

# Helmet and Sword

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Turn with me to Ephesians chapter 6. We've been going through this chapter. We'll, all being well, God willing, finish it next week, and that will be the whole of this letter coming to an end. Ephesians chapter 6, we've been looking at the armor of God.

And we've reached verse 17, but can I read from verse 14 just once again to get the whole thing in context? Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 14, stand therefore having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. Now here's a verse I want us to look at tonight, verse 17, and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Two additional elements to add to the elements that we've already seen in the whole armor, the whole armor of God. Let me say once again that there's not an armor which we can pick and choose, the bits that we happen to think that we need, we have to have the whole, therefore take up verse 13, the whole armor of God. And that's why it's important that we understand how each part relates with one another. Last week we saw what the shield of faith was. We tried to look at what the shield of faith was. It was a smallest shield in which you were able to defend yourself against the fiery arrows which could be fired at you at any moment in time. And we looked at what these arrows might have been, suggestions of course, and questions about the teaching of the Bible and how the shield of faith was used in order to defend us against. I heard, I read one very, just before we move on to verse 17, I just, I didn't have time to mention this the last time, but I read something that was really what I thought was something really, really not just nice, it was really, it was really quite precious. And this person was saying that sometimes in an army, when you knew that the enemy was going to fire all these fiery arrows at you and they were all going to come at you, what they did was they all got together, they came close together, and they put their shields together and they kind of created, if you can picture, a kind of human tortoise with the shields. They would crouch down and raise their shields and so that to form a shell, a kind of a domed shell, like if you like a giant human tortoise. And of course, that made everything, that made the whole thing. Once the shields came together, that meant that all the soldiers were safe and that there was no cracks, there was no way in which an arrow could find its way to hit the soldier himself as long as they stayed together and as long as they formed this. And I thought it was a really, really interesting illustration of how we're not in this alone, we're to be together in the defense in the war that the apostle is talking about. And once again, we're reminded that this is not just written to individual Christians, it's written to the church, and the church is God's people as they together face the difficulties and the challenges and the attacks of the evil one. We're to pray for one another, we're to be conscious of what we're to help one another, we're to exhort one another and give encouragement, we're to act together. And it's when we fail to act together that the enemy will find a loophole or a crack or a space in which to strike. And I thought that illustration was a tremendous one that illustrates not only how we're to use the shield individually, but we're to use the shield in connection with other Christians. Once again, reminding us of the fellowship of the gospel. Let's remember that we are in fellowship and unless we stand together, then the whole structure is weakened and the enemy will find a way, the shield of faith. Verse 17 then, the last two elements, take up the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit. What's the helmet of salvation? Well, of course, the helmet covered your head. If anything happened to your head, you were finished. One of the vital parts of your body. So it was absolutely essential that the whole of your head was covered. And the helmet, of course, was made of metal and it was made in such a way as to give protection to your skull, to your brain. Now, according to some people, when Paul talks about the helmet of salvation, he's talking about being sure of our salvation. But that may be so. But I want to

suggest that from another part of the New Testament, another of the writings of Paul, that there's something else in mind here. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 8, we read this, put on the hope of salvation as a helmet. Let me read that again. Put on the hope of salvation as a helmet. So Paul's talking in Thessalonians about a particular element of salvation, what he calls the hope of salvation.

[ 5 : 49 ] We were discussing this in actual fact this morning when we're talking about Romans chapter 5 and verse 2, when Paul talks about, we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Now, when Paul talks about hope, he's not, let me just remind you of this, you know this already, it's important to say it again and again, he's not talking about anything he has doubt about. He's not using the word in the sense that we use it, I hope it's going to be a better day tomorrow than it is today, and we don't know whether it is, we just hope. It's a wishful thought. That's not the way the New Testament talks about hope. When we read the word hope in the New Testament, it's a sure, it's a word that means how certain the apostle is as he looks forward to the future. Because whilst he does not know what's going to happen tomorrow or next week, he knows exactly that God is going to fulfill every promise that he has made in his word.

