

War in Your Head

Every Word in Ephesians

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Heavenly Father, we have so many things to be thankful for. We are thankful that we can call you Father. You are the creator of this universe. You are the King of kings and yet you are our Father. We have a relationship with you. We are thankful, Lord, that we can call you Father with confidence because you have adopted us and we think of all the work that went into adopting us. You planned it from before the foundation of the world. You actually sent your Son Jesus Christ to become man and to die and to raise from the dead that we might be brought into your family. Then you raised up apostles and prophets who would preach the Word and then, Lord, you sent your Spirit who would open our eyes to the gospel and cause us to be born again and, Lord, even now that same Spirit is working in the hearts of those of us who are believers so that we might cry out Abba, Father. But, Lord, God, you have gone to great lengths to convince us of your everlasting love for us as your children and we would just ask that today we would believe it. It seems strange to think that one of the hardest things for us as Christians is to actually believe that the Father loves us. But, Lord, we pray that would believe that. And if there is anyone here who is not one of your children, but who is actually, Lord, living in rebellion against you, we pray that even today would be the day when your Spirit would work in their hearts and move them from a slave of sin to a Son of God. Lord, we long to see that happen in this place and we know it is only by your strength that that can happen and we pray it in Jesus, your name. Amen.

Well, if you will take your Bibles and open with me to Ephesians chapter six and we are going to look specifically at verse 17. And you know that we have been in this section of Scripture, Ephesians 6:10-20, which is all about the armor of God. It is kind of, actually, a famous passage of Scripture. If you have been coming to church for a long time you probably have heard of the armor of God. And this whole idea of the armor of God it is really kind of a picture the apostle Paul is using to help us understand how the Christian

life works. He wants us to understand how to live out the Christian life. And so he pictures for us the Christian life as being like a war. You are a Christian. You are involved in a spiritual war. And if you are going to survive and if you are going to thrive, if you are going to stand strong in the middle of this war, Paul says you need to be putting on the armor of God, which is an illustration to help us understand that to live out the Christian life we need to utilize the resources that God has given us in the gospel.

And so we have been working through this description of the armor of God and there is actually six pieces of armor that we find in this passage. And because these pieces of armor are so important, we have been working through them just one by one and we have actually, I think, come to the fourth piece of armor or the fifth piece of armor today. We talked about the belt of truth, you remember. And we looked at the breastplate of righteousness. And we have talked about the preparation that comes from the gospel of peace. And last week we talked about the need to take up the shield of faith. And we were saying that there are times when the war becomes especially intense and so there are particular pieces of armor that we need to use at particular times and the shield of faith is one of those pieces of armor that we need to use when temptation becomes intense.

And today we are talking about the helmet of salvation. So we have come to Ephesians chapter six verse 17 and we are looking at this one particular piece of armor, the helmet of salvation. And one of the things that I think is fun. You see Paul just says here:

“...take the helmet of salvation.”¹

But at the beginning of every week, as we have been looking at these pieces of armor, I often begin every week by wondering how in the world am I going to have something to say? I mean, take up the helmet of salvation. If you just look down in your Bibles it is kind of just a few words there. It is not a whole lot. By the end of the week, I always wonder how am I going to say everything that I need to say. It is too much. And I think that is especially appropriate. I think it is appropriate for us to take some time to consider the helmet of salvation. I don't mind taking a whole Sunday to just think about this one phrase. I think it is appropriate, because obviously, as Paul picks this particular piece of armor, the helmet, he is indicating that this is an important concept he wants us to understand because obviously a helmet is a pretty important piece of armor. And the helmet, we know this is an important concept for us to understand because it is an important piece of armor. The helmet is an important piece of armor because it protects a pretty important piece of our body, or at least of the soldier's body.

