a message, but it never seems to be an issue because of the power of God's Word.

To start off, I think we can make 3 primary observations about those 6 simple words. First of all, a helmet is needed. That's pretty obvious, isn't it? A helmet is an essential piece of the full armor of God that protects arguably the most important part of our body. A second observation is that, like the other pieces of armor, we need to actually put it on. Leaving it lying on the ground will do us no good. It needs to be picked up and put on our head. And a third observation is that the helmet we need to put on our head is salvation. Salvation is somehow what protects our spiritual head and brain in the battle.

III. PURPOSE OF A HELMET

So let's dig a little deeper into the purpose of a helmet. As we consider the spiritual battle each of us is facing right now, clearly we need protection for our heads. To go into battle with our head exposed and unprotected would be extremely foolish and would set us up for quick defeat. With arrows and swords and daggers flying all around us, our head cannot afford to be unprotected.

In our study on the breastplate of righteousness we noted that the heart is usually the target of the enemy, since life is immediately over once the heart stops beating. But think for a moment about the head. If a person's brain stops working correctly, they're completely out of commission, aren't they? Their body will no longer be able to move and function correctly because it won't be receiving messages from the brain on what to do. The heart may continue beating and the body may continue to survive, but if the brain is taken out all meaningful existence and functionality ceases.

We've probably all known or heard of people who've had a traumatic brain injury and ended up in a coma or completely bed ridden for the rest of their lives. Serious bike riders wisely wear helmets because they know if they crash and injure their head, they could very likely be a vegetable for the rest of their lives. I don't know about you, but it's hard for me to imagine a worse existence than having my brain function destroyed but my body continuing to live on for years and years and years. It's not something I even care to imagine, much less having to experience in reality. Clearly, protecting our heads in the spiritual battle is absolutely essential and if we fail to do it, we may end up a spiritual vegetable, completely disabled in the midst of battle by the enemy. We need to put on the helmet of salvation and never leave home without it.

IV. SALVATION IN EPHESIANS – THE IMPORTANCE OF PAST TENSE

So what is meant by salvation here and how does it serve as our helmet? I believe the answer to this question can best be found in considering what the rest of the book of Ephesians tells us about salvation. Paul has told us a lot about salvation in the earlier chapters of Ephesians. If you'll remember, the first 3 chapters are all about our salvation and new identity in Christ.

Interestingly enough, I haven't actually preached yet through the first 14 verses of Ephesians, because the first sermon I ever preached at Union Baptist was based on one of my favorite passages of Scripture: Ephesians 1, verses 15 through 23. Then I just continued on from there. So at some point, I'm looking forward to preaching on those first 14 verses of Ephesians, and let me tell you, they are full of amazing truths...mind-blowing realities about our incredible salvation through Christ and the blessings that accompany it. These blessings represent every

spiritual blessing available in the heavenly realms. Think about that for a moment. God has held no blessing back from us.

In those first 14 verses of Ephesians, Paul shares with us 6 blessings we've each received through faith in Christ:

- 1) We've been chosen by God to be holy and blameless in Christ;
- 2) We've been adopted as God's sons;
- 3) We've received redemption, the forgiveness of our sins, in Christ;
- 4) We've had the mystery of God's will revealed to us, relating to the summing up of all things in Jesus Christ;
- 5) We've obtained an inheritance in Christ;
- 6) We've been sealed with the Holy Spirit...thereby guaranteeing our inheritance.

And the really interesting thing about each of these blessings that accompany salvation is that they're ALL stated in the past tense. In other words, they're a done deal. We have been chosen. We have been adopted as sons. We already have redemption through Christ's blood, the forgiveness of our sins. God has already made known to us the mystery of his will that was revealed in Christ. We have obtained an inheritance. And we were sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit. The sealing has already taken place and indicates that our future inheritance is secure.

Verse 13 of Ephesians chapter 1 says this: ***"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise..."*** The Ephesian believers had heard the good news of salvation through faith in Christ, they had believed the message, and as a result they were sealed with the Holy Spirit. This means that for those of us who have repented of our sin and come to true saving faith in Christ alone for salvation, this salvation has occurred and is forever secure.