He is absolutely sure of that. He's taken God at his word, and whatever the circumstances, whatever he has to go through, he knows that God will keep his promises. That's what he's talking about here as the helmet of salvation. When he uses the word salvation, there's three ways in which the Bible talks about salvation. Firstly, it talks about us having been saved. If we're following Jesus tonight, we can look back and we can say that in Jesus Christ, our sins have been taken away. We have been changed. God has given us a new life. We've been raised to newness of life. That's something that has taken place in the past. But the New Testament also talks about salvation as an ongoing reality. God talks about us being saved. The work of the Holy Spirit is to renew our hearts and our minds and our wills and create within us that image of Jesus Christ that God wants us to have. So we're being saved at the same time. But the New Testament also talks about a day coming when we will be saved.

There's a future, a future in which God's people will be brought in. Jesus will come again. The graves will open. The dead in Christ will rise. We will all appear before the judgment seat of Jesus. Jesus will judge us and take us in to his kingdom. And so we will forever be with the Lord, said the Apostle Paul. That is not just our hope. It is our absolute certainty. It's what we look forward to. It is the fulfillment of God's promise in this world. God has a purpose for this world. This world's not a random place. It's not a random series of events that happen from day to day without any meaning. God will do his purpose and his will. And one day, one day he will come again. Now that's what the Apostle has in mind when we have to put on the helmet of salvation. What kind of attacks is he talking about?

We've been talking all along. We've been thinking all along of the kind of attacks in which our enemy may come to us and in which we need the armor of God in order to defend us. What kind of attacks is he talking about here? Well, if you think about what I've just been saying, God's promise. Let's take, for example, Jesus saying, upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell or Hades will not prevail against it.

[ 9 : 33 ] I will build my church. Now, there's a promise. Promise that Jesus made to his disciples. Let's take another one. When he said to his disciples as part of the Lord's prayer, we're to pray, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That's what we pray for when we pray the Lord's prayer. And if we don't use these exact words, then we ought to pray for the extension and the building of God's kingdom into the future in which more and more people are saved and the church, God's people are built up and extended and in which countries get to hear the gospel, people who have never heard it before. That's what I was praying for earlier on when praying for missionaries and praying for the translation of God's word and the way in which God's word goes out to all the earth because God has promised that one day the earth will be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Now, you take a look around you.

There's not much evidence of it, is there? In fact, if anything, in our part of the world, in the part of the world that we live in, it's in reverse. And you know that thought that comes to you every so often?

You are wasting your time on this promise. There was a day, of course, in the past when people were less educated than they are today, and of course, they swallowed all this gospel stuff.

But really, it was only just a kind of a panacea for them. It was only just kind of a sap to their conscience and something that they chose to believe in in days gone by before we had science and before we had knowledge and the kind of understanding and technology that we have today. Now, we're beyond all that. We've evolved beyond all that. So what is the point in continuing to believe this empty stuff about God building his kingdom and that one day God will build his church and that the gates of Hades, that's just such a load of nonsense.

That's the kind of thought that comes into our heads, isn't it? That's the kind of attack I believe the apostle had in mind when he says, put on the helmet of your salvation. The salvation he's talking about is that what looks into the future and the kind of attacks that he's talking about are the kind of suggestions that come into our heads every so often, all too often that actually wonder, that tell you, you've put years into being a Christian. What's it all been for?

[12:07] How many years have you been a Christian? 10? 20? 30? Look at all the hours you've spent reading your Bible, coming to church. Look at all the hours, look at all the money you've spent putting in the money at the door, worshipping God. Why?

Is it all going to happen? No, it's not going to happen, he tells us. The whole thing, you're going to waste your life on this gospel and it's not going to happen. The evidence itself shows you, look at the empty pews.

It's a real thought, isn't it? When the devil comes and he sows these seeds, what is it? What is the only one thing that we can use as a defense against that suggestion?

I'll tell you what it is. That God has never broken his promise and will never break his promise. And the same God who promised to send his son into the world and actually did send his son into the world is the same God who will send him once again.

