

THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL: A STUDY OF EPHESIANS

(LESSON ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY THREE)

“THE HELMET OF SALVATION”

EPHESIANS 6:13-17

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness.

15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

In verses **14-17** of our text, the Apostle Paul provides a list of the offensive and defensive pieces of armour that believers are to employ in **spiritual** warfare. The pieces of armour appear in the order in which a Roman soldier would put them on before engaging in **physical** warfare. In previous Lessons we have considered the “**Belt of Truth**,” the “**Breastplate of Righteousness**,” the “**Shoes of the Gospel**,” and the “**Shield of Faith**.” In this Lesson we will look at the “**Helmet of Salvation**.”

In verse **17** Paul writes, “*And take the helmet of salvation...*” The word “*and*” at the beginning of the phrase, connects this particular piece of armour with all the pieces mentioned previously. It is important for us to understand that although the “*whole armour*” or **panoplia** was comprised of several different pieces, it represents a “**unit**,” and not one piece can be missing if the Christian soldier is to successfully wage spiritual warfare in God’s power, and for His glory, against the “*evil one*.”

Paul’s figure of the Christian soldier’s “helmet” recalls Isaiah’s description of the Messiah in **Isaiah 59:17**: “*For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an **helmet of salvation** upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.*” The “*helmet of salvation*” was worn by our Lord Himself when He waged spiritual warfare against the devil and his hosts on behalf of His people. This helmet on the head of Messiah, identifies Him as the believer’s Divine champion. When it is worn by the believer, it becomes the sign of his or her protection by God.

In **Exodus 15:3** we read that, “*The LORD is a man of war.*” We have an illustration of our warrior Messiah in **Isaiah 63:1-6**. The **New Living Translation** renders the passage as follows:

1 Who is this who comes from Edom, from the city of Bozrah, with his clothing stained red? Who is this in royal robes, marching in his great strength? “It is I, the LORD, announcing your salvation! It is I, the LORD, who has the power to save!”

2 Why are your clothes so red, as if you have been treading out grapes?

3 “I have been treading the winepress alone; no one was there to help me. In my anger I have trampled my enemies as if they were grapes. In my fury I have trampled my foes. Their blood has stained my clothes.

4 For the time has come for me to avenge my people, to ransom them from their oppressors.

5 I was amazed to see that no one intervened to help the oppressed. So I myself stepped in to save them with my strong arm, and my wrath sustained me.

6 I crushed the nations in my anger and made them stagger and fall to the ground, spilling their blood upon the earth.”

Christ, the Divine warrior, wore the “*helmet of salvation*” in the sense of His being the One who **accomplished** salvation for His people, clothed and armed, as it were, with this great purpose. The Christian warrior wears the helmet in the sense of being the **receiver** and **possessor** of salvation, clothed and armed in the assurance of His or her standing before God.

The Apostle writes, “*Take the helmet of salvation.*” The Greek word translated “*take*” is **dechomai**: (**dekh’-om-ahee**), which means, “to take with the hand; to take hold of, take up; to receive.” It means to accept deliberately and receive readily. The idea is of taking or receiving or accepting into one’s hands. This is especially appropriate in regard to this portion of the armor, which is identified with salvation. The word differs from the “taking up” commanded in **Ephesians 6:13** and **6:16**. It signifies the accepting of something offered by the hand of another. As one commentator explains, “The previous items were laid out for the soldier to pick up. The helmet and sword would be handed him by an attendant or by his armor bearer.”

The word **dechomai** is in a construction in the Greek which indicates that Paul is issuing a command that is to be obeyed without delay. The “*helmet of salvation*” is bestowed upon each believer by the hand of God. The believer is to accept it deliberately, and receive it readily from God’s hands, and place it securely on his or her own head without delay.

The Greek word translated “*helmet*” is **perikephalaia**: (**per-ee-kef-al-ah’-yah**), which literally means, “around the head.” Roman military helmets were of two types: the **galea** which was made of leather, or the **cassis** which was made of metal. The helmet had a band to protect

the forehead and plates for the cheeks, and extended down in back to protect the neck. When the helmet was strapped in place, it exposed little besides the eyes, nose, and mouth.



Due to their weight, the metal helmets were lined with sponge or felt. Virtually the only weapons which could penetrate a metal helmet were hammers or axes. No soldier's uniform was complete without a proper helmet. A helmet, being hot and uncomfortable, would be put on by a soldier only when he faced impending danger. A Roman soldier who lost his helmet in battle was in danger of receiving severe head wounds which would, at the very least, disorient him and render him ineffective and in danger of further injury. At worst, he could suffer a fatal blow.

