

The Secure Hope

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[0 : 0 0] Ephesians chapter 6, when I was growing up, we didn't wear bicycle helmets. We built bridges over ditches and tried to get hurt. If someone wore a helmet, he would have been made fun of, sent home.

Now if a child doesn't wear a helmet, you're a neglectful parent and somebody's going to post it on Facebook. When I played football, the effort was to hit a man square with the top of your helmet right in the center.

When he was not looking, call a crack back and try your best to knock him out. Today, if you do that, you will not play anymore. You're done.

If somebody got their bell rung, which we now understand and properly acknowledge is a concussion, a bruise to the brain, smelling sauce and a couple plays later, you're back in.

I had a quarterback one time that went to the wrong sideline. They turned him around, brought him back to the huddle. We kept going. I'm not celebrating that kind of ignorance. I can't remember old what's-his-face's name.

[1 : 1 1] And it's probably because I got cracked back one time and missed half a game taking a knee and I don't remember any of it. So we know more now than we used to.

To ride a bike without a helmet, man, I'd feel like I was sawing a tree branch that a ladder was leaning on. Sunday afternoon, I played backyard ball with a bunch of ex-high school football players on local schoolyards.

It's kind of horrifying to me. I remember one time I drove up to Montevue Middle School and they were playing out on the wreck. And those boys, I don't think were sober.

And they didn't have shoes on and they didn't have shirts on. And I thought, this may not be the game I want to pick up on, you know. Today, guardian caps are popular in college practices.

They're gaining ground in high schools for players in high-impact positions. Some can even wear them during ball games. And that trend started, ironically, at Clemson 12 years ago.

[2 : 2 2] Protecting the head is important. And we've understood over the years how much more so that it is than we thought before. If in battle, if the head's not protected, you can lead to a lethal blow quickly.

And that's the idea behind our descriptive piece of battle armor that we deal with this morning. We've been talking about spiritual warfare and that we better be ready for that we're in the midst of.

And we talked about living out the truth of the gospel. And we've talked about living right before the Lord, making sure that we get the gospel out and that it's a living part of our life and trusting God completely when the enemy's fiery darts come.

Today, we're going to talk about the need to protect ourselves from a lethal blow. In Ephesians chapter 6, verse 17, he said, Take the helmet of salvation.

Now, a Roman helmet, probably the one that was kept in mind, was made of solid cast metal. Or some were made of leather with patches of metal sewn in.

- [3 : 41] It was to save the head from fiery darts. But it was also to save the head from a broadsword. A broadsword was about three to four feet long.
- It was to be held with two hands like a baseball bat. And it was to be hammered down on top of someone's head. To say the least, it was a lethal blow.
- Although Satan came to steal, kill, and destroy, when we are saved, he cannot claim us. Once you're saved, the devil cannot have us.
- Because salvation in Christ is a helmet of protection. It is our secure hope.
- And I want to tell you how today. For one, it is our life hope. Jesus came and lived a sinless life and died a death in our place so that we could have salvation through him.
- [4 : 42] Hebrews chapter 3, verse 7 and 8 says, Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. In other words, God is the one that initiates our salvation.
- He speaks to us. I like the way it's been put, not audibly, but louder than that. He speaks to the state of our heart. We know the state of our soul. And when he speaks, we know he's speaking.
- And when we respond to him in obedience, our life is changed. Romans 10, verse 9 says that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved.
- It's followed by verse 13 that says everyone that does that, calls upon the name of the Lord, will be saved. So the salvation process is when we ask God to forgive us and we repent and turn from our sin.
- He removes our sin. Scripture says as far as the east is from the west. And he establishes us into a relationship with him.
- [5 : 48] Our life hope is that if that's ever established, it never changes. It is sure.
- It is certain. If Christ has saved you, there's no need for you to feel insecure in your salvation. There's no need for you to feel unsure of your salvation.
- The devil wants you to feel insecure. He wants you to feel unsure. But the reality is the devil nor anybody else can take that away.
- We cannot lose our salvation once we've placed our faith in Christ Jesus. Ephesians chapter 2, verse 8 says, For by grace you've been saved through faith.
- And this is not of your own doing. It is the gift of God. In other words, you don't do salvation. He does it in you. And you can't take salvation because he secures it.
- [6 : 48] That's what Christ came to do. When the angel came to Joseph, that Jesus' father figure on earth, he said that he will save his people from their sins.
- That's what the word Jesus means. It's what he came to do. And once you're saved, you're always saved. But it's important to know that you're saved.
- You need to know that you know the Lord. Don't rest in an emotional decision that you made as a child. I'm not telling you that you can't get saved as a child.
- I was saved at a very young age. I'm not saying that that's not real. But I'm saying we need to know that we're saved by the evidence that came forth from that decision.
- Has there been any fruit in your life at all from that point? Is there any evidence at all that that was legitimate? Don't ever rest in just repeating a few words after somebody.
- [7 : 51] It's not the words that you say that lead you to the Lord. It's the heart that you have before the Lord. It's what you really mean. Don't ever rely on a time when you followed a friend down the aisle because it was popular.