And when he says that the day will come when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, that will happen. And we are to pray, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven because there will come a day when God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[13:33] I believe that. And I believe that the gospel is never, ever an empty activity to be involved in. We may feel that it is, we may not see the effect of what we do and what we are for the Lord Jesus, but God is able to take our little contributions and that's what it means to do things in faith.

That's what it means to live in faith. Faith is the evidence of what we don't see. When you put your money on the plate as you come into church, you don't know where that's going.

You're giving it in faith, believing and prayerfully believing that God will take that small contribution and that he will create something great. That somehow or other that will be used to reach somebody with the gospel in some small way.

And when you're involved in campaigners or Sunday school or in creche or whatever you're involved in in the church, youth club, whatever it is, you do so in faith, believing that God will take your small contribution when you pray for that missionary, when you pray for, when you come and when you listen to the accounts that are given from time to time in the hall or in the seminary of various missionaries and you go away and you're so burdened for them and you want to pray for them and you think, well, what's the point of my prayer?

Because the odds are stacked against us. Nothing, surely nothing is going to happen in my prayer. And all of it, every evidence shows me that no matter what the Bible says, the world is going in one particular direction and it's certainly not in the direction of the gospel.

[15:19] Well, tonight you can believe the evidence or you can believe God. That's the choice you have. And faith is what lays hold tonight upon God's word and his word alone.

Even if that means laying down my life and I don't necessarily mean in persecution or literally, I mean giving my life for the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to ask our young friends tonight, you've got your life in front of you, although you don't know how long that's going to be. You don't know the day or the hour. I want to ask you tonight, are you prepared prepared to lay down your life to give the rest of your life in the service of Jesus Christ? Because the world will say to you, you're nuts. You're mad. Look at all the opportunities that are in front of you.

Look at all the money you could make. Look at all the intelligence that God has given to you, the opportunities, business opportunities. Now, of course, all of that is quite legitimate. I'm not saying that to be in business is wrong.

[16:34] That may very well be God's place for you to be. But I'm asking you the question tonight, are you prepared to go where God is leading you?

Are you prepared to ask him, Lord, take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee? My first priority is what God wants me to do, not my own riches or my own success or my own happiness even, but what God wants me to be and what God wants me to do.

I'm challenging you. I'm not challenging the older ones. Of course, every one of us is in the same position, but especially the younger ones tonight because I feel for you.

You've got two voices in your head. You've got the voice that tells you, well, you know, make the most of this world. And the voice that tells you to commit your life and the rest of your life to the Lord.

And as soon as you do that, then you're going to be, you're going to be surrounded by all kinds of doubts as to whether or not you've done the right thing. But you can never fail when you give the Lord the best years of your life.

[17:50] The helmet of salvation is the voice that says, God said it, I believe it, and I am staking and resting my life upon what God says, no matter what things look like in this world.

God is able to change things in a moment. And even if he doesn't in my day, then a day may very well come when he will turn things around and when things will be very different.

See, what we're doing today is like sowing seeds, isn't it? You don't ever see the, or rather, you may not see the result of sowing seeds.

But you sow them believing that they're going to take root and that they're going to grow one day. And one day they're going to be, things are going to look very different from what they are today.

Not, we will never sow them if we listen to the voice that says it's no use. It's all going to come to nothing. Where is the sign of his coming? He's not going to come at all. You've believed a lie.

You've believed something which is completely wrong.

[18:55] The helmet of salvation looks forward into the future and takes hold of what God says and God says alone. Now, the sword of the Spirit, the sword of the Spirit, again in verse 17, take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Now, before we jump to the Bible, which of course is what the sword of the Spirit means, let's just take a few moments thinking of the title that the apostle gives it, the sword of the Spirit.

First of all, it's the sword. Now, there are various types of sword. I'm sure that most of us have seen movies about these times when, for example, you would have these great, massive, great, heavy swords that were almost as tall as the soldier himself and you needed incredible strength to be able to wield one of these things, but if you were able to wield it, then you could cut somebody in half with one blow.