If you were a soldier you could, perhaps, lose a finger or you could lose a leg in war. You could even lose an arm in war. But you cannot lose a head and survive. A head is an important piece of the soldier's body. He doesn't want to lose it. And so the helmet is an important piece of armor. And that is true not just physically, that is also true spiritually. The helmet protects an important part of the Christian soldier's body and that is our head. And head obviously represents, it is not too hard to understand what head represents. The head represents our thinking, our mind, our way of viewing the world. It is vital for the

¹ Ephesians 6:17.

soldier to protect his head and it is vital for us as Christians to protect our heads. We need to protect our way of thinking, the way we think. And it is vital for us to protect our thinking because Satan is constantly attacking our thinking.

In Paul's day the Roman soldiers had to wear specially metal helmets. You have probably seen some of the pictures of the helmet with the nose plate that comes down that they used to put over. They had to wear these metal helmets because in war not only did they need to be protected from arrows. There were also people riding around with broad swords that they would whack on the soldier's heads in order to knock him down so they would be able to kill him. And so they needed a helmet which would protect their head. And we as believers are fighting an enemy who is constantly coming after our heads, who is constantly coming after our thinking.

And one of the primary ways that he does that is through deception. We need to protect our thinking because we are fighting an enemy who is an amazing liar. Satan is constantly distorting and twisting reality.

I don't know if any of you have ever had friends who are liars and who are very good at lying. One of the things that I find very frustrating about dealing with a liar is that it is so hard to know what is real. It is hard to know what is the right thing to do, because the person is telling you so many lies that you don't know actually what is reality. And Satan, of course, is the father of lies and so he is selling us so many different lies that it is very easy for us to become confused about what is real. And, as a result, very hard for us to know sometimes the right thing for us to do.

One proof of how good a liar Satan is, is how many Christians are tempted to believe that they are fighting a losing battle. We have to protect our thinking because Satan is constantly coming after our thinking by twisting reality and deceiving. And one proof that Satan is such an amazing liar is the fact that so many believers are hopeless and wondering if they are actually on the wrong side.

This, I think, is one of Satan's general strategies. We talked in the past a lot about Satan's particular tactics, but I think one of his basic overall strategies is to tempt believers to look around them and to look at their own lives and to wonder if, in fact, they are fighting a losing battle, to become weary, discouraged, not maybe about a particular doctrine or a particular truth, but just to become weary or discouraged in general and feel like perhaps it is time that they give up.

Maybe some of you know what I am talking about personally. Maybe some of you there have been times in your own life and in your own relationship with God where you struggled with sin for so long that you wonder: Is it possible for me to actually change? And you struggle with a particular temptation and you have become weary and discouraged and you just feel like giving up. Maybe others of you, it is not so much personal as you become weary or discouraged as you look at the Church in general. You look out there at the state of Christianity and you see all these false teachers. You see these greedy individuals who are deceiving people for the purpose of buying their own

vehicles and planes and you meet Christians, people who say they are Christians who just seem so worldly and perhaps there has been times where you have looked at the Church and you have just felt weary and you have felt hopeless and you have wondered if you are fighting a losing battle.

We know that Satan, that this is one of Satan's favorite tricks, twisting reality and trying to confuse believers into believing ... to thinking that they are losing. We know this is one of his favorite strategies, because it is a common... it is a kind of a common occurrence that we find believers struggling with even in the Scriptures. In the Old Testament I think of a particular psalm, Psalm chapter 73. This is another one of those just famous passages of Scripture, but Asaph in Psalm 73 he says that he is looking out at the wicked. He says:

For I was envious of the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
For they have no pangs until death;
their bodies are fat and sleek.
They are not in trouble as others are;
they are not stricken like the rest of mankind.
Therefore pride is their necklace;
violence covers them as a garment.²

He goes on to say in verse 12:

Behold, these are the wicked;
always at ease, they increase in riches.
All in vain have I kept my heart clean
and washed my hands in innocence.
For all the day long I have been stricken
and rebuked every morning.³

Well, what do we find Asaph struggling with there? We find him struggling with reality. He is losing touch with reality. He is looking out at the world and saying, "Is it true? Am I losing?"