You need to make sure that it's real. The question is, have you ever truly surrendered your life to him? And if you surrendered your life to him and ask you to forgive you of your sins and to come into your life, you ought to be able to rest in that.

I like what John says in 1 John 5, verse 11 through 13. He said, and this is the testimony that God gave us eternal life and this life is in his son. Whoever has the son has life.

Whoever does not have the son of God does not have life. I write these things to you. And this is one of my favorite scriptures. It's almost repeated verbatim in John 20, verse 31.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. You need to nail that down.

[8 : 59] I thank God that in Christ we can nail that down. It is our life hope. It's what we rest in. But it's not only that, but our salvation is also a growing hope.

Because when we give our lives to Christ, we have joined team Jesus, if you will. And there is a status change that takes place.

I want you to listen to what the Apostle Paul said in Ephesians chapter 2. He said this, But God.

But God. But God. Biggest but in scripture is right there. But God. But God. Being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us.

Even when we were dead in our trespasses. Makes us alive together with Christ. By grace, thank God, you have been saved.

[10 : 27] Listen. When we're saved, we are changed. There's a position change. There's a position change. We are in Christ. But not only that, but there's a process change that takes place.

Because the work of salvation begins in us. Let me ask you to think about something for a moment. Let's say you want a new job. And so you're going to apply for a new job.

And you're going to get your resume together. And you're going to double check that and make sure that it's spaced out correctly. And make sure that all the words are written correctly. And put in the best grammar that you possibly can.

You want to make it look as good as you possibly can. If you're filling out an application, you want to make sure that you fill it out in a way they can read it. Number one. And number two, that is truthful. But man, it sounds as good as it can possibly sound.

And then you turn that in. They call you and they want to interview you. You sit down with an interview with them. And you try your best to shine in every way.

[11 : 28] Whether that's one interview or several interviews, you do everything you can to make yourself look as good as you possibly can. And they call you and tell you you've got the job.

Congratulations. Congratulations. Are you done? Well, if you thought that was it, you're not going to keep that job very long.

Because the reality is once you get that job, that's when the work begins. Now listen. Our salvation comes by the grace of God through the cross of Christ.

And once it's done, it is secure. But the salvation that we receive for him is to progress for the rest of our lives.

Do we become more secure in our salvation? No. You were as secure the day you gave your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ as you'll ever be throughout the rest of your life.

[12 : 30] You become, however, more Christian. You become more like Christ. He is at work in you. In other words, you ought to get better at it.

Paul prayed for us like this when he said in Colossians chapter 1 verse 9 through 11, And so, from the day we heard, we've not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

May you be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for all endurance and patience with joy. That is the process of sanctification.

And it's becoming more like Christ. We're blessed this weekend to have my oldest daughter here from Mississippi visiting with us. We honored Millie at the ball game on Friday night, senior night, and Abby made a point to take a day and drive to be here for that special event, and she spent the weekend with us.

She's recently had ear surgery. She had an eardrum that was replaced. The doctor went in behind her ear, took cartons from that area, opened her up back there, went in, built a new eardrum, and did all that.

[13 : 56] And before she had that surgery, they gave her instructions in preparation for that surgery. And one of them was that I remember particularly is you don't eat the day of, you know, and you don't drink the day of.