That was one type of sword. And then there's another type of sword that was more like a kind of rapier. It was a very thin sword, a long, very, very extremely sharp sword, and you had to use it in terms of you had to be a fencer to be able to win with it, but you had to be very skilled in fencing. It's kind of like the three musketeers, that kind of sword. Neither of these two swords are the ones that Paul is describing. He's talking about a short sword that actually anybody could use.

[20:28] It was more like a dagger, although it was a bit bigger than a dagger, and it was held in a sheath inside the belt so that at any given moment you could reach for your sword and you could pull it out, and it was used for hand-to-hand combat.

But the apostle calls it the sword of the Spirit. And I want us to keep in mind the fact that it is the sword of the Spirit. There's a connection between the Spirit and the sword, and that gives us a clue as to how we're going to use this sword.

It is the sword of the Spirit. What does the Spirit mean? It means the Holy Spirit. Remember, the Bible tells us that God is three and one, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the person of the Godhead that works within us to give us understanding and to open up our hearts, to communicate with us, and to convict us of our sin and our need of Jesus and to strengthen us.

He's the one who brings God's Word and applies it in our hearts and brings it to life in our hearts.

It's God who does that through the person of the Holy Spirit. So, the picture that we have in front of us is then that there's the sword and the Spirit, and there's a connection between the two things.

[21:49] Now, when we come to see what he says, which is the Word of God, in other words, the Bible, what Paul is telling us is that there is a connection between the Bible and the Holy Spirit.

And it is as those two, if you like, elements, God in the person of the Holy Spirit and the Bible, as they work together, that we are able to use the Bible as a sword.

Now, why am I saying this? Well, because there are two extremes in the understanding of some Christians. There's a first extreme that kind of ignores the Bible and kind of relegates it to a secondary importance in favor of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

And all the emphasis has been put on the Holy Spirit. Now, I'm not saying for a moment that we should ignore the Holy Spirit or not emphasize Him. He is the third person in the Trinity.

He is God. He's to be worshipped. He's to be adored. And we're conscious, I hope, of Him and His work. I'm not saying for a moment. But there are some Christians who put so much emphasis on the Spirit, it's as if the Word doesn't matter.

[ 23 : 04 ] It's as if the Bible doesn't matter. Talk about being led by the Spirit. Talk about being enlightened by the Spirit. Talk about being moved by the Spirit. And all of these things. And of course, these things take place.

But they take place in connection with the Bible. The Bible is essential for our moving on as Christians and for our growth as Christians.

Now, at the other end of the extreme, there are some other Christians who are so clinical about their use of the Bible, it's as if the Spirit didn't exist. That's equally wrong.

And it's almost like everything depends on how you split a certain word that's in the Bible. And they reduce the Bible to simply an instrument, a mechanical instrument by which they can prove their own rightness or wrongness or someone else's wrongness.

That's not how the Bible is to be used at all. The Bible is God's personal message to each one of us. And we use it correctly as we listen to the voice of God speaking to us in the Bible, instructing us and revealing himself to us, telling us about himself and enabling us to use the Bible.

[ 24 : 22 ] And so, I want us to spend just the next last 10 minutes talking about the importance of the Bible and how to use it. I've spoken about this often, I'm sure Kenny I has, on many occasions.

We come back to it time and time again. It's the center of our service here. You walk in that door tonight, what do you see? You see the Bible, the place where the Bible is, that shows you that it's like nothing else is important in this building apart from the Bible.

Why is that? Because it is in the Bible that God speaks to us. And that reminds us again and again of how we must engage with the Bible. It's not to be left on our shelves.

It's to be used. And it has to be, it has to be used actively and daily and as we have, as we find it here.

Now, what is, again, we're coming back to the question, what kind of attacks does the apostle have in mind? We asked that question with regard to the helmet of salvation and the shield of faith.

[ 25 : 26 ] What kind of attacks are we to anticipate in our daily Christian living when it comes to the Bible? Well, all we have to do there is to go back to the beginning of time, to the Garden of Eden and to where God said to Adam and Eve that they could eat from any of the fruit in the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

You remember, of course, what happened in Genesis chapter 3 when the serpent came into the garden and came to the woman and said to her, did God really say, has he really said, and you know what?