Commenting on the "*helmet of salvation*," **Steven Cole** writes the following:

"The helmet protects your head from the enemy's attacks. Your head is a very important part of your body, because it contains your brain,

which controls everything. Your head determines how you think about all of life. How you think in large part determines how you feel and how you act....**To put on the helmet of salvation requires that you learn to think biblically about the predominant worldviews. You must develop a Christian mind, a saved mind. Your head determines how you function in all of life.** If your brain is not working properly, it affects how other parts of your body work. A brain injury can affect motor skills or the ability to speak or think clearly. If a soldier got knocked unconscious by a blow to the head, he was probably doomed. He had to guard his head by having his helmet securely in place. **Spiritually, salvation determines how we live in this sinful world. We live as pilgrims who have been rescued from this present evil kingdom of Satan. We live in subjection to Jesus Christ as Lord and King. We view everything—values, money, entertainment, the arts, or politics—from the perspective of being saved people. Understanding the doctrine of salvation equips us to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. Salvation is the foundational doctrine to understand cognitively and to know experientially.** Putting on the helmet of salvation protects everything in your life."

The helmet that the Christian soldier is to wear at all times is "*salvation.*" In what sense is Paul using the word "salvation" in this verse? The persons to whom Paul is writing are already saved. They are already justified. We know this because in chapter 1 and verse 1, he referred to them as "saints." Therefore, when Paul exhorts them to "*take the helmet of salvation,*" he is not speaking to them about their need to **obtain** salvation. Rather, he is speaking about their **assurance** of salvation and how that assurance will allow them to be delivered from the power of sin in this **present** life. Satan is well aware that there is nothing that he can do to cause a believer to **lose** his or her salvation, but he unceasingly seeks to destroy the believer's **assurance** of salvation with his weapons of doubt and discouragement. Satan knows well that it is well-nigh impossible for a believer who has little or no assurance of salvation to successfully wage warfare against him. While **security** of

salvation is a fact; **assurance** of salvation is a comfort that is increasingly experienced by believers who are consistently surrendering to the influence and control of the Holy Spirit.

Brothers and sisters, in the context of **Ephesians 6:17**, Paul's use of the word "*salvation*" means that God has rescued us in the **past** from the **penalty** of sin through our faith in His Son, Jesus Christ; He is rescuing us in the **present** from the **power** of sin through the resurrection life of Christ in us; and He will rescue us in the **future** from the **presence** of sin when Jesus Christ returns in power and glory. It is our understanding of the awesomeness of our **past** salvation from the **power** of sin, and our confidence in its far-reaching, life-transforming effects, that will assure our hearts and minds that "*that the one who began a good work in [us] will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus*" (**Philippians 1:6 New English Translation**).

Warren Wiersbe writes that, "The helmet refers to the mind controlled by God. It is too bad that many Christians have the idea that the intellect is not important, when in reality it plays a vital role in Christian growth, service, and victory. When God controls the mind, Satan cannot lead the believer astray. The Christian who studies his Bible and learns the meaning of Bible doctrines is not going to be led astray too easily. We need to be '*taught by Him as the truth is in Jesus*' (**Ephesians 4:21**). We are to '*grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*' (**2 Peter 3:18**). Wherever Paul ministered, he taught the new converts the truths of the Word of God, and this helmet protected them from Satan's lies."

The **New Living Translation** renders **Romans 12:1-2** in the following way:

I And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.

2 Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:7-9 Paul writes,

7 For those who sleep, sleep at night and those who get drunk are drunk at night.

*8 But since we are of the day, we must stay sober by putting on the breastplate of faith and love and as a **helmet our hope for salvation**.*

9 For God did not destine us for wrath but for gaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

(New English Translation)

In verse **8**, Paul makes reference to a “*helmet our hope for salvation.*” Here the Apostle is speaking about the impact that the **assurance** of **glorification**, or **future-tense** salvation should have on our **present** thinking and conduct. Paul is exhorting the believers to let the “*hope for salvation*” be their mindset or their “*helmet,*” allowing them to focus on God’s promise that they will not be delivered over to wrath.

In verse **9** we are informed that “*God did not destine us for wrath but for gaining salvation.*” The Greek word translated “*destine*” is **tithémi**: (**tith'-ay-mee**), which means, “to set, put, place; to fix, establish; to appoint, ordain.” Brothers and sisters, God has **destined** us, He has **set** us, He has **placed** us, He has **fixed** us, He has **established** us, He has **appointed** us, He has **ordained** us, **not for wrath** but for **salvation!**

Brothers and sisters, our salvation is a result of God’s **appointment** and it is connected with the past act of Him choosing us in Christ before the foundation of the world, according to **Ephesians 1:4**. Our salvation is also connected with the deliberate purpose of an infinitely loving, merciful and gracious God. The word **tithémi** is in a construction in the

Greek which indicates that in destining us for salvation, God acted in His own interest, and that His act of destining us for salvation is an event which occurred in the past, and, in the mind of God, an event which is already completed! In other words, God, Who acted according to His own will and good pleasure, has **destined** believers to salvation as His gracious intention for them!

