

# Our Spiritual Warfare(7) - The Helmet of Salvation

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[ 0 : 00 ] Return with me now please to Paul's letter to the Philippians, sorry to the Ephesians, I'm getting ahead of myself. It's Ephesians chapter 6.

Tonight we're going to look at verse 17, the first part of verse 17. As you can see verse 17 mentions two parts of the armour that we've been going through over the past number of weeks.

So verse 17 mentions the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.

We're just going to confine our thoughts tonight to the first of these, this helmet of salvation.

We've been looking at the various parts of the armour as we've gone through them. We've noticed at times that there's a specific connection between some of them. And that's the case spiritually, of course, as well, even more so than it was in the case of the Roman soldier, who's used here as a picture or analogy of a spiritual armour.

And we'll see that that's the same tonight as we come to the helmet of salvation. It has a specific connection with the word of God, with the gospel.

[ 1 : 12 ] Verse 15, shoes for your feet, having on the readiness given by the gospel of peace, but also what is mentioned, the belt of truth in verse 14. Because the belt of truth in many ways, as we saw it going round the waist of the Roman soldier and keeping things in place, it's always the case that spiritually we come back to the belt of truth because it's foundational to our progress and to our security.

So as we look at verse 17 tonight, obviously, it has to do with the helmet of the Roman soldier, which protected the head, one of the most important parts of the body.

Obviously, if the head was damaged, then the whole person was really out of action and would not be able to carry out their duties as required. So let's look at this helmet in the spiritual sense of it.

And first of all, try and work out what exactly it means. It's called the helmet of salvation. Is it salvation in its entirety? What does the word salvation actually indicate there?

And I think there's a clue to this in the passage we read in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, and especially the words of verse 8 there. You recall as we read through that, since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.

[ 2 : 41 ] So it's narrowing it down there to the hope of salvation. In other words, it's not salvation in the broadest sense. It's salvation in a more narrow, specific sense.

And I think we can take that into chapter 6 of Ephesians as well, because the Thessalonian passage gives us an insight into the working of Paul's mind in regard to this.

Now, the context, as you recall, in Thessalonians is one of Paul encouraging them to encourage one another. They were looking forward to the coming of Christ. Some actually were a bit concerned or even confused about how that would be in terms of in relation to those who had passed on from this life.

And you recall in chapter 4 that he deals with that specific problem, that the Lord will come with the sound of the trumpet of God. The dead in Christ will rise first. We then who are alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the air to meet the Lord in the air.

We will always be with the Lord. Therefore, encourage one another with these words. And then in chapter 5, as we read, verse 11, therefore, encourage one another and build one another up just as you are doing.

[ 3 : 50 ] So it's very much to do with the context or the purpose of Paul of encouraging these Thessalonians, encouraging this young church as they wrestled with theological problems, but also like the Ephesians as they wrestled against spiritual darkness and against decline, even amongst some of the people who had come to follow the Lord.

And the context of encouraging one another there in 1 Thessalonians is set in the context of Christ's return, set in the context of looking forward in hope to the arrival of the Lord Jesus Christ as promised by himself and by the teachings of God's word when he left this world to return to glory. So salvation in this context really has that narrower focus. And indeed, you'll find that in other contexts as well. 1 Peter, for example, begins his epistle by reflecting on how the resurrection of Jesus Christ brought them all to a living hope.

God had done this by the resurrection of Christ to a living hope. To you who are called, he said, you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Now he's talking there of, Peter is talking there of salvation ready to be revealed. And he knows very well that salvation has already been revealed. So he's talking again more narrowly, more focused on salvation in the sense of what is going to appear at the coming of Christ.

[ 5 : 24 ] What is going to be made known then, that is not necessarily as clear now, but certainly hasn't yet been realized, hasn't been accomplished in the sense of it hasn't taken place.

And here you can import that into your thinking in Ephesians here and verse 17. Take the helmet of salvation. And if you think in that narrower focus as the hope of salvation, as the helmet covered the head physically, So the hope of salvation is something that looks forward to the future in hope, but also is such an important and integral aspect of the Christian's life.