Paul goes on to tell us in Ephesians 2, verses 5 and 6, that God has made us alive, has raised us up with Christ, and has seated us with Christ in the heavenly places. Do you notice all the past tense in those statements?...has made...has raised...has seated? I'm getting a clear sense that this has already happened, aren't you? From God's perspective, we're already seated with Christ in the heavenly places...salvation has been accomplished and is secure.

Still not sure about this? How about those very familiar verses in Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8 and 9: ***For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*** You have been saved! And your salvation is not dependent on your performance...it's dependent only on Christ's performance and on your willingness to accept the gift he offers you.

Now we do need to be careful here, because there's another clear teaching of Scripture that true saving faith will always be accompanied by a changed life over time. In other words, there will be evidence in our lives if we've come to true eternal salvation in Christ. My uncle and pastor used to describe it this way: before I came to Christ I knew I should be good, but after I came to Christ, I wished I could be good. This is one way of describing the change that happens when we are reborn and come to new life in Christ. God recreates us at the heart level and we start to desire him and begin longing to live a life that reflects him. We don't suddenly become perfect in all of our behavior and never sin again, but we do start to change and, little by little, we start looking and acting like a child of God. When we make mistakes, we feel bad about it and confess it to God, asking for his forgiveness and power to keep it from happening again.

I say this to make sure I don't give a false sense of security to someone who hasn't truly come to saving faith. Maybe you repeated a salvation prayer when you were 6, but nothing has ever changed in your life and you have no real relationship with God or desire to live for his glory. Or maybe you were raised in a Christian home and you just feel like you inherited salvation from your parents, though you've never really personally expressed your faith in Christ or actually surrendered your life to him. Or maybe you know that God is real and that Jesus Christ was a good man, but your belief in him is like the belief of the demons...it doesn't involve personal surrender or any kind of real relationship with him.

If any of these places are where you are today, you need to make sure that you're a true child of God. And I'll give you that opportunity before we leave here today. But for those of us that have come to true saving faith and have seen the evidence of the change God has brought about within us, salvation is true and present reality that is secure forever through Christ.

V. SATAN'S STRATEGY

Think about the battle for a moment. What is Satan trying to do? What are his primary goals? We could probably come up with a pretty extensive list if we spent some time, but I'd just like to identify a few things he is most definitely trying to accomplish as he does battle against us. First of all, Satan's highest goal is to keep people from ever coming to the point of trusting in Christ for salvation. And the method he uses to try and keep that from happening is deception.

Revelation chapter 12, verse 9 describes this mission of deception Satan has:

And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world..."

This is Satan's mission related to those who don't know Christ yet. He deceives. He's best off when people have no idea that he even exists and certainly no consciousness of a need to do battle with him.

You can look around in the world today and see that Satan is having more and more success in this area as each day goes by. In just the last 100 and some years he's been leading an aggressive charge to elevate evolution and the theory that the whole world is just a result of random accident and chance. He's been deceiving and blinding millions and millions of people to the abundant evidence of design that God has left in every highway and byway and obscure corner of the universe. And he's been aggressively leading the world to disregard the Bible and relegate it be viewed as an outdated and irrelevant religious fairy tale that needs to be suppressed and eliminated from the public forum.

But a second primary goal of Satan is focused on those who have already trusted Christ and come to new life in him. Once new life in Christ has occurred, Satan

gets really angry and changes his strategy. This new strategy is centered around accusations and is described for us in Revelation 12, verse 10:

...for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.

Satan's strategy, the focus of the warfare he brings against you and me, is to accuse.

Have you ever experienced the accusations Satan whispers in your ear? They might sound something like this:

"How can you call yourself a Christian after what you just did? You'll never measure up. What you just did proves that you're not a true believer. You've made too many mistakes... you've crossed the last line...God's done with you."

Or, "Do you really think God could love somebody like you? Nobody likes you. Do you really think God does?"

Or maybe, "You don't have enough faith. You're kidding yourself to think that you're really saved...a new creation...yeah, right!"