And if you go in and tell them that you've eaten and drank or drank, you'll go home, you know, after that. So you won't have it. But anyway, that's one instruction. And then when you get done with the surgery, they give you all kinds of instructions as well.

They had packed that ear. They had covered that ear and the whole bit. They had done all kinds of things for that. And they gave her instructions on what to do in those days afterwards. And then as she went back, as she continued to progress, they gave her further instructions and more medicine to do and all that kind of stuff.

Are you taking your drops? Are you doing what you're supposed to do? All right. So, listen. What is the success of that process is not only on that surgeon.

The success of that process is in the patient following the instructions as well. Now, what's God's instructions to believers?

[15 : 05] Romans 12, verse 2. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. That by testing you may discern what is the will of God.

What is good and acceptable and perfect. Not only that, he follows that up by saying in 2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 3 through 5. That's the very thing we're talking about, folks.

In the armor of God. Now, listen to what he says. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God.

And get this last phrase. And take every thought captive to obey Christ. It is key that we take every thought captive to obey Christ.

Years ago, I was at Cleveland Park. And a man walked up to me. And we began to talk. And I led that man to Christ. I followed that up.

[16 : 28] And I went back to his apartment. He was a man that lived. Didn't have much. He lived by meager means. And when I walked in his apartment. And he cut on the light. The room came to life.

I had never seen that many roaches. That just scattered all over the place. They wasn't even scared of the light. They came out and said, hey, how you doing? You know. They were everywhere.

I looked for a place to sit. I sat down. They crawled across my shoe. I'd never seen anything like that. In my heart, I wanted to go stomping. And kill them all.

Get them all done. But I didn't want to hurt that man's feelings at all. I acted like I never saw him. And I sat down and talked to him about what it means to give his heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we were able to baptize him in days afterwards and try to encourage him in his faith. But you want to stamp those things out.

[17 : 29] You want to get rid of every one of them. And that kind of philosophy is the very thing that we need to have in our heart and life when it comes to every thought that is not pleasing to the Lord.

Take every thought captive to obey Christ. When you're a child of God and the devil whispers into your ear that you're good for nothing, take every thought captive to obey Christ.

When Satan puts an impure thought in your mind, take every thought captive to obey Christ. When he puts something in your mind that you feel like you want to say, something that you need to ponder on, somebody you need to get back to, take every thought captive to obey Christ.

It's like whacking a mole. Just keep whacking. Take every thought captive to obey Christ. It'll wear you out to begin with.

But remember what James tells us. Resist the devil and he'll flee from you. When his schemes and his plans no longer work and you're taking every thought captive to obey Christ, you're building, excuse me, the Holy Spirit is building you up in Christ.

[19 : 05] And God is renewing you. He is completing the work in us. Philippians chapter 1 verse 6 says, And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.

You know what that means? Christ is not done with you. And he won't be done with you until you see him face to face. It lasts for a lifetime. And the whole time at last, if we've ever given our heart and life to the Lord, the whole time at last, we are secure in our salvation.

2 Timothy chapter 1 verse 12 says, But I am not ashamed for I know whom I believe. And I'm convinced that he's able to guard until that day what was entrusted to me.

The devil will try his best to throw us off. He'll try his best to make us doubt. He'll try his best to discourage us. But I got news for you folks.

You need to hear me today. Salvation is a fact. Our security in our salvation is a fact. Assurance is the feeling that comes from knowing that you know the Lord Jesus.

[20 : 22] And in that, we grow in Christ. It is our growing hope, thank God. But that's not all. For our salvation as well is our future hope.

Our salvation is our future hope. Our conversion is when we surrender our lives to the Lord. And when that's real, it cannot be lost. Satan does not have the authority to take our salvation away from us.

No one can snatch you out of the hand of the Father. And I don't believe you can fall out of the hand of the Father. What I always think about when I think about this, and I've talked about this before, but when my children were young and they were old enough to walk on their own, but not old enough to be trusted in a Walmart parking lot, okay, by themselves, I held them by the hand and walked them into the store, okay?

Now, I tried to train them to hold on to my hand. But I'm just going to be honest with you. If they had let go in the Walmart parking lot of my hand, it wouldn't have made any difference, okay?

Because I was holding it. It would have made a difference. I might have picked them up real nice and pinched them and twisted them right underneath their thigh. But anyway, it would have made a difference. But anyway, they wasn't going anywhere.