It is not just the psalmist who struggled with this. We find actually whole books of the New Testament that are devoted to helping people who are struggling with this very battle. The book of Hebrews, you study the book of Hebrews you will find that the book of Hebrews is basically written to people who were on the verge of giving up, who had started well and were excited when they began, but now were looking at their lives and looking at Christianity and saying, "Maybe this is... we are not going to be victorious. Maybe this is not the path."

² Psalm 73:3-6.

³ Psalm 73:12-14.

2 Peter, Peter actually prophesies. He says, “There is going to be a time coming in the future where there are going to be people who say, ‘Yeah, right, Jesus is coming back? Look around you. They have been saying this forever. Give up.’”

This is a common temptation. And it is, perhaps, a common temptation because it is so dangerous. Satan knows that once he has got you thinking, once he attacks your thinking, one he begins getting you to question reality and to begin wondering whether or not you are on the winning side, when he begins getting you to think, perhaps we are on the losing side, he has you where he wants you. He can do all kinds of practical damage at that point.

The book of Colossians is a great book of the Bible. Perhaps we will study it in a few years. The book of Colossians, the whole book of Colossians is Paul basically telling Christians two things. He says, “I want you to know who Christ is and I want you to know who you are in Christ.” In Colossians Paul is saying, “I want you to understand what it is to be a Christian, how big a thing it is to be a Christian.” And then reason Paul has to spend this whole book saying, “I want you to understand how big a thing it is to be a Christian,” is because he knows what happens when believers begin to have doubts about what they have in Christ. And, in fact, in Colossians we see that when a believer begins to wonder whether or not he is on the winning side, when he begins to question how big his salvation is, he is open for things like Legalism. You wonder why people ... they don't enjoy.... we have been.... we have talked about the gospel so often at this church. You wonder why people go from really grabbing hold of the grace that is found in Christ to just sort of religiosity, do this, do that. Well, some of it has to do with the fact that they don't understand how big salvation is. but it is not just Legalism that we are tempted to when we don't understand how big salvation is. Also in Colossians it is mysticism. Why do people go off and listen to these sort of silly men who are saying all sorts of crazy things that they... claiming to have these visions that don't even make sense and that contradict each other? Well, why do people run after all this sort of mystical ways of thinking?

Well, some of it has to do with they don't how big their salvation is. So you have to understand what is happening. Satan has been defeated. The salvation that God has provided in Christ—we are going to talk about this today—it is big. Jesus has won. Jesus has defeated Satan at the cross. He stripped him of all his great weapons and he, as we are united to him in faith provides us with these stunning resources as Christians to fight this battle with Satan. And Satan knows that if he is going to make any headway in the believer's life, if he is going to have any advantage in the believer's life, what he has to get you to do is to give up. It would almost be humorous if it weren't so dangerous.

You can imagine, perhaps, a man who is paralyzed and on a bed. And someone else comes into the room with a huge AK-47. He has got muscles everywhere and they are supposed to be a war between the paralyzed guy and the guy with the AK-47 and muscles everywhere. So what does the paralyzed guy have to do as he lays there? Who do you think you are, big guy? You think you can take me on? And so the guy with the AK-47, the muscles everywhere he starts trembling. Oh, scary, scary. And he {?} he puts the big

military AK-47 down and says, “Sorry, sorry.” He walks out. He just sits down. It is humorous maybe in a movie. It is not so funny when Satan is {?} the believer to put down his resources and to give up. And this is, perhaps, why throughout the book of Ephesians Paul is constantly praying that God would help us to understand and appreciate the resources that we have in Christ.