The Christian looking forward in hope is itself an antidote to discouragement, an antidote, as we saw there in 1 Thessalonians 5, to the discouragement that is so easily comes and drifts into our lives.

So if you think about the helmet in the ordinary sense, in the natural sense of protecting the head, I think we can say that spiritually the helmet is there to protect the mind.

The mind, as it works through the issues that God has revealed, comes to certain conclusions. God has given us the spirit of a sound mind. He's opened our mind.

[ 6 : 49 ] He's given us the kind of mind that wants to learn more and more of the truth of God, learn more from the word of God. And as that is the case, so it is something which nourishes your hope as you look towards the future, among other things.

Of course, it does more than that, but we're focusing on the hope of salvation as it's represented by this helmet, this helmet of the Roman soldier. And the Christian mind, as it thinks ahead, is a mind that is able to think clearly because you have the benefit of God's word clearly stating that the things that are hoped for are already secure.

They're not things that are waiting to be worked through and brought to realization or accomplishment. The fact that Jesus has gone to glory and is at the right hand of God the Father, the fact that he has accomplished redemption on earth, the fact that the spirit of God has come as promised, and that Christ the Son and the Father are present through that spirit in the hearts of God's people, that itself is something that is already the case.

And the word of God brings it to us so often that that has already been accomplished. So hope in this sense, as you put on the helmet of hope, as you exercise hope every day in Christ, you're not dealing with something that's uncertain, something that is still somehow unclear.

Sometimes we use the word hope, of course, and we mentioned this more than once. We use the word hope in the ordinary, everyday sense of hope, like hoping for the best or hoping something will actually come to take place, or whatever it may be.

[ 8 : 35 ] We're hoping it might be realized. We're hoping it will come to pass. We have no confidence that can say for sure it will. But here, in the word that God has given us, this belt of truth that's fastened on, it's something that comes through the workings of your mind to focus upon those certainties on which your hope is based, on which your hope rests.

Because you're not here tonight as Christians, exercising the mind that God has given you, and somehow doubtful about things that are foundational for your hope. Christ has died.

Christ has risen from the dead. Christ is at the right hand of glory. And all the way through the scripture, especially Paul's epistles, you'll find him referring to these great facts, facts accomplished already as the very ground of our hopes, the very ground of the Christian hope, that salvation that's certain, that God has said is already accomplished, that will remain to be, that remains to be finally crowned at the appearance of Christ.

Well, what he's saying is, in order to face the issues of the day, and especially to face the enemy, to face the spiritual darkness that we all wrestle against, as we saw at the beginning of this passage, take the helmet of salvation, take the hope of salvation, take that hope that penetrates forward into

the future, not as an unknown future, though there are many events in the course of life that will remain unknown.

But these are not unknowns. These are the actual verities, the truths, the certainties of what God has already done, and of what God in his word has promised, will yet be fulfilled.

[10:26] So that's something about the spiritual helmet. We're focusing it down, following 1 Thessalonians 5, to the hope of salvation, to the final stage of salvation, with the coming of Christ.

And Paul is there, and also here in Ephesians, drawing the minds of the Ephesians to that particular issue. So that it's looking forward to projecting into the future.

So which temptation especially is addressed by this particular emphasis on the hope of salvation or the helmet of salvation?

Well, the second point, and we looked at the spiritual helmet briefly, is to look at how we need to keep up the fight, to keep up our resistance, and indeed our attack of the enemy as well, whatever forms we find the enemy actually coming to assault us.

And the particular temptation, I think, that's in mind here for the use of the helmet of salvation or the hope of salvation, is the temptation to lose heart.

[11:42] The temptation to recede, the temptation to go back, the temptation just to, if not almost give up, then certainly progress towards that. The temptation to become disillusioned with the Christian life.

The temptation to be disillusioned even with Jesus himself when things are not going so well in our lives generally. The temptation even towards thinking, is there any point to this at all?

Remember how in Ephesians chapter, sorry, in Hebrews chapter 12, you find that there's an exhortation there to look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

And in Hebrews 12 and verse 3, the writer there is actually looking in a similar situation to what you have here in Ephesians. Remember that Hebrews is very much an epistle given towards those who are tempted to give up following Christ, giving up the profession they've made of faith in Christ.

