

“Take the helmet of salvation...” “...putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.” - Ephesians 6:17a... 1 Thessalonians 5:8c-d

“Hope: The Helmet of Salvation”

Ephesians 6:17a; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

I. The helmet of salvation (Ephesians 6:17a) is composed of hope (1 Thessalonians 5:8d) which is:

1) Placed in Jesus alone (1 Timothy 1:1; Titus 2:13)

2) Completely opposite worldly hope, because worldly hope:

a) Is never certain; Christian hope is (Hebrews 6:18-20; 1 Peter 1:3)

b) Often disappoints; Christian hope doesn't (Romans 5:5)

c) Is based only on what is temporary, not eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18)

II. The hope of salvation serves as a helmet by:

1) Giving us patience when God tarries (Psalm 27:14; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:3)

2) Comforting us amid affliction (Job 19:25-27; 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11)

3) Keeping us pure (1 Thessalonians 5:7-8; 1 John 3:3)

III. Applications:

1) Hope is attained only through faith in Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:27)

2) Hope is not an option; it must characterize our lives (Romans 15:13)

02/20/2011 a.m.

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In our study of spiritual warfare we have seen that God has provided unique and very effective armor for us. The armor is provided to protect us from the assault of the evil one, and it is a very comprehensive suit of armor.

In other words, the Lord doesn't allow us to face the evil one with a just any suit of armor. Instead, His suit of armor is all comprehensive and includes the belt of truth, that is, a knowledge of God's Word which is to be wrapped around us. It also includes the breastplate of righteousness, which refers to our conduct, to how we are to live holy, pure lives. Even shoes are provided in this spiritual armor. We saw that footwear is essential for both offensive and defensive battle. The Lord also provides us with the shield of faith, to repel all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

And now this morning we read about the fifth item provided for us. In Ephesians 6:17 it says: *“Take the helmet of salvation.”*

We have seen that each piece of armor is crucial... It is no different with the helmet of salvation. This figure of speech would be easy for Paul's first century readers to grasp. They realized the importance of each soldier having their helmet. Back then, war was waged not only with flaming arrows, as we saw last week, but also with swords. Some of the swords were small, the size of a dagger. You remember that the Romans had a small shield, the size of a large Frisbee, to protect themselves from the dagger of the enemy in hand to hand combat.

But armies back in the first century were also equipped with large, long swords. Often these swords were used by the cavalry. Picture in your mind a soldier on foot, - he's about this high, even shorter than I am, - and he is engaged in battle with an enemy who is mounted on a horse, way up high, and the horse-mounted soldier is swinging this large sword down at the heads of the opposing army with all his might.

Needless to say, every soldier needed his helmet so that if the sword came down on his head, it would be deflected by the helmet and it would give time to react against the next attack. Archeologists have unearthed the skeletons of soldiers who didn't have their helmets in place. Their skulls were usually severed in two right down the middle. The sword had been very effective, because the soldiers had not kept their helmets on.

In much the same way, it is essential, absolutely crucial, that we use the helmet of salvation described in Ephesians 6:17. Without that helmet firmly in place we are open and helpless in the attacks of the evil one.

But the question could be asked: What is this “helmet of salvation” made of? How is it put together? We know that the soldier's helmet was made of metal, with fabric or leather

straps to hold it securely in place, we can picture that easily enough, but what is meant by the “helmet of salvation”?

Comparing Scripture with Scripture we find the definition in 1 Thessalonians 5:8, *“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.”*

Hope Placed in Jesus Alone

1 Thessalonians 5:8 is telling us that the helmet of salvation is composed of hope. However, it is not just any hope. Rather, it is hope which is placed in Jesus alone. It is impossible for a person who doesn't believe in Jesus to have the joyous hope that we as believers in Christ possess. Just as our faith is placed in Christ alone, so also our hope, which goes hand in hand with faith, is placed in Christ alone. A number of Scriptures point this out:

1 Timothy 1:1: *“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the command of our God and Savior and of Christ Jesus - our hope.”*

Titus 2:13: *“We wait for the blessed hope - the glorious returning of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Colossians 1:27, speaking about the power of the gospel and faith in Christ adds, *“Christ in you, - the hope of glory.”*

The Antithesis of Worldly Hope

This hope which is placed in Jesus alone is completely opposite of worldly hope, because worldly hope is never certain, but Christian hope is. In the winter we hope the weather remains warm, but there is no certainty in that hope, especially in the Chicago area! We may hope that our car passes the emissions inspection or that our representatives in Springfield and Washington use wisdom and do what is right. But that hope, based on what is in the world, and the people of the world, often disappoints, doesn't it?