Do any of these statements sound familiar? Well, I can tell you that not one of these statements comes from the voice of God. They're all miserable lies and accusations that Satan is shooting at you like flaming arrows. They're designed to destroy your faith and cause you to remain insecure in the sure salvation God has provided to you through Christ. Because if he can keep you insecure and weak, he can keep you from realizing who you are as a child of God and what that really means.

Now the third primary strategy Satan uses in his warfare against true believers is focused on causing unfruitfulness within us or leading us to live lives inconsistent with our new identity in Christ. He would like nothing better than for those of us who call ourselves followers of Christ to never walk into the new life God has for us, but rather remain weak and sinful and unfruitful and stuck in the ways of our old self. He wants us to constantly doubt God, ignore the guidance he gives us through his Word, and live lives that do not bring glory to him. And he is

aggressively and continuously working to make this happen. That's why we're in a battle.

Revelation 12, verse 17 tells us that Satan is enraged and making war with us right now:

So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

He's not just slightly opposed to us and weakly trying to keep us from following Christ, but rather he is really, really angry and has marshalled all his forces to make war against those of us who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

This third strategy of Satan to cause us to doubt God and remain in the ways of our old self may sound something like this:

"God can never use you...you have too many scars and weaknesses to play any role in the body of Christ. You know, those promises in the Bible are just too good to be true. They sound great, but come on... And do you really think you could actually live like the Bible says you can? Let's get real. It all sounds great, but you know it will never work in your practical daily life."

Or, "If you surrender your life to God's purposes and pursue him, you're going to miss out on so much good stuff this world has offer. He'll definitely send you somewhere you don't want to go and call you to do something you don't want to do. I'm positive that you'll end up in some dark rainforest in Africa, eating bugs and catching some weird disease."

"And what about this walking by the Spirit stuff? Are you crazy? You'll lose control of yourself if you try to do that and end up barking like a dog or passing out in a church service. Do you really want to risk that?"

"And whatever you do, don't ever think you have what it takes to share the gospel with someone. You don't know enough Scripture and you'll probably get laughed at and rejected."

So I know there was a little humor in a couple of those things I just said, but in reality the battle Satan is bringing against us is anything but humorous. It's life and death and make no mistake, he is coming at you and me with flaming arrows and sharp daggers and with the most evil intent you've ever encountered. He wants to permanently take out your head and your heart. This is not a game. And that's why we truly need to put on every piece of the full armor of God.

VI. ACCEPTING YOUR NEW IDENTITY AND SECURITY IN CHRIST – THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESENT TENSE

And this brings us back to our focus for today: the helmet of salvation. What I believe God is telling us here through Paul, in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 17, is that the helmet we are to put on is the confident assurance and acceptance of our permanent salvation and security and new identity in Jesus Christ. Satan's mission is to keep us insecure in our salvation and stuck in the ways of old self, and the only way we can overcome these lies is by coming to a complete and full acceptance of who we now are permanently and forever in Jesus Christ.

Ephesians gives us a great picture of this new identity we have in Christ. We truly have been reborn, remade and filled with new life and the very presence of God himself in the Holy Spirit. We spent some time already today focusing on the past tense in terms of our salvation. Hopefully by now you're convinced that it's secure and complete and forever accomplished. But let's spend some time moving to the present tense. Our salvation and new life is complete, having trusted Christ. So who are we now? What is our new present reality?

Well, let me give you a beautiful review of this new present reality from the book of Ephesians:

- 1) You are a fellow citizen with the saints (Ephesians 2:19). You are saint whether you feel like it or not.
- 2) You are a permanent member of God's household (Ephesians 2:19). You've moved into his house as one of his permanently adopted children.

- 3) You have boldness and confident access to God the Father through Christ (Ephesians 3:12). You can have a constant conversation with the God of the Universe who is your Father now and is relating to you with constant and steadfast love.
- 4) You have a new self that has been created for you by God and is ready to be put on like clothes (Ephesians 4:24). You're not the same person you used to be and you now have the power to leave that old person behind by the power of the Spirit within you.
- 5) Your identity and true self is no longer an immoral, impure, covetous person who lives in slavery to idolatry (Ephesians 5:5-7). You're true self is now a permanent child of God, holy and dearly loved.
- 6) You are now light in the Lord (Ephesians 5:8). You've moved out of the realm of darkness into the realm of perfect light.