If you look back at Ephesians chapter one and verse 18 this is how Paul begins praying for the Ephesians. He says, verse 16:

I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might...⁴

Paul here, as he is talking to these Ephesians is not praying as he describes what he is praying for. He tells them he is not praying that they might have more power. He is actually praying that they might know the greatness of the power that is already at work in them, because he understands that as believers even as believers very often we fail to appreciate the significance of our salvation. Even Ephesians chapter three Paul’s second time of describing what he is praying for in the book of Ephesians, but Ephesians chapter three verse 14. He says:

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.⁵

Paul is concerned that believers do not fully appreciate how big their salvation is. The salvation God has provided is huge. And we don’t always appreciate how huge it is. And what Satan wants is to get us to think of it as small. He wants to get us to think of our salvation as small, because if he can get us teetering or tottering on that he knows he has opened us up for all kinds of attacks, which is why Paul here in Ephesians chapter six, if you turn there again, Ephesians chapter six verse 17 tells us to put on the helmet of salvation. That is the point. That is the image. Paul is saying, “You must protect your thinking,” not by being saved, not saying, “Take on the helmet of salvation after you already have the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, you need to get saved.” He is not saying you need to become saved. You need to take on the helmet of salvation

⁴ Ephesians 1:16-19.

⁵ Ephesians 3:14-19.

meaning you need to appreciate how big your salvation really is. As vital, this is how you protect your thinking by understanding the glory of the salvation that God has provided for you in Jesus Christ.

Salvation, what does it mean? Helmet means protect your thinking, but salvation means what? Rescue or deliverance. Helmet of rescue, helmet of deliverance. And when the Bible talks about salvation it talks about it in all sorts of different ways. It is really one of these broad words to describe the way God has rescued Christians. Sometimes when the Bible talks about salvation it talks past tense. This would be the word saved. You are saved. If you are a Christian you need to appreciate when we talk about the helmet of salvation that you have been saved. You have been delivered or rescued from the penalty of sin.

Sometimes when the Bible talks about salvation it talks present tense. It is very important you understand the tenses of salvation, one of the most important things. Past tense, you were saved; present tense, you are in the process of being saved. If you are a Christian, God is doing a great rescue work in your life right now. He is rescuing you not just from the penalty of sin, but he is actively involved in your life rescuing you from the power of sin. And what a privilege if we just stop and just enjoy that for a second, to have the almighty God at work in your life helping you become like Jesus Christ. Salvation is past tense. Salvation is present tense. We are not left on our own to sort of drift through this life as Christians. The Holy Spirit is actively engaged in saving us, sanctifying us. And the Bible doesn't stop there when it talks about salvation. There is past tense, saved, present tense saving. And there is future tense. God will save us. And this {?}. We don't want to talk about salvation without leaving that part out, because this is our great hope. And actually in 1 Thessalonians when Paul talks about the helmet of salvation he talks about the helmet of the hope of salvation, the future salvation that God is going to provide. This life, this salvation that God has provided is not only that he forgives you from sin, he helps you become a little bit more like Christ and then you die and go into the ground and that is it. No, that is not where salvation ends. God has a glorious future salvation for us as believers in which he is going to rescue us. He is actually going to return. He is going to display his glory as he declares us holy and blameless and above reproach on judgment day. He is going to display his glory when he reveals us as the sons and daughters of God in which actually he is going to save, redeem these old bodies by creating a new bodies, resurrection bodies which are going to be able to enjoy forever and the whole creation, Romans eight says, is longing for this day when the sons of God will be revealed and we will begin to see the glory, the full glory of God's salvation.

And the way we protect ourselves from wrong thinking is by thinking deeply about this past, present and future salvation that God has provided for us in Christ. You are saved, but you ... if you are a believer, you need to not only... not only be saved, you also need to enjoy your salvation. This is sort of our baseline reality for us as Christians. We have been saved. We are being saved and we will be saved. And you know what? We have to keep coming back to this reality if we are not going to be fooled. God has provided something stunning in salvation. And so what Satan wants to do is to make that salvation seem small. This is reality. You have been saved from the penalty of sin. You are being