By contrast, Christian hope is an absolute certainty. Our hope in all the blessings of eternity are not mere wishful thoughts. Rather they are all certainties, guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Do you remember how Peter begins his first letter? 1 Peter 1:3: *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*

Hebrews 6:19-20 adds: *“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul; firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever on the order of Melchizedek.”*

Biblical hope, - hope that is based on Jesus Christ, - is far different from worldly hope. Biblical hope is indeed an anchor for the soul because our object of hope is Christ Himself.

Secondly, worldly hope often disappoints; Christian hope doesn't. Like the forbidden fruit that captured Eve's eye, the things we long after and hope for seem so great, - until we have them. And then, when we have what we had hoped for, often we are completely disappointed. We find an empty shell, - the substance of our hope is hollow, - and deep disappointment often comes with the fulfillment of worldly hope.

That's not the case with hope that is placed in Christ and His Word. Romans 5:5 *"Our hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us."*

One reason why earthly hope often disappoints is because worldly hope is based only on what is temporary, not eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:18: *"We fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."*

Everything that is visible will pass away. Hope that is placed on the material things of life will inevitably disappoint as what is visible ends. This is also why Jesus directs us to seek our treasure, not here on earth below, but in heaven. In Matthew 6:19-21 Jesus says: *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

Horace Tabor is well known in Colorado history. Horace Tabor made millions of dollars from his silver mine, called the "Matchless Mine" near Leadville, Colorado. He divorced his wife to marry a beautiful divorcee known as Baby Doe. But then misfortune struck. The mine no longer produced the silver which had earned it the name "The Matchless Mine." And then, in 1893, the price of silver crashed. Horace Tabor went from having millions to being a pauper. Yet he was a famous pauper. When he died in 1899 over 10,000 people came to his funeral.

Before dying he reportedly told his wife, Baby Doe, "Never give up on the Matchless Mine. It will return everything it lost. Never, never give up on the Matchless Mine." For the better part of 36 years his widow took his advice. She lived in a run down shack near the mine, helped by neighbors who felt sorry for her. Then, in 1935, after an especially cold and snowy storm, neighbors noticed that no smoke was coming from the chimney of Mrs. Tabor's cabin. When they went to investigate they found her lying on the floor, frozen to death.

The Tabors lives turned out to be a dismal failure and came to a tragic end. Why? Because they had their hope in the wrong object. Their hope was in what could be seen, a shaft going into the earth looking for silver. And they failed to see with the eye of faith

Him “*in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,*” (Colossians 2:3), Christ, the source of eternal hope.

The skeptic likes to look at the hope of the Christian as the main part of his crutch. The skeptic says: “You Christians need a crutch to get through the tough times of this life, so you place all your hope in Christ and His Word.” However the skeptic fails to see that hope that is placed in Christ is not a crutch; it is indeed a helmet, a strong helmet that withstands the sword of the evil one.

Hope and Patience

Hope as a helmet, as it is described in Ephesians 6:17 and 1 Thessalonians 5:8, protects us in a number of ways. First, hope gives us patience when God tarrys. We have all found out, many times over, that God’s timing and our sense of timing are not the same. Our Lord created time, but He is above time and not bound by the passing hours and days as we are. Anyone who has been waiting for a job to open up, or to meet a Christian marriage partner, or for schooling to be completed and a new chapter in life to begin, knows how hard it is to wait on the Lord. One of the most perplexing questions of life is: “Why does God tarry? Why don’t His great and precious promises become realities now, immediately, in our lives, today?”

The Thessalonians were caught up in the same conflict. Their big question was, “When will the Lord return?” Some believed that He had already returned and that they somehow missed the second coming. These were young Christians, after all!