So the question I have for you today is this: Do you believe these truths about yourself and have you truly accepted your permanent new identity in Christ? I can tell you that Satan is doing everything he can to keep you from putting on the helmet of salvation and accepting your who you now are in Christ...accepting that God has accomplished your permanent salvation and nothing that Satan or the world or other people or life's circumstances can do, to take away what God has brought about. You are his workmanship and no one can snatch you out of his hand.

If you're still struggling to believe that, or if you just need some encouragement in this area today, listen to these words from Romans, chapter 8:

29 For those whom [God] foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all,

how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

VII. APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

My friends, this is the knowledge and conviction we need to protect our heads in the battle. Our salvation and new life and adoption as God's children is complete and irreversible. We are his children forever. We have a completely new identity in Christ that is a present reality right now. And there is absolutely nothing that can separate us from his steadfast and faithful love that remains steady and unchanging through all the ups and downs of life and mistakes we make.

Additionally, as we put on the helmet of salvation, we can know with confidence that God will win the battle and cause us to come out victorious as we trust in him. We walk into the battle secure and confident of the final outcome, knowing that God's salvation and victory is guaranteed. I came across a verse this week that provides encouragement in this area. It's found in Isaiah 41:10 and it says this:

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

A true heart conviction and belief in the truths of this verse is what we need in the battle...the confident assurance that God is fully committed to us as his children, and will strengthen us, help us and uphold us with his righteous right hand. With him, ultimate victory is assured and our salvation is forever secure. This is the helmet we need to put on, and when we do, Satan's continuous lies and accusations will fall flat on the battlefield, never penetrating our helmet.

Now I know there very well could be someone here today who can't put on this helmet of salvation, because you've never made the decision to repent of your sin and trust in Christ alone for salvation. For you there's no assurance that you're saved and secure and have become a forever child of God. The full armor of God will do you no good if you haven't made this life-changing decision. There's no way you can put it on without coming to new life in Christ.

If that's you today, and you're ready to walk out of darkness and into the light of Christ, experiencing salvation and new life and moving into God's house, I want to give you that opportunity right now. There's no better choice you could make, and it's the only way to experience the abundant life and hope and peace that comes from being reconciled to your Creator and invited to walk through life with him.

Scripture gives us a simple and clear picture of how we come to true salvation and new life in Christ. There's only one way to do it, and it's by admitting your sin and turning away from it, and then choosing to believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay for your sin, was buried, and was raised to new life. When you do this, you are raised to new life with him and become God's forever child.

This is something you can do right now. Let's close our eyes and bow our heads and if anyone here today is ready to come to new life in Christ and experience true and permanent salvation right now, I'd like to invite you to pray this prayer with me quietly in your head. Let it express the belief in your heart:

God, I admit that I've sinned against You...
That I've not lived my life for Your glory...
I turn from that sin right now...
I don't want to live that way anymore...
Jesus, I believe that you died on the cross for my sins...

And that you rose from the dead...
Right now, I put my faith in You alone for my salvation...
Jesus, You are my Savior and the Lord of my life...
Thank you for forgiving my sins...
And for making me a new creation right now...
Show me how to live the rest of my life in Your love and for Your glory...
Amen.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says that ***“...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold new things have come.”*** I want to encourage you today that if you prayed that prayer and meant it in your heart, you have just walked into new life and now have permanent peace with God! You’re his forever adopted child and he has given you his Holy Spirit to dwell within you! And you can now begin putting on the full armor of God and learning to walk in the new life he’s called you to. You have an exciting journey ahead! I’d love to visit with you afterwards if you’ve made this life-changing decision today.

Right now we’re going to celebrate communion together, remembering and honoring what Christ has done for us on the cross. Communion is only to be taken by those who have trusted Christ as Savior, so you haven’t made that decision yet, please don’t partake today. But if you’ve become a new believer today, I’d invite you to enjoy your first communion with your new family and with your Savior!