

## Stand Firm, Wearing the Helmet of Salvation

by Mark Jarvinen

This is message # 6 in the series entitled, "***Standing Firm in the Face of the Enemy.***" We stand firm against Satan by putting on of the full armor of God. Because of our status in Christ, we have resources for victory in the battle against Satan. We've seen how the "**belt of truth**" leads to the integrity of heart that protects against divided loyalties. We've discussed the "**breastplate of righteousness,**" which defends us against Satan's accusations of past wrongs, and reminds us of our right standing before God in Christ. Then we learned about how to overcome Satan's strategy to destroy relationships by having our "**feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace.**" Last week we learned how to fend off doubt with the "**shield of faith.**" Today we move on to consider "**the helmet of salvation,**" which Paul encourages us to "take" or "put on" in **Ephesians 6:17a.**

Roman soldiers in Paul's day wore bronze helmets with leather chin straps. This helmet never left the soldier's side and he never entered battle without first putting it on. A soldier's helmet protected the head and eyes. Paul drew from this analogy in referring to another piece in the Christian's armor as "**the helmet of salvation.**" **What is the purpose of the helmet of salvation?** The helmet of salvation is designed to protect our minds and thinking processes from the **discouragement** induced by Satan. This happens as we adopt a positive alternative focus, i.e. our salvation in Christ.

You see, salvation not only involves the heart, it involves the mind. In fact, some have characterized spiritual warfare first and foremost as **"a battle for the mind."**

**Satan loves to discourage believers** by attacking the thought life. How we need the helmet of salvation for protection. I'm reminded of the time our 18 month old son, David, became very ill with a bacterial blood infection and had to be hospitalized. His temperature soared, and he became lethargic and listless. One of his feet swelled up to almost twice its normal size. After several tests, the doctor admitted him to the hospital. He was a very sick little boy. Part of his treatment required hooking him up to an I-V. After several failed attempts to find a vein, as a last resort, they inserted the needle into his temple and covered it with a paper cup taped to his head. As serious as the situation was, we had to chuckle at **David's "paper-cup helmet"** protruding from the side of his head. He looked like a little elevator bell-hop. This makeshift helmet didn't do much good. In a matter of minutes David had ripped it from his head and had torn it to shreds. The analogy here is that all too often, Christians enter into the battle for the mind with Satan while wearing **"paper cup helmets,"** and find themselves unprotected. Satan will work to **discourage** us if we're not wearing the helmet of salvation. Consider the following scenarios.

Perhaps you're working hard to serve the Lord and your efforts seemingly aren't being appreciated by others. You're probably beginning to identify with Paul's words in **II Corinthians 1:8-9a**, where he writes of suffering hardships, saying:

**".... We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed in our hearts we felt the sentence of death."**

Later in **II Corinthians 7:5**, Paul adds,:

**" ... this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn - conflicts on the outside, fears within."**

In moments like these, Satan preys on our minds and whispers to us, **"You've been working so hard to `serve the Lord' and this is the thanks you get?"**

Before long you're having a full blown pity party. You never get to the part in **II Corinthians 1:9b**, where Paul reflects further on his ministry hardships, saying:

**"But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead."**

Consider another scenario in which you're behind in your bills and the old devil says, **"How do you know God will come through? If He were going to act, don't you think He'd have done something by now?"** You feel desperate and alone. Discouragement sets in. Your outlook becomes negative. The promise of **Philippians 4:19 - "And my God will meet all your needs ...."** sounds hollow, rather like a pipe dream. You're mired in hopelessness and despair. Your focus is on **"What am I going to do?"** instead of **"I wonder how God will lead me through?"**

Maybe you're watching television and a certain car that's captured your fancy, replete with all the options and a pretty girl on the hood to boot, flashes

on the screen. You've seen the price tag and you know it's a "no go" considering your tight budget. You grow discouraged with your lot in life, and then angry. The thought crosses your mind, **"If `so-and-so' can have one, why shouldn't I?"** So you buy it, **and** before long you're even more discouraged, making payments you can't afford because Scriptures like **Colossians 3:2 - "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things,"** never got through to you.

Here's one for men. You're away from home on business and your eyes wander across the titles on the magazine rack in the hotel gift shop. There's one wrapped in plastic ... all of a sudden you feel lonely and vulnerable ... you pick it up and say to yourself, **"I'll buy it and only read the articles,"** forgetting Paul's advice in **Philippians 4:8**, which says –

**"... whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - ... think about such things.**

Consider with me **King Saul**, the first king of Israel. He was an impressive looking man - a head taller than most. He came from humble beginnings - the tribe of Benjamin - and seemed well suited to be king. After being anointed by Samuel as Israel's first king, **I Samuel 10:9** says, **"As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart, ..."** in other words, he was converted. God performed a work of grace in Saul's heart. Later when Saul arrived at Gibeah, a procession of prophets met him, and **verse 10** says, **"the Spirit came upon him (Saul) in power, and he joined in their**

**prophesying."** What's amazing as you read on in the account, is that a man who began so well spiritually, ended so poorly. Through disobedience, Saul opened the door to pride, succumbing to fits of anger, jealousy, and depression. Later, he sought out a fortune teller, and evil spirits worked a progressive disintegration of his mind and personality. By the end of his life he was basically insane. Saul became the victim of Satan's discouragement by not wearing the helmet of salvation.