[21 : 45] Because I had a hold of them. I was holding on to them. And I got news for you. In the same way, by the blood of the Lamb and with the Spirit of God, God the Father is holding on to us.

You can let go all you want to, friend, but if you're a child of God, He's never going to let go of you. You are secure with Him. Once saved, we begin the sanctification process.

That's the process of becoming more like Christ. And we will not get there in this life, but we progress throughout our lives. And it's an imperfect progression.

Chuck Swindoll years ago said three steps forward and two steps back. Man, that's a step of progress, you know. Three steps forward, two steps back. You've made progress. But there's also, not only that, there's also a future of our hope.

Because our salvation comes with a guarantee of a greater promise. I want you to see this this morning and I'll close. 1 Peter 1, verse 3-5 says this. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[22 : 57] 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. Listen to this. 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. It is secure, my friend.

Not only that, but we will be glorified. 1 John 3, verse 2 says, Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him because we shall see Him as He is.

We will be made like Him. I will live until the day I die looking for and believing in the hope, the blessed hope of Jesus appearing and calling me home.

And that, my friend, is the helmet of my salvation. That's what I rest in. Now, the Roman helmet was one of protection against lethal blows.

[24 : 18] Those in authority had helmets that were topped with an ornate plume. If you've ever seen the church passion play and the Roman soldiers come down with stiff, bristled red brooms glued to the top of their helmet, okay?

That's what we're talking about, all right? Ornate plumes. It was not just a fighting helmet.

But it was one that identified whose army they were in. Whose army are you in?

Who are you identifying with? And are you sure that you're in? Has there been a time in your life when you know that you've asked the Lord Jesus to forgive you of your sins, to come into your life, and to save you and change you?

Has that ever happened? If it has, are you living like it? Are you hoping like it? Does your life reflect it?

[25 : 42] That's the message of the helmet of our salvation. First, if you've never given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ, you need to do that.

Today's the day of salvation. He'll meet you where you are. If there's an inkling in you that feels like you want to do that, believe me, you didn't come up with that. Scripture says you were dead in your transgressions and sins.

It's God himself who's come to you, who's whispered into your heart that you need to surrender your life to the Lord Jesus Christ. He'll save you and change you. And if you have done that, if you've never publicly acknowledged that, Jesus, by his example and by his commission, shows us that it happens through baptism.

And I'm just telling you, after doing this for a few years, I've learned from people that if they haven't been baptized as believers, it becomes a hindrance in their walk with God. It's the first step of obedience.

It's kind of like skipping the last step or something. You know what I'm saying? You don't work. If you want to try that, go climb steps in the middle of the night, all right? Miss a couple of steps and see what happens.

[26 : 45] You don't need to miss a step. It don't take away your salvation. It don't provide you salvation. But it confirms it. It confirms it publicly. And maybe you're here this morning and you've done all that, but God is leading you to First Baptist Church.

God's doing a wonderful work in our church, and I'm thankful for that. We had a man come this morning and join our church during our earlier worship hour. What a blessing that is. That's a new thing for us.

You know, this new, this two worship hour things, it's a new thing for us, and we're still getting adjusted to all that. But, man, I'm thankful that somebody came this morning from our earlier service and joined our church.

Maybe God's leading you to be a part of that. We'd love to have you, and we'd love to guide you in that process, however God's leading you. I'll be happy to help you along the way with that.

Or maybe, and this will be the majority of folks here, maybe you got your helmet of salvation. You know you've been saved.

[27 : 51] You know that Satan can't steal that from you, that you can rest in that. But you're struggling on the battlefield. Every thought in your life is not being taken captive to obey Christ.

You need renewal in your life today. And I am thankful that the Lord Jesus meets us where we are. We're going to stand and we're going to sing in just a moment, but more important than that, I want you to do business with God.

And you can do that where you'll stand. You can do it at this altar. I'll be happy to pray with you. I don't know what God wants you to do. I just want you to be obedient. Just follow what God would lead you.

And if there's questions along the way, I'm here. I'll be happy to guide you in that process. Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, we love you. We thank you for your love for us.

Will you lead us right now to simply be obedient to follow you, Lord? In Jesus' precious name, amen.