And then he says, it was through 11, as you know, chapter 11, that great cloud of witnesses, as he calls it, in verse 1 of chapter 12, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which clings so closely.

[13:00] Let us run with endurance, the word which means perseverance. Let's not give up the struggle. Let's not give up the fight. He's saying, the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

In other words, we are exhorted when the temptation comes to slacken in the race or to withdraw from the race, as Hebrews 12 puts it. We are encouraged to look to Jesus.

And why are we looking to Jesus? Because he's not only the savior in the sense of being foundational to our faith, to our Christian life. He's also our supreme example of perseverance, of pressing on, of not giving up, of not giving up on the fight.

That's why he said there, he endured the cross for the joy that was set before him. In other words, the saint Jesus was looking ahead of himself as he lived in this world, looking ahead even beyond the cross, looking at the reality of the cross and all of that would entail for himself.

But for the joy that was set before him, for that which was promised him beyond this world, beyond the resurrection, beyond exaltation, beyond the cross, he endured the cross for the joy that was set before him.

[14:33] In other words, you could say there's a sense in which there's certainly an affinity with the hope that Christians, that is people have in looking beyond the current life, the current circumstances, the current situation, to the fulfillment of the promises at the coming of Jesus Christ himself.

And when that takes place and that aspect of salvation is then actually realized and fulfilled, then the promises will be enjoyed by his people.

So that letter of Hebrews, the letter of exhortation, is a letter that is very much in line with Ephesians here in terms of encouraging us to actually not give up.

Remember, all the way through Hebrews, you've got references to Israel, references to the Old Testament and Israel in the progress that they made through the Old Testament in the desert.

And so often in Hebrews, they are an example of not persevering. They are an example of giving up. An example of not actually pushing through and persevering into the land of promise.

[ 15 : 42 ] And that's why the writer is saying, we have them as our example so that we don't follow the same sort of path they followed because they all fell in the wilderness, is the writer's word for it.

And apart from two, they did not enter into the land that God had promised them. And so, we actually have the helmet of salvation, the hope of salvation, the wilderness hardships that Israel experienced.

And this is the contact point with ourselves. the wilderness hardships that they experienced actually gave the devil an entry point.

An entry point towards just them giving up the struggles. An entry point towards them going back. They wanted back to Egypt. Remember how soon after leaving Egypt, they were saying to Moses, why have you brought us out here to die in this wilderness?

We wish we were back in Egypt with the food that we enjoyed in Eden. There's nothing in Egypt. There's nothing here for us in this wilderness. And that's what the devil is actually always setting out to tempt you towards thinking and concluding along those lines.

[ 16 : 57 ] That somehow or other, the struggles of the Christian life are not really worth it after all. So as you take up this helmet, you use it, first of all, against what we can call spiritual pacifism.

You know that a pacifist in the ordinary sense is somebody who, because of their strong views against war, they exercise the liberty of not actually taking up the opportunity of engaging with an enemy in a time of war.

There were pacifists. There were people who are pacifists in every generation. That was their liberty that they had to live like that, to have that conclusion.

And so they withdrew from active engagement in times of war in army or navy or air force or whatever. Well, there's a kind of spiritual pacifism as well that the devil, these powers that are mentioned there, the schemes of the devil, wrestling not against flesh and blood, but against these present darkness, the spiritual forces of evil, need the spiritual helmet.

You need this hope of salvation because he wants to persuade you that because life is so difficult as a Christian, is it really worth going on? There's a pacifism that really wants you to conclude that it's all right being a Christian in an ordinary sense, but if only we could take the struggles out of the Christian life.

[ 18 : 25 ] And really, that's what the devil wants to persuade you of, that the struggles of the Christian life really have no meaning or no purpose or little purpose or little value. Whereas when you go through the likes of Ephesians and Paul's other letters in the New Testament and the writings of the psalmist in the Old Testament, as well as the prophecies of some of the prophets and the struggles they had to endure, it becomes obvious pretty quickly.

