

Helmet of Salvation

<i>Text</i>	Ephesians 6:17
<i>Readings</i>	Psalm 2; Romans 8:12-30; Ephesians 6:10-18
<i>Theme</i>	The Christian is to be protected with the helmet of salvation.
<i>Purpose</i>	To explain the biblical concept of salvation and how this protects us in battle.

A favourite hymn for many Christians is “The Old Rugged Cross”:

“On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
the emblem of suffering and shame;
and I love that old cross where the dearest and best
for a world of lost sinners was slain.

So I’ll cherish the old rugged cross,
till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
and exchange it some day for a crown.”

This hymn is about the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus on that old rugged cross. As Christians we are called to take up our cross and follow after the Lord Jesus. The refrain of this hymn looks ahead to the day that we will exchange the cross for a crown.

Today we are going to look again at the Christian armour. This armour is only for this life. While we are living on this earth we need this armour because we are engaged in a spiritual battle. But one day the Lord Jesus will come as the great Conqueror and he will finally and completely defeat his enemies. All of us who trust in him will be raised from the dead with our new glorified bodies.

We will lay aside our armour and exchange it for the white robes of the righteousness of Christ. But that is still future; in this present situation we still need it.

We need the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the shoes of the gospel of peace. We also need to take the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation. All of these are protective pieces of armour. This is a serious conflict and we need to be well protected, and well guarded.

The emphasis of Paul is not on the comparison in each case but rather on each of these Christian realities – each of us needs to be defended with truth, righteousness, peace, faith and salvation.

All of these are connected together. If one is weakened then they are all weakened; if one is strengthened then all are strengthened.

So today we will give our attention to the **helmet of salvation**.

The Roman soldier wore a helmet made of bronze, which was heavy and expensive and provided a lot of protection in battle. It was lined with felt or sponge to make it more comfortable to wear. The helmet protected the soldier's head and neck and cheeks. He did not wear it when he was marching but carried it on a strap. Just before battle he would take up his shield and then put on his helmet.

That was vital because a blow to the head would often be the end of the soldier. A severe blow on an unprotected head from an axe or hammer or sword would often kill a man. But his helmet gave him good protection and enabled him to survive those blows; he could continue living and fighting.

This is true for the Christian. The helmet is a picture of our salvation. Without our salvation we are finished; we have no spiritual life and we cannot keep fighting in Christ's army.

You need to **"take"** this helmet of salvation. The Greek word would be better translated as "receive" or "accept".

A Roman soldier would pick up his belt, breastplate and shoes, but he would be *given* his helmet by an attendant or by his armour bearer.

In the same way a Christian receives the helmet of salvation from God. This is consistent with the message of the Bible. You cannot earn your salvation by your good works; you do not deserve to be saved; you can't go and get it for yourself. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God – not by works so that no one can boast." (Eph 2:8-9)

Yet the verb here is also an imperative, a command. The Lord offers you salvation as a gift and he commands you to take it, to receive it, and accept it. Have you done that? Have you accepted this gift of salvation through faith?

What is this **salvation**? This is one to the broadest terms in the Bible to describe all that God has done for his people.

The Hebrew word literally means "a broad place" or "a wide open place". When we are in the grip of Satan and of sin we are confined to a prison, we are bound, we are pressed into a small narrow space. But the Lord has rescued us from that and has brought us out into the open, into a wide spacious place. This is God's work of salvation. He has delivered us, rescued us.

Salvation embraces **everything God has done** for us, beginning with our election and going through to our glorification, and everything in between. Paul described this in Romans 8:30, "Those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

The word looks back to what God has done in the **past**.

He has saved us through Christ's work in his death and resurrection. Jesus was "delivered over to death for our sins and raised to life for our justification." (Romans 4:25) On the cross he took our punishment on himself and then was raised to prove that the price had been paid.

The work of Jesus is absolutely central to our salvation.

In the Old Covenant God saved people as they looked forward to Jesus as he was pictured in all the types and ceremonies.

In the New Covenant God saves people as we look back with faith to the death and resurrection of Christ and are united with him in those saving events.

It is because of Jesus that God can cause us to be born again by his Spirit, forgive us our sins, give us the righteousness of Christ, and adopt us into his family. We are saved because we are united with Jesus and because of our relationship with God through him.

This ought to give the Christian a solid *assurance of salvation*. Think of it as a comparison between courting and being married.