saved from the power of sin. One day you will be saved from the presence of sin. And what Satan is constantly trying to do is to twist that reality and to deceive you into thinking that you are actually fighting a losing battle so that you give up. And so we have to go back to our salvation and we have to know the facts of our salvation and we have to actually apply our salvation to our everyday life and we have to analyze and evaluate the way we are thinking and to ask: Does this line up with what I know to be true about the salvation that God has provided for me? And we have to proactively think true thoughts about our salvation and our lives that line up with the salvation we have received in Christ. This is what it means to put on the helmet of salvation. It is to go through life and to evaluate your thinking and say, "Hmm. Does that thought, does that match, does that go in line with what I know to be true about heaven? Or does that thought line up with what I know to be true about what God is doing in my life right now? Or does that thought line up, does it match, does it make sense? Is that through true in light of what I know God has done in my life?"

I can't tell you how important that is. That is, in a big way, that is a major part of sanctification. That is where we are constantly trying to do in sanctification is line our thinking, line our feelings and line our actions up with reality, the reality of salvation.

But I realize maybe it sounds a little bit out there, a little vague. And so I thought what I could do today is just spend some time giving you real life examples of what it looks like to put on the helmet of salvation. And what we are going to do is we are going to look through Ephesians and we are going not look at some of the lies that we are tempted to believe when we are in the middle of the war spiritually and we are going to try to counteract those lies with the truths that Ephesians reveals about our salvation. Ephesians is basically kind of a salvation book. The whole thing is about salvation. There is all kinds of descriptions in salvation. And what I am trying to help you see is that these descriptions of salvation, they can't just stay in this book. They can't just like academic facts that you hear at church that you are like, hmm, saved from the penalty of sin. No, these truths about salvation, if you are going to put on the helmet they have to get out of this book and onto your head. They have to protect your thinking from lies. And so what I want to do is I want to talk about 22 lies. We will go through this quickly. Don't worry too much. We are going to talk about 22 lies that we are tempted to believe and we are going to look at how what Paul says about salvation in Ephesians helps us respond to those lies. So we are just going to sort of like practice putting on the helmet of salvation, sort of what it might look like in your life to put on the helmet of salvation in the middle of the war.

The first lie if you just go back to Ephesians chapter one you will see that I am just going to actually... what I am going to do is just work through the book and show you what Paul says about salvation and how it applies. But the first lie that we are tempted to believe is I don't have what it takes to fight this battle. Sometimes we are in the middle of a situation that is really a lot of pressure. And we feel like God, hey, you haven't given me the resources I need to actually respond to this. And that is a beautiful place and not... actually it is a terrible place. But for the sinner who wants to sin it is a nice place for him to be which we don't want to be, but he might say, "If I am starting to doubt that God has

given me the resources to fight a battle, that makes me feel good about my sin, because it gives me an excuse.” So I can say, “Hey, God, what do you expect me to do? I am in this war and you didn’t even provide what I needed to fight it. So what can I do but sin?”

Except that Paul says in Ephesians chapter 1:3, how the book begins and how the book ends is with the resources God has provided us. But Ephesians chapter one verse three. What does Paul say about our salvation? He says:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.”⁶

Every is a very comprehensive word, right? And so he is saying there is not a single spiritual blessing out there that you as a church do not have. So you are not just sort of supplied for this battle by God. Every single blessing that God could provide for us to fight this battle he has given us.

Now sometimes it doesn't look like that to the world. They look at the blessings and the resources we have and they sort of mock what we have as not much. I was even thinking this week of David when he went out to fight Goliath how Saul just didn't believe that trusting in the promises of God and these little weapons that David had, that they would be able to defeat that great giant Goliath. And so what did Saul do? He said, “No, this isn’t quite enough, David. You need to wear my weapons, my armor and use my weapons.” And David put that stuff on he is like, no, Saul, I don’t think this is going to work at all. I would rather just use the resources God has provided.

And sometimes in our own lives we are Saul. We are actually looking at our own lives in the battle we are facing and we are saying, “God, I think I need armor and I think I need resources that you haven’t provided.” And what we need to do put on the helmet of salvation is we need to go back and we need to say, “No, I have been saved.”