The devil has not stopped asking that same question ever since. He asked it from her and he's been asking it to every single person who listens to the Word of God, including you and I.

And just like he has undermined our confidence in the future of the promise of God, like we said before, he also undermines, tries to undermine our confidence in the Bible.

And he does so by asking a host of questions, which I guess fall into two categories. First of all, is this really God's Word? Is it really and truly God's Word?

[ 26 : 48 ] And secondly, how do you know that your understanding of God's Word is the right one? These are the two questions that the devil always asks. And he does so in order to undermine our confidence in the Bible.

And as soon as our confidence begins to crumble, then the whole basis of our faith begins to crumble because it is from the Bible that we've discovered Jesus Christ.

It is from the Bible that we've discovered how much we need God's forgiveness. And if our enemy comes in and he starts questioning whether God really said what he did say in the Bible, then everything is up for grabs and we no longer can believe the Bible because our confidence has been

undermined.

So that is why it is incredibly important to be confident in this book that's in our hands tonight. It's foundational. I want to ask you tonight how much time do you give to the Bible? Reading it, studying it, asking the kind of questions that arise in your minds as you study it day by day.

[ 28 : 04 ] But not only so. But are you allowing God to absorb your heart, to enter into your thinking and your understanding as you read the Bible?

You'll never do that until you give God quality time. We've said all this before. I need to ask myself this question and I need to ask you this question as well.

How much quality time do we give the Lord? And in that quality time there's absorbing God's Word into our hearts. And it's important to answer the questions that we are asked as suggestions.

Has God really... It's important to know why it is we believe this book to be God's Word. Do you know why you believe this book to be God's Word?

Do you know why these 66 books are God's Word? And do you know why we believe that they are infallible?

[ 29 : 04 ] Without defect, without flaw, perfect in every possible sense? That's what we mean by the way when we talk about the Bible as the Word of God.

It's not that the Word of God is contained somewhere within the... As soon as you believe that the Word of God is only contained some places in the Bible, then you're left asking the question, where?

And what part is God's Word and what part isn't God's Word? You're left in utter confusion. Unless you come to the conclusion that the whole of this book, from Genesis to Revelation, is God's message, his infallible and perfect message to each one of us that tells us what God is, who God is, what we are, who we are, who Jesus is, why he came into the world, what he did when he died on the cross and rose again, and what he will do one day.

This is incredibly important. And let me suggest this. And when we begin to ask those questions, and there are a whole host of other questions as well, like, for example, why did God not put other books in the Bible?

There were other letters at the time of the early church. Why did he not include them in the Bible? How do we know that, for example, the book of James is supposed to be included in the canon of Scripture, the list of books that are in the Bible?

[ 30 : 31 ] How do we know? And how can we be so sure that they have the authority that we believe that they do as God's word? Can I say this? There's nothing wrong with asking these questions because it is by asking these questions that we come to a greater confidence in the Bible.

And what I'm saying to you tonight is when these questions arise in your minds, don't just say, oh, I shouldn't be asking that question. That's the wrong way. When these questions arise, you say, well, I'm going to find out.

I'm going to read about this. I'm going to research this. I'm going to find out why as a Christian I really truly believe. Do you know what? It's as you discover, as you read about these issues, that you become more confident.

I remember going through a time in my life when I was younger, when I started, when I began to really ask questions, these kind of questions. And at first, I felt guilty. I felt so vulnerable. But the real problem was I'd never asked them before.

So I began to read. I began to read people like Francis Schaeffer, who himself, his whole life was given to answering the kind of questions that I'm talking about tonight.

[ 31 : 51 ] And he wrote this whole series of books from his ministry in Labrie in Switzerland. And if ever you get a chance to read Francis Schaeffer on this kind of subject, then go for it.

Because it's by absorbing that kind of biblical information that we grow in our confidence. in the Bible. But you know, ultimately, you can read what you want about the Bible.

Ultimately, the Bible itself is where we grow in our confidence of it. It's as you read the Bible. In other words, you can read as many scholarly books as you possibly can, but you won't have your confidence in the Bible grows and increases as you become more familiar with the Bible yourself. So that's the challenge to each one of us tonight. To make the Bible our priority. Not just to read it kind of superstitiously.