Courtship can be a stressful time for a young man and woman. It can be unsettling and time-consuming. You are often thinking about your relationship and you have lots of questions and doubts: Is this really the person for me? Does she really love me? Do I love her? Will this relationship last? Will it result in marriage? Should we continue on? You find yourself thinking about all this so much that it is hard to concentrate on other matters. There is much uncertainty during this time.

When you get married you put all those doubts and uncertainties behind you. You have made your decision and you have said your vows to each other. You are married, "till death do us part". Your marriage still takes time and work and effort but you know that your relationship is secure. That frees up your mind so you can concentrate your energy on other things.

Being a Christian is like being married. The church is the bride of Christ. A Christian is united with Christ Jesus, connected with him, and joined with him. This relationship takes effort and work on your part but if you believe in Jesus as Lord and Saviour you can be secure in Christ. You can be certain you are a Christian; you can have assurance of salvation.

This assurance means that you don't have to keep worrying about the relationship; rather you can put your energies to praising God, serving Christ and obeying his commands. You can be useful and active in his church and kingdom.

This is your helmet of salvation; it is the security of knowing that Jesus has died for your sins and he has saved you.

This is the assurance Fanny Crosby wrote about in her hymn:

“Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine;
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God;
Born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my saviour all the day long.”

Salvation not only covers what God has done in the past but also what he is doing in the **present**.

In battle a soldier needed to keep his armour on to avoid injury, but he also needed ongoing supplies so he had the strength and energy to keep fighting. Without this supply he would become tired and weary and discouraged.

This is true for us as Christians. The battle we are fighting will be long and hard. Our enemies are strong and active. It is easy to become battle weary and tired and then to become discouraged and depressed.

You might feel like this as you look at all you need to do and all the work that lies ahead of you. You might feel you don't have the strength or energy for your work, or your study, or any active service in the church. If this is how you feel remember to keep on this helmet of salvation. Remember that God is constantly supplying us with all we need for this ongoing warfare.

Jesus is in heaven and he is interceding for us to the Father.

Jesus has also given us his Holy Spirit and he is applying to us all the benefits that Jesus gained for us in his death and resurrection.

The Holy Spirit is also helping us to be more holy, more sanctified, more like the Lord Jesus. We have an ongoing supply of the grace of salvation.

With all this in mind, “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we shall reap a harvest if we do not give up.” (Galatians 6:9)

Salvation describes what God has done in the past, what he is doing in the present, and what he will do in **the future**.

If a Roman soldier thought he was going to be defeated in battle he would be less likely to fight. He would lose heart and hope. He would be tempted to run away, or surrender, or give up.

But if he were hopeful of victory he would keep fighting. He would support his legion and throw himself into the conflict.

So too in our battle as Christians; if we thought we were going to lose we too would be inclined to run away, to hide, to wave a white flag. But that is not our perspective.

We share the same view Winston Churchill had as he led England as Prime Minister during World War II. His philosophy of war was very simple: "Wars are not won by evacuations." No matter how dark and bleak the situation while London was being bombed by the German air force he would not surrender, he would not give up.

This is our philosophy for this war. We will not evacuate, we will not give up, and we will not surrender, because we know the outcome is certain – we will win!

This is why Paul urged the believers in Thessalonica to put on "the hope of salvation as a helmet." (1 Thessalonians 5:8) We have a certain hope of the salvation that is still future.

We know that one day the trumpet will sound, Jesus will return, the dead will be raised, and all who have believed in Jesus and obeyed his word will be welcomed into the new heaven and the new earth.

Even now Christ is putting all his enemies under his feet, and one day he will destroy all the powers and authorities of this dark world and then he will "hand over the kingdom to God the Father." (1 Corinthians 15:24)

Every year that final victory is getting closer. "Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here." (Romans 13:11)

If you believe in the Lord Jesus you have been saved, you are being saved, and you will be saved – past, present and future.

That future hope we have is well expressed in the words of the hymn I quoted earlier:

"To that old rugged cross I will ever be true,
its shame and reproach gladly bear;
then he'll call me some day to my home far away,
where his glory forever I'll share.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
and exchange it some day for a crown."

This is the helmet of our salvation.

Keep wearing it and it will protect you from doubt, from uncertainty, from discouragement and from giving up.

And one day you will exchange the helmet of salvation for the crown of life!

Amen