Let’s look at the salvation that God has provided. He has provided every spiritual blessing for me in Christ. I can, I do have the resources I need to live for Christ. And what are some of those resources, guys? We have the Word of God. God has spoken. We have the Church of God. God has, too, he has united us to people who will help us. We don’t only have the Word of God and the Church of God, we have the Spirit of God. God is with us. God abides in us and the Spirit of God is actively engaged in our lives opening our eyes to the Word of God, helping us put off sin. And so what we need to do if we are going to put on the helmet of salvation is in faith trust God. That is, salvation is as good as he says it is, that we do have the resources we need to fight the battle that we have been called to fight.

A second lie. I don’t have what it takes is the first lie. A second lie. I will never make it. And so this is where we look at our lives and it almost feels holy to think this one, because we look at our lives and we say, “You know what? I am a mess. And I just ... I

⁶ Ephesians 1:3.

have been a mess for a long time. And I think, you know what? I am always going to be a mess. I am never going to become the kind of person that God wants me to be.”

And that lie feels kind of righteous, because we are like, hey, I am serious about sin and I see it in my life and I hate it and I am just a big mess. But do you know what? When we get to the point where we want to give up and we say, “Hey, I will never make it.” We are not only saying something about ourselves as Christians. Do you know who else we are saying something about? We are saying something about God and the salvation he has provided, because look at Ephesians chapter 1:4. What is God’s plan? What is included in our salvation?

“...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.”⁷

Do you use what is happening? God, before the foundation of the world, before he even created the world selected us as believers for the purpose of being holy and blameless and above reproach when we stand before him in eternity. God has a plan that has been going on since before the beginning of time that we might be holy. And so when we look at God and we say, “Ah, you know what? I don’t think I am going to make it, we are not saying something so much about ourselves. We are actually saying something about the eternal God’s power to do what he has been planning to do from before the beginning of the world, which is to present us holy and blameless and above reproach. And so part of putting on the helmet of salvation is when you begin to wonder as a Christian, if you are a Christian, when you begin to wonder and you begin to doubt and you begin to feel like giving up because you see the sin in your life part of what putting the helmet of salvation on is doing is going back and saying, “No, this is what God is committed to. And, yeah, I am weak. Yeah, you are right, Satan. I ... if this were up to me, if my salvation were up to me, done. I wouldn’t even make it. I will stop now. But my salvation is not up to me. It is actually... I am being saved by God. And I know God will do what he has promised to do.”

A third lie. I don’t have what it takes. I will never make it. A third lie. I am in this thing on my own. Satan wants us to feel lonely and to feel like we have to fight this battle without any help. I even think in the Old Testament of Elijah. Do you remember the prophet Elijah? And there was that time when he got so discouraged. He is like, God, am I the only one left? And God is like, man, I have got 7000 others who haven’t bowed the knee. And God in his grace here in saving us, we need to come back and remember what he has done because we are not on our own. In fact, the end of verse four, the beginning of verse five. God has united us to himself. He has actually brought us, maybe the way to say it better would be to say he has brought us into his family.

“In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.”⁸

⁷ Ephesians 1:4.

⁸ Ephesians 1:4-5.

Satan wants you to still think like you are an orphan at the orphanage, just trying to make it when nobody that really cares about you. And God says, "No. In salvation, do you realize what I have done? I have brought you from the orphanage into my home. You are my family." And he goes on in Ephesians chapter two verse 19 to describe being part of the church as being part of the household of God, being part of the family of God. And God in his grace has not only joined us and brought us into his own family, in bringing us into this own family, Ephesians chapter four verse 25 tells us that he has actually brought us into the family of God. And now we belong to each other. And so we are brothers and sisters with each other. And so God has done something marvelous in our salvation. He hasn't saved us to fight this thing on our own. He has actually saved us and joined us to a family that is so tight knit that you could just say that family is one body. We are more than family. We are part of the same body actually.