Not only are there struggles in the Christian life, but there are beneficial struggles. There are struggles which fit into God's program of their redemption, of their sanctification, especially. And that spiritual pacifism is something that the devil will seek to make very attractive to you. And you know, there's a form of it which maybe doesn't go as far as withdrawing altogether, but there's a form of it that we're very familiar with, of a kind of Christianity that just goes through the motions, as it were, or a nominalism, belonging to a church and saying, yes, I'm a Christian, but no real engagement with any of the spiritual enemies of the gospel, no real engagement positively for Christ in this world by way of witnessing for him, by way of confessing him openly.

There's a kind of spiritual withdrawal in that sense, that pacifism. Well, here is the apostle saying, take up this helmet of the hope of salvation. And because of the wonderful certainties of what are set out at the return of Christ for you, encourage one another, strengthen one another, be involved in the way of giving each other the support and the encouragement towards that final return of Christ that all of us need.

[ 20 : 19 ] Every single Christian needs, at some point, encouragement from other Christians. That's one of the reasons we actually value the wonderful privilege of belonging to the body of Christ, of belonging to that church of Christ on earth.

So it's an antidote against a spiritual pacifism, but it's also an antidote at what you can call defeatism. I mentioned some of that just in a few moments ago.

When you see the state of things in the world, when you see the extent to which what we'll call the world has rebelled against God and rebels against the gospel and rebels against the law of God and rebels against the testimonies of history in the church, when you actually take a view of the church itself in the widest possible sense, well, the devil will suggest to you, is there really any point

to being a Christian?

Is there any point to belonging to a church? Look at the state of the world. It's not made any difference in your lifetime. Why should you actually go on with these struggles? It's not made any difference. Things are going on just as they were.

People aren't at all interested in Christ. When you think of the struggles that people have for the gospel, struggles with regard to standing for the rights of Jesus, the devil will come.

[ 21 : 40 ] Well, the gospel is just not going to win anyway, so what's the point? Forget about evangelism. Forget about your own personal advancement and holiness of life. Forget about your own perseverance and looking onwards in hope, because when you focus on the present, as the devil will suggest to you, that's really all that matters.

Just as 2 Peter would say, those who are facing, those the church was facing then were facing the idea of, well, where is the promise of his coming? Everything remains just as it was.

There's a kind of pointlessness suggested and thrown at you. when you think of what it is to be a Christian and the struggles of the Christian life.

Of course, what he's telling us here, and you find it abundantly throughout Paul's writings, is that you counter that with taking an account of eternity.

This is not all about the present life. The present life is important to the Christian. The present life is important to the church. The present life is important in many respects. But what the devil wants you to look at is the present life exclusively and not actually take account of the importance and the enormity and the way in which eternity looms for the Christian as the crowning of their salvation.

[ 23 : 04 ] And in a sense, everything of this present life, however important it may be in its own right, but everything really moves forward towards that crowning moment of the coming of Christ.

That's really what the helmet of salvation is about, the hope of salvation. Where the devil would encourage you, just focus on the present and where he would say, well, look at all the differences of opinion that are about the future, anyone about the coming of Christ.

Not all Christians believe the same thing, so that's another way that he can get into your mind and say, you know, just don't be too serious about it. Be a Christian, certainly, just in a nominal sense, that'll do, that'll be enough.

Well, this is the hope of salvation to counteract that. Where God started the work, as we saw in Philippians some time ago, just across the page in your Bible, I am sure of this, that he who began a good working, you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

At the day of Jesus Christ. Take up the helmet of salvation. And just like you find with the sword of the spirit and with the shoes of the gospel and all the other parts of the armor, they are actually there ready to hand to be used on a daily basis.

[ 24 : 32 ] You need the helmet of salvation because your warfare is a daily warfare. You are facing this enemy every single day of your life. I know that I'm saying these things to people who already know that.

But think of how often in the New Testament itself you find the likes of Peter and of Paul reminding Christians, reminding myself, reminding yourself.

And reminding just means going back to the basic things, to the foundational things, to the building blocks of our redemption. Because the devil will, again, these powers of darkness, schemes, the wiles, the way in which temptation is shaped so as to draw you in and take your attention and suck you into its workings.

It's there counteracted so often by the apostle by bringing before us the importance of eternity and bringing before us how God will not stop short of finishing the work that he has begun.

