

Series: Unsearchable Riches in Christ (Ephesians)

Text: Ephesians 6:17

Message #34 (June 3, 2007)

## **DRESSING FOR BATTLE – Part 5 “The Helmet of Salvation”**

### **Introduction**

1. The battle is real. It comes in many forms. Sometimes there is direct attack from the enemy packaged as temptations on the inside and evil reactions of others toward us on the outside – temptations within and perils without. When we see these coming, we know the battle is real and we know we are in it.
2. Sometimes the battle is less obvious, but no less dangerous. The normal pressures and trials of life that come because we are sinners and live in a cursed world, are allowed and designed by a sovereign God to develop our character and make us trust Him more. But the enemy hijacks those divine purposes and turns them into times of great doubt and terrible discouragement. So, what was designed to make us strong is working instead to make us weak and vulnerable, filling us with doubts and crippling us with discouragement. That is why we so desperately need to take up the helmet of salvation. Let's see if we can understand why this piece of armor is so important in our battle with the prince of darkness.

### **I. WHAT THE HELMET IS – THE PROVISION OF HELP AND HOPE**

#### **A. The literal helmet**

1. The Roman soldier's helmet was like a cap with cheek flaps made of leather or cast bronze. Often it was decorated with a plume on the top. (Certainly this feature made the soldier stand out in a crowd). The soldier could be identified as a soldier with the helmet on.
2. But more than ornamental, the helmet was designed to protect the soldier against the large broad sword which was held sort of like a baseball bat, designed to land a heavy blow against the skull of the enemy. The design was to crush if not decapitate. The helmet would also protect against the fiery darts aimed at the head.

- #### **B. The symbolic meaning – The helmet is called “the helmet of salvation.” To what aspect was Paul referring? It seems odd to speak of salvation as the fifth piece of armor rather than the first. Since Paul had all along been speaking to believers, it seems odd that he would just now speak of the helmet of salvation when presumably his hearers were**

already saved. In what way does it make sense for them to now put on the helmet of salvation? Also to speak of taking up the helmet of salvation rather than putting it on and keeping it on, seems odd. The answer to those questions may be found in understanding the nature of salvation. There are multiple aspects to salvation that are clearly presented in the Scripture.

1. "I am saved" (past tense). This aspect of salvation is what we most often assume when we hear the term. Certainly salvation as we understand it was a transaction in the past that resulted in our redemption. We went from death to life. In Jesus' words, we were born again; we were made alive in the Spirit. This is what Paul had in mind when he told the Romans, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. We are saved. It is a settled matter. It is a completed transaction. We have been **saved** from the **penalty of sin**, which was death. We have been redeemed – made alive in Christ – no longer dead, but alive. That is what we usually think about when we hear the term salvation, but it is unlikely that this was Paul's point here in his call for us to take up the helmet of salvation.
2. "I am being saved" (present tense). Without denying the reality of the past tense of salvation, it can also be said that we are in the process of being saved. Listen carefully. We have been saved from the **penalty** of sin. That is a settled issue. We are under no condemnation. But we remain in a struggle with the **power of sin**. That is a daily occurrence. Paul discusses this in Romans 6-8. Condemnation was sin's penalty and we have been saved from that. We are no longer condemned, but rather set free from the law of sin and death. However, we continue to struggle with sin's **power** while we remain in the flesh. Much of the emphasis in the epistles has to do with bringing our practice into conformity with our position. This is what you are in Christ; now be what you are! Paul told the Romans, "Reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to Christ." In other words, you are dead to sin and alive to Christ in position. Make it your daily practice! As we live in this way, the power of sin is weakened and we lose our appetite for it. This seems to be what Paul is saying in relation to taking up the helmet of salvation.
3. "I shall be saved" (future tense). The day in coming when our practice will match our position – when we will be "entirely sanctified." I do not believe this is possible in this life because we carry around with us the body of sin. Our spirit has been reborn,

but our bodies have yet to be redeemed and we remain in a fallen world subject to the temptations of sin. But the day is coming when we will be made perfect – when sin will be done away with, when we will literally be **saved from sin's presence**. But since that is not so for us, since we continue to live here in the flesh, we must be armed fully, and this armor includes the helmet of salvation.

### C. The point Paul is making

1. The helmet of salvation deals with protecting the mind/heart from the hopelessness and despair that the devil will throw at us. When these feelings and concerns overwhelm us, we have for our protection and defense this helmet. (Where does that come from?)
2. Paul referred to this helmet in another letter as “the hope of salvation” (1 Thessalonians 5:8 – ***But 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***).
3. I think the helmet of salvation is a reminder that one day, the battle will be over, and we are on the winning side. When the enemy whispers that we are losing, so we might as well give in and give up, our confident response is to take up the helmet of salvation. I think the essence of Paul's point is captured in the context of 1 Thessalonians 5:8. ***But 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*** (present tense) ***For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ*** (future tense), ***who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him*** (present and future tenses). ***Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.*** (Our anticipation of our completed salvation – thus our hope – will protect our heads in the heat of battle). In the words of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, “when you are attacked, besieged, tried, tempted and the devil says, ‘There is nothing in it, you might as well get out of it, Christianity makes false promises, it does not fulfill them – give up!’ you answer by saying, ‘No, I have not been led astray by this teaching. I have always known that there are steps and stages in salvation. I know that I am saved, I know that I am being saved, I know that ultimately I shall be completely saved.’” That is the answer of the believer who has taken up the helmet of salvation!