And what Satan wants you to think is that that is just not real. And often you will hear people talk this way as if their own physical family were more real than their spiritual family. So your spiritual family is as real, if not more real, than your physical family. You have been adopted and made brothers and sisters and so you are not in this on your own. That is a lie. And part of putting on the helmet of salvation is when you are tempted to feel lonely and isolated. This is, of course, what you want to do in a war is if you are fighting a soldier you want him to feel that he has been left on his own and that his army has deserted him, right? You can imagine actually I had some friends back in school. I just remembered this. I had some friends who were in the military in the United States in the military and this man was in a special unit. What they did was they had POW prisoner of war training. And so they parachuted in. They definitely didn't parachute out of a helicopter that would have been another kind of war, but they parachuted out of an airplane into this ... the state of Maine. There is nobody there. And then they captured them and a place in the state of Maine, an army base. I am sorry, not just the whole state. But anyway, there is a few people in Maine. But there is an army base there. And they parachuted in and then they captured and brought them into this prisoner of war camp because they wanted to train them what to do if they were ever prisoners of war. And what they did was isolate them immediately from every other part of their unit and when they isolated them from every part of their unit, that was the beginning of them breaking them down, making them feel like they had been abandoned and left alone.

And Satan, of course, that is what he wants to suggest spiritually. He wants us to feel like we are on this thing alone. And so part of putting on the helmet of salvation is coming back to reality. I am not ... first of all God is with me. You know, if it is just me and God I am in the majority? So God is with me. But it is not just God is my family. I have my family of God. I have brothers and sisters in the Church.

Fourth lie. Keep going. We will see how many we can get through. I always have bigger intentions than we are able to handle, but the Word of God is so good. It is so thorough if we will just start applying it to our lives. So sad to see Christians who have been saved living as if they are not saved and thinking as if they are not saved.

A fourth lie is I am trapped. I don't have what it takes. I will never make it. I am in this on my own and I am trapped. I am stuck. I can't... I have no choice. And actually you can see how Satan is going about this lie. He wants to do everything he can to make you think you have no choice but to sin. And now even... and he has got all kinds of philosophies he even uses for this. Nowadays it is the genetic excuse, that I have to be homosexual or I have to be a gambler or I have to be an alcoholic because of my genetics, my genes. I have no choice. That is just one illustration of how Satan wants you to feel trapped.

But Paul says that part of your salvation is actually Ephesians 1:7. In Christ we have redemption through his blood. Redemption means God has set you free. So you have been a slave that Christ has purchased and set free from slavery and Satan wants you to go back to the slave camp and say to the tyrant, "Could you put the chains on me again, please?"

You say, "Well, man, are you sure about that?"

Well, Paul goes on in Ephesians chapter 2:5 as he describes the power that is at work in the Christian's life to ... he describes it as in Ephesians chapter two verse five he says... he describes it as a supernatural miracle. He says:

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.⁹

If you are a believer, you are not a spiritually dead man. Yeah, if you are not... if you are an unbeliever here today, you are spiritually dead. And it may be that some of you the reason you feel stuck is because you are stuck, because you have never been born again. There is a need for the new birth. And so if you are not a believer, if you are dead spiritually, if you are stuck you have this no signs of life, what you need to do is you need to get on your knees and you need to say to God, "Please cause me to be born again." You need to cry out to God that he in his mercy would do this great work. But if you are a believer, if you have been born again Satan is certainly going to want you to think that the new birth is not that big a miracle and what you need to do is you need to tell yourself, you need to tell Satan, you need to tell the world, "I am not who I used to be. So if you tell me that I cannot change, that is a lie."

If I saw a man get up from the grave I would say, "That is a tremendous power. And that same amount of power has been at work in my life to save me and to change me." This is why Paul in Ephesians 4:22-24 he gives us illustration of what it means to be saved. He says that you need to, with your understanding of what it means to be a Christian here, this is not the way you learn Christ. Here it is:

...to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your

⁹ Ephesians 2:4-6.

minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.¹⁰

And he is just describing the difference between being an unbeliever and a believer like this: old self, new self. The gospel has transformed us and salvation includes this supernatural miracle. And we need to put on the helmet of salvation and believe it as we fight with sin.