Brothers and sisters, let me say it again, God has **ordained** not our destruction but our salvation. He has no intention of us becoming the subjects of His wrath. He cherishes no angry purposes toward His beloved, redeemed children. His divine wrath against sin, and therefore sinners, was diverted from us when by faith we were united with “*the Son He loves*” (**Colossians 1:13 New English Translation**).

As Charles Wesley wrote in the fifth verse of his hymn, “***And Can It Be That I Should Gain?***”

*“Still the small inward voice I hear,
That whispers all my sins forgiven;
Still the atoning blood is near,
That quenched the wrath of hostile Heaven.
I feel the life His wounds impart;
I feel the Savior in my heart.”*

We need to pause and offer up a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God for this wonderful truth!

The “*helmet of salvation*” protects our mind against discouragement, doubt, and a desire to quit. It gives us hope, not only in knowing that we **were** saved (**justification - past tense salvation**), but that we **are being** saved (**sanctification - present tense salvation**), and that we **will be** saved (**glorification - future tense salvation**).

Regarding the phrase, “*And as a helmet our hope for salvation,*” Paul is **not** saying that we have a hope that we will be saved some time in the future. Believers can know **today** that they are saved **forever**, and are

certain of spending eternity with God. **Scriptural hope** has as its foundation faith in God. The word “hope” in English often conveys doubt. For instance we say, “I **hope** it will not rain tomorrow.” In addition, the word is often followed by the word “so.” This is the answer that some persons give when asked if they think that they will go to heaven when they die. They say, “I hope so.” However, that is not the meaning of the words usually translated “hope” in the Bible.

In both the Old and the New Testament the word “hope” has the meaning of **confidence** and **security**. The concept of doubt is not part of this word as it is used in Scripture. Therefore, hope in Scripture is a confident expectation or assurance, based upon a sure foundation for which we wait with joy and full confidence. In other words, “There is no doubt about it!”

In **Hebrews 11:1**, the writer of the letter to the Hebrews expresses **scriptural hope** as follows: “*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see*” (**New English Translation**). This verse carries with it all of the confidence that comes from knowing for sure, with no question, what we have been promised by God in His Word. Our faith is confident assurance, because it is founded upon the Rock of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, **scriptural hope is a reality and not a feeling**. It is a sure foundation upon which believers base their lives, believing that God always keeps His promises. Hope, or confident assurance can be ours when we trust our Lord’s words recorded in **John 5:24**, “*I tell you the solemn truth, the one who hears my message and believes the one who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned, but has crossed over from death to life*” (**New English Translation**). Accepting that gift of eternal life means our hope is no longer filled with doubt but, rather, has at its sure foundation the whole of God’s Word, the entirety of God’s character, and the finished work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters, hope is the proper response to the promises of God on the part of a believer. Abraham serves as a prime example of this.

Even though he was very old, he had confidence that God would fulfill the promises He had made to him. In **Romans 4:18** we read, “*Against hope Abraham believed in hope with the result that he became the father of many nations according to the pronouncement, “so will your descendants be”* (New English Translation). In the same manner as Abraham, believers today can trust in God’s promises and “*hold fast to the hope set before us*” (**Hebrews 6:18 New English Translation**).

Scriptural Hope is engendered in the heart of believers through the Word of God (**Romans 15:4**), by the power of the Holy Spirit (**Romans 15:13**), as a gift of God’s grace (**2 Thessalonians 2:16**). Hope leads to joy (**Romans 12:12**), boldness (**2 Corinthians 3:12**), and faith and love (**Colossians 1:4-5**).

It is very important for us to understand that **scriptural hope** has a sanctifying effect. In **1 John 3:1-3** we read the following:

1 (See what sort of love the Father has given to us: that we should be called God’s children—and indeed we are! For this reason the world does not know us: because it did not know him.

2 Dear friends, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that whenever it is revealed we will be like him, because we will see him just as he is.

*3 And everyone who has **this hope** focused on him purifies himself, just as Jesus is pure).*

(New English Translation)

Paul’s figure of the Christian soldier’s helmet encourages believers to have confidence in the salvation they already possess. Doubting our security in Christ renders us ineffective in spiritual warfare, just as a blow to the soldier’s head would render his physical body incapable of defending itself. Discouragement and doubt are negated when we know that we are secure in the salvation that was worked out for us by Jesus Christ, in His perfect life and sacrificial death!