After reassuring the Thessalonians that their hope in the Lord is secure, concerning their loved ones who had died as well as their own union with Christ, Paul concludes in 1 Thessalonians 4:18: “*Therefore encourage each other with these words.*”

At those times when it seems as though the Lord tarrys, as though He is slow in bringing His promises to fruition in our lives, the evil one pounces. At those times Satan loves to fuel our doubt. But at those times hope that is placed in Christ serves as a helmet of protection and gives us patience and peace.

David also teaches this truth in Psalm 27:14. He has written about the faithfulness of the Lord, of how the Lord is his light and salvation. He says: “*The Lord is the stronghold of my life, - of whom shall I be afraid?*” And then he concludes, not once, but twice the need to wait upon the Lord: “*Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.*” (Psalm 27:14).

Hope and Comfort

Hope also comforts us amid affliction. Satan’s attack against believers is always heightened amid affliction. Job’s experience is repeated over in every believer’s life, not to the same degree, yet every believer faces some type of affliction, for “*man is born to*

trouble a surely as sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). At those times of affliction hope in Christ serves as a helmet of protection and becomes the greatest comfort we can find. - It was that hope placed in Christ that sustained Job. In Job 19:25-27 we read this profession of Job’s faith:

*I know that my Redeemer lives,
and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.
And after my skin has been destroyed,
yet in my flesh I will see God;
I myself will see him
with my own eyes—I, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!*

William Gurnall, in his book, *The Christian in Complete Armor*, writes: “Hope is the handkerchief that God puts in the hands of His people to wipe the tears from their eyes.”

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 sums up the greatest comfort anyone could ever find: “*For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*”

Hope and Purity

Third, hope serves as a helmet protecting us from impurity. Another favorite attack of the evil one is to bombard us with impurity. At those times it is our focused hope in the Lord that serves as a helmet of protection. 1 Thessalonians 5:5-8 explains: “*You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. 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.*”

John writes a similar thing in 1 John 3:3. The context is the return of Christ and our need to be ready to meet Him. John writes: “*Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He, (Christ), is pure.*” Perhaps it was verses like these that lead Jonathan Edwards to make his famous resolution: “Resolved never to do anything which I would be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.” In this way, too, hope serves as a helmet of salvation.

Hope Attained Through Saving Faith in Christ

How do we apply this passage, with its truth that we need hope in Christ as the helmet of salvation in our warfare with the evil one?

First, realize that true, biblical hope is attained only by those who have faith in Jesus Christ. If we lose hope in all the various struggles and hardships of life, and if we lose hope as we face the attacks of the evil one, then we need to re-evaluate where our hope is placed. Is our hope and trust - our faith - truly placed in Jesus and His Word? Do we know Him as the 'blessed hope' that Paul wrote Timothy and Titus about? Can we echo the words of Colossians 1:27, "*Christ in you, - the hope of glory!*" ?

Hope: a Characteristic of Our Lives

Second, hope is not an option; it must characterize our lives. If it doesn't we will scatter and run before the face of the enemy, just as the disciples turned and fled when Jesus was arrested. When they saw their Lord and Savior taken away by the Roman army, they lost hope. They were looking at what is seen, not on what is unseen. They turned and fled as defeated men.

And the same will happen to us if we don't base our hope on Christ and His Word. Hope placed in Christ protects us against the assaults of the evil one. How thankful we can be that this hope is actually stored up for us in heaven; hope is not something we manufacture inside of us. Colossians 1:15 gives us this remarkable assurance: "*Hope is stored up for you in heaven.*"

And God takes this unlimited supply of hope, stored up for us in heaven, and pours it into our lives. Romans 15:13, "*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*" Do you see how we gain this hope? It is given to us by God Himself, from His unlimited supply, as we trust in Him, in His Son and His Word.

In a world filled with hopelessness, do you have your helmet of salvation on? Is the helmet characterized and put together by hope and trust in the risen Savior? Then rejoice! You have a hope that will never disappoint you, but will give you great joy in the Lord, and protection from the evil one, now and forever. Amen.