**Satan attacks the mind in so many ways.** This demonstrates what an important, God-given function the mind has in the Christian life. If Satan is given permission to damage it, or reduce its capacity spiritually, bringing about a pervasive sense of discouragement and failure, he has gained a substantial foothold in a person's life, robbing that person of the victory that is his as a child of God.

### **How can we use the helmet of salvation to overcome discouragement in our lives?**

In writing about the helmet's power over discouragement in **1 Thessalonians 5:8**, Paul says –

**"But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the HOPE OF SALVATION AS A HELMET."**

The helmet of salvation is the **hope** of salvation. When a soldier loses his hope, he loses the battle. If he looks around and says, "We cannot

possibly win," he will give up and make his defeat certain.

Now understand this. Our hope as Christians goes beyond a mere "hope-so" attitude. It is more than just wishful thinking. **Real hope is confident, expectant thinking based on the quality of God's promise.** As Christians we have much more reason to be confident in our hope than just our human ability to overcome the odds. **Our hope is based on something much more solid and sure - the finished work of Christ,** the one thing sufficient for our salvation.

Author **James Philip**, in his book on Christian warfare makes a wise statement that holds a key for understanding the helmet of salvation and the protection it affords our minds. He writes, "**A mind constantly preoccupied with thoughts of our great salvation is a mind kept safe from the onslaughts of the enemy.**" (**Philip, Christian Warfare and Armour, 1989, p. 71**) He goes on to explain that a lot of Christians believe they are thinking about God's great salvation, when in fact they are more centered on how well they're progressing in their Christian lives, e.g. their own growth in holiness, than they are on Christ's finished work on the cross. They are looking inward instead of thinking about the eternal realities of God's great salvation, which remain constant. They are not thinking about the fact of salvation as much as they are thinking of their experience of that salvation, which can fluctuate up and down depending on their moods and feelings. This is just **"self-centeredness wrapped in spiritual garb,"** according to James Philip. He

writes, **"Preoccupation with Christ must replace preoccupation with holiness and with ourselves. Poking around in the recesses of our minds and hearts is a luxury we simply can't afford in the Christian battle, if we are to keep our minds intact." (Philip, p. 79)**

So much of Christianity is feelings based today. Much of our music seems to focus on how we feel in God's presence, or the state of our emotions in the midst of our struggles. Don't get me wrong. There is a subjective side to the Christian life. But there's a great difference in always saying **"God give me peace and joy,"** than in saying, **"God, you are my peace and joy because of what Christ has done."**

**Romans 5:1** illustrates this so beautifully where Paul says, **"Therefore since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. NOT ONLY SO, BUT WE ALSO REJOICE IN OUR SUFFERINGS..."**

Do you see the progression from the objective reality of justification by faith to the subjective response of rejoicing in our sufferings? **The subjective is anchored in the objective.** We lose the hope of our salvation if we only focus on our experience to the exclusion of what Christ has done for us in His finished work on the cross.

**Do we want to win over discouragement?** Consider this. When we wake up in the morning we have two choices: **1)** the choice to dwell on how we

feel spiritually and how dissatisfied we are with some aspect of our lives; or **2**) we may put on the helmet of salvation and think on the glory and wonder of the forgiveness of sins, the mystery of God's love for us, and our hope for the world to come because of our position in Christ. **Colossians 3** tells us to "**Set our minds on things above,**" and that is what we must do in putting on the helmet of salvation. This is not an escapist doctrine. There might be a few Christians who are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good. But I doubt that's a problem most of us have. We must anchor our experience of the Christian life in the finished work of Christ on the cross.

### **Conclusion:**

Scripture teaches that "**If any one is in Christ he is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold the new has come.**" (II Cor. 5:17) In other words, with the new birth comes the potential to think new thoughts. Our spiritual eyes are no longer blinded by Satan, whom Paul refers to as "**the god of this age**" (II Corinthians 4:4). Our focus need no longer be turned inward. When we come to faith, we enter a growth process which includes the renewing of the mind. Paul writes in **Romans 12:2** - "**Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the RENEWING OF YOUR MIND.**" As we grow in grace, cultivating a love relationship with the Lord, a new world view begins to emerge. As this process unfolds, we find ourselves less preoccupied with ourselves, and more concerned with the hope that is ours in Christ. This is why we are urged by Paul in today's text, to



protect our minds by putting on the helmet of salvation. **A-men.**