When you go back to Romans chapter 8, that great chapter, we could have read that one tonight. It's very much in line with some of the thoughts in this chapter in Ephesians as well.

[ 25 : 51 ] But Romans chapter 8, and remember Romans chapter 8 is certainly a very strongly theological chapter. It's got some of the most wonderful theology, both of our foundational salvation in Christ and the work of the Spirit of God in us, but it's also got some of the most wonderful teaching on sanctification, on God actually working in his people, bringing them onwards towards the time when they will finally be like Jesus in the image of God's Son, what they are predestined to.

So yes, there's all that wonderful theology in chapter 8 of Romans, but it's a chapter for encouragement. It's not there just to be studied by theologians.

It's not just there for those who are skilled in following out theological arguments. It's there for you and it's there for me. It's there for every Christian because it's a chapter to do with Christian encouragement, which is why Paul winds up that chapter if you like.

You can put it that way from verse 31, especially what then shall we say to these things? He's saying, here's the theology, here's the wonderful teaching, here's the doctrine, here are the things that are foundational to our belief, to our faith, to our salvation.

So what's our reaction? What are we going to say? Why is that there for us? What are we to make of this? What shall we then say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

[ 27 : 28 ] He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? You notice the with him is important. How will he not also with him, with the son, with Jesus, united to Christ, give us all things?

And then he says, who shall lay any charge against God's elect? You see, that's the same context, the same atmosphere, if you like, as Ephesians 6, in the armor of God.

Charge is brought against God's elect. That's the devil's business. That's his purpose. That's what he's busy at. That's what his scheming is about. Who shall lay any charge or bring any charge against God's elect?

It is God who justifies. So who is to condemn? Where is there condemnation for these people who are in Christ Jesus? Paul is saying, there can't be.

There's just no possibility. It's an impossibility that the devil is true about your condemnation when you're united to Christ.

[ 28 : 32 ] Because he says, Jesus Christ is the one who died, more than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword, all of which are things that the devil has access to, to bring you to be discouraged, to bring you to take steps back?

No, he says, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

You see how wonderfully practical Paul is in applying his theology. That's what is there for you and for me, too. And as you go to Ephesians 6, and go through these parts of the armor, and you come to what we're looking at tonight, this helmet of salvation, the hope of salvation, it's really saying to you, think of your future.

Think of what's already secure. Think of what's there waiting for you to enjoy in eternity. Think of all that for your present life, so that you be encouraged in it, so that you don't slacken, so that you don't give up, but rather that you persevere.

[ 30 : 02 ] I mentioned 2 Peter a few moments ago, and you'll find similar emphasis there as he deals with what was in his own day, some critical times as well, and you recall there in 2 Peter chapter 3, how he is facing the idea that there is actually just no such thing as the return of Christ, where he's saying in chapter 3 there, he said, I'm stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord, knowing first of all that scoffers will come in the last days, and the last days are from the time that Christ came and went back to glory until he returns, these are the last days.

And he's saying in chapter 3 here of 2 Peter, they will say, following their own sinful desires, they will say, where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.

And so all the way through, he then goes to deal with the Lord, not slack, concerning his promises being fulfilled, and how he's patient towards us, and how one day with the Lord is like a thousand years, a thousand years like one day.

Therefore he said, beloved, since you are waiting for these things, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish and at peace, and count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you, according to the wisdom given to him.

Know you therefore, know you therefore beloved, in verse 17, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.

[ 32 : 07 ] What is the antidote to being carried away and losing your stability? What's the antidote to slackening off or just giving up or saying what's the point?

It is this, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and to the day of eternity.

In other words, you can say, speaking into Ephesians 6 as well, that the antidote to the temptation to go back or to give up is to grow.

Spiritual growth is the only adequate response or answer to the temptation of the devil to go up. to give up. And instead of succumbing to that temptation, what we are encouraged to do by God himself through his word is to say in return, not only am I not going to give up, but I'm determined to go on growing in my Christian life, in my relationship with the Lord, in my relationship with my fellow Christians.

I'm determined not to give up, but instead to actually take all the encouragement I can from being with my brothers and sisters in Christ, so that together we will grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 33 : 33 ] May God bless these thoughts on his word to us. now we're going to conclude. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.