## II. WHAT THE HELMET DOES – THE PROTECTION FROM DOUBT AND DISCOURAGEMENT

A. The protection against doubt

1. In relation to doubts about our salvation – If we assume that when we get saved everything will go well from then on, you can imagine when the trials come flooding in how we might wonder if in fact we are really saved? The reality is that when we trust Christ, life probably will probably get much more difficult! We need the helmet of salvation to guard us against such potential doubts.
2. In relation to doubts about our provision – There are times when things look bleak. I love the perspective we glean through Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 and his conclusion in verses 16-18! ***(We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed ... So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.***
3. In relation to doubts about our value – I have a friend who is in ministry. He is doing a good work and God is using him greatly. I am encouraged as I watch God use him for the glory of Christ. A number of years ago I got a letter from this friend. He was in utter despair. He talked about spending 25 hours preparing for a message and people do not seem to get it. He was frustrated and discouraged and ready to quit the ministry. After all, what value is there in it? What's the point/ Why invest your life in something that no one cares about? When we doubt what we are doing is of any value and we begin to think ourselves as nothing, it is time to take up the helmet of salvation. That doesn't make us worth any more, but it shows us that we belong to God and He is using us for His glory. When we belong to Him, we find our value in Him!

B. The protection against discouragement (To discourage us, the enemy can point to failures, our past and present sins, our unresolved problems, our physical and mental infirmities – or whatever – to cause us to doubt or lose confidence in the Father's love and care). But when we take up the helmet of salvation...

1. It keeps us from quitting. Warren Wiesbe helped me with this. There are four men in the Bible who became so discouraged that they wanted to die – three of them

even specifically asked God to take their lives! You will recognize the names – Elijah, Jacob, Moses and Jonah. Check out their stories. Find out what was the cause of their despair. Elijah was exhausted physically. The same guy who put to death 450 false prophets the day before, was trembling in his sandals at a note from Queen Jezebel who threatened to kill him. Jacob was overcome by grief. First it was the loss of his favorite son, Joseph. Now many years later it is the possible loss of his second favorite son, Benjamin. His line was, “All these things are against me!” His was a mental problem. He was believing a lie. Actually everything was not against him but for him! Salvation for the nation was in progress and would come to pass! Moses dealt with people and their problems and disputes from early morning until late at night. Emotionally he was totally depleted. He did not care if he lived or died – actually he wanted to die and he asked God to take him. He was rather frustrated that God had given him so many problem people! God had to remind him that He had not intended for Moses to do it all. There were others who were quite capable of helping. Moses had come to believe that he alone could do the job. God had to adjust his thinking! And then there was Jonah, the great prophet who had just witnessed the greatest evangelistic campaign the world has ever seen – and he wants to die because God used a worm to kill a plant with which Jonah had grown quite fond, but God had failed to destroy a whole city for their wicked behavior. Jonah’s problem was spiritual and God had to teach him a lesson complete with visual aides! Though there are various secondary causes for despair (physical, mental and emotional exhaustion, and spiritual bigotry), the primary cause in all four of these cases was that they forgot to take up the helmet of salvation! It keeps us from quitting.

2. It keeps us from despairing – I am reminded of Peter's words in his first letter. It is a letter that was written to believers who were experiencing great suffering for their faith. Peter writes: ***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have***

***been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith--more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire--may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*** Peter is describing a believer who has taken up the helmet of salvation. Sure, there are various trials – some of them very severe, but we have a living hope in the Lord Jesus that He is working to make us better so that when we arrive in His presence and see Him face to face, we will rejoice with joy unspeakable and filled with glory! That's what a believer looks like when he has on the helmet of salvation!

## **Conclusion**

1. This week I had conversations with Cindy Depuy and Sue Litewski and Bob and Vivian Bruton, and a couple of weeks ago with Jay Jackson. For these and many others, the burdens of life have come in like a flood. These trials may not in any way be caused by the enemy, but the enemy certainly knows how to use them to bring discouragement and doubt. But about the time the burdens become unbearable, each of these have learned to take up the helmet of salvation – and God has renewed their hearts and helped them to say with Peter, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...”
2. Last week I turned to a psalm for a conclusion. I want to do that again – this time to a couple of psalms that probably should be counted as one – Psalms 42-43. Just listen to the text. The question, “Why?” occurs ten times in these two psalms. (There are 51 personal pronouns in these two psalms as well). Three times the psalmist battles doubt and discouragement with this chorus – “Why are you downcast, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?” Each time the answer is the same – “Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.” There it is – the helmet of salvation!