I have to read a chapter a day without really wondering whether the chapter goes in or what. But read it prayerfully, carefully, asking the kind of questions that arise in our minds as we do so,

believing that this is God speaking to us and using every biblical resource that we can to help us in our understanding of God's word.

[ 33 : 17 ] And it's as we understand the Bible more and more, two things happen. Our confidence in it grows and we're able to use it against those suggestions as God really said.

I want to challenge you tonight as to how we use the Bible, how we know the Bible and how we absorb it.

I want us to, I want to ask you how much of the Bible you know about. We heard an incredible piece of poetry last week, those of us who went to the Congregational Fellowship and we heard Ernie Garden having memorized a 15-minute poem that went all the way through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation perfectly.

And there's obviously someone who loves the Bible so much that he wanted to encapsulate the whole Bible into, well that's one way, that's one avenue, that's one thing that we can do to try and encapsulate the whole story of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

And we want to get into the more, as well as the easy parts, we want to get into the more difficult parts as well, parts in which we need each other and need the thoughts perhaps of other people who have studied it in order to help us to try and get our heads around it.

[ 34 : 42 ] And all these things, of course, I could go on with that all night. We have to know our Bibles. I don't know why we expect this to be any easier than anything else that we do in our lives.

For example, if you're a student tonight, I don't understand why you're prepared to put so much effort into an honors degree, quite rightly so, and you're not prepared to put effort into understanding the Bible.

I don't understand why we're quite happy to watch a three-hour movie on an evening and we say, well, I don't have time, I don't have five minutes to read my Bible.

Well, that's a real problem, isn't it? That's a problem of priorities. You're basically saying, I can do without it, I can spend five minutes and that's it. It's amazing how we've got time for other things, the things that we want to do.

But I hope that tonight that we rethink our priorities and that we give the Bible our first priority in our lives. I've discovered, just by the way, we're just coming to an end, I've got a phone that gets access to the internet.

[ 35 : 55 ] And I've just discovered once again the value of listening to the Bible. I just want to share this with you. We very often think about reading the Bible, quite rightly so.

The Bible is in our hands and we absorb it by reading. But it tells us also that faith comes by hearing. There's something about hearing God's word in which we very often discover elements that we never discovered before.

And I, for the last few weeks, I've got this audio Bible, it's an application on my phone. Again, I'm talking to some of our young friends here who've got phones and you've got the internet on your phone and you've got, I hope you've got a Bible app for your phone.

I really do hope you have. And if you, if not, get one, they're free. Download a Bible app and modern Bible apps have got a button that you press and you actually can hear it.

are. You don't have to read it, you can hear it. And what I found is really amazing is that I'm hearing things that I haven't discovered before. In a chapter, for example, I may have read that chapter on many, many occasions and when I hear it, maybe it's something to do with the way it's been put or the intonation or the sentence or whatever.

[ 37 : 13 ] I think I've never even thought about that before. What I'm saying tonight is that there is a whole host. Use the resources that are available. We live in the 21st century. We need to thank God for what God has given us.

The knowledge, the resources, the technology that he's giving. There's no excuse for us not to know the Bible. Not a single excuse. So that's the challenge.

Let's use these to God's glory so that we can grow as Christians and so that we can be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, we give thanks for your word that is perfect and infallible.

We thank you, Lord, that every promise that you have made will come to pass one day. It may be difficult for us to see these promises coming together when there is so much opposition to the truth of the gospel, but give us to remember that there have been other times in history where your people have faced even greater opposition than we face.

[ 38 : 26 ] And we ask tonight, Lord, that you will strengthen us, give us to be strong in the Lord, and enable us to use the great resources that are available to us to help us to understand the Bible and enable us, Lord, to grapple with the many questions that arise from listening to your word and trying to get our minds around it.

So, Lord, strengthen us, give us to know how to be strong in the Lord and in the power of your mind and forgive our sin. In Jesus' name, Amen.