A fifth lie. I have messed up too badly. I don't have what it takes. I will never make it. I am in this on my own. I am stuck. A fifth lie is I have messed up too badly. Satan is pretty... he is pretty comprehensive in his deceptions. He is very tricky and he can take sorrow over sin, which is a good thing. Some of you maybe you haven't felt enough sorrow over your sin. But Satan can actually take sorrow over sin and he can switch that good thing into something that is bad. It is possible to sorrow over sin in a way that is bad. Did you know that? And it is possible to sorrow over sin, to become so obsessed with the ways in which you have sinned that you fail to appreciate the forgiveness that is found in Jesus Christ. All you can see is your sin. You cannot see forgiveness.

And so there may be some of you who you just... it is hard for you to even move on in the Christian life, because you keep remembering the past, 10, 15, 20 years ago. There is this memory that keeps going. It is like repetitive in your mind. You remember what you did and you can't erase it and you wish you could erase it and you can't move forward. It is like this sin in the past is holding you back. And part of what you need to do is you need to go back to your salvation, because Ephesians 1:7 tells us that in Christ we have the forgiveness of our trespasses. And what does forgiveness mean? It means that God has erased away the debt. He has cancelled the certificate of death that was held against us. We are clean, in other words. And so it is not holy not to believe that you have been forgiven. That is not holy. That this like standing at the cross and looking at the cross and Jesus dying and God saying, "This is for the forgiveness of all your sins." And you standing at the cross seeing Jesus dying and saying, "But I don't think it is enough for my sins."

He is crying out in agony:

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"¹¹

And you say, "That is nice, but I am too bad."

You know, that is not holy. That is a denial of the glory of salvation. And what you need to do when Satan comes after you and saying, "You are too bad. You are too bad to be saved," is you need to put on the helmet of salvation and you need to point yourself back to the cross. This is what Christ has done. This is what he has accomplished and I am going to honor God by believing it.

¹⁰ Ephesians 4:22-24.

¹¹ Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

A sixth lie is I have no future. I don't have what it takes. I will never make it. I am on this on my own. I am trapped. I have messed up too badly. I have no future.

If you want to stop someone from really living, all you need to do is to steal their hope, to steal their confident expectation of the future. If you can steal somebody's hope, you have just taken the petrol out of their spiritual gas tank. And so it is easy for us as believers. We get so in the present in the moment that all we can think about is now, now, now. It is not the way I like it now, now, now, that we almost have what you might describe as eternity amnesia. Do you know what amnesia is? It is you can't remember. It is like we have saved for this glorious future, but we are going through life as if we weren't going to heaven. And Paul tells us you have got to come back to your salvation. What has happened to us?

Verse 11.

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.¹²

And then he goes on to say not only has God given us an inheritance in salvation which Peter tells us is what? Imperishable, undefiled and will not fade away. Can you imagine meeting a guy who stubbed his toe? Have you ever stubbed your toe? It really hurts, but he just ... before he stubbed his toe, I have been told, he... maybe he was at like a... he was at the lawyer's office and the lawyer had just read a will and the will had just... in the will the lawyer had just read it was revealed that this man had just received a billion rand inheritance. And after the lawyer reads billion rand he stands up like this. He is so excited and he kicks his foot against the table and he stubs his toe and then he is... he falls on the ground. {?} He looks around. He is... my life is so bad. My life is so horrible.

And the lawyer is like what are you talking about? {?} the pain I am in. You don't understand me. You don't understand what I am going through. And he is like, but you just got a billion... {?} I don't want to hear about that right now {?}.

And you say, "Man, do you know what you have? And, believer, do you know what you have? When you are tempted to give up, do you know what you have? This salvation includes an inheritance."

And do you want to know how good it is? Look at 2:6. It says that we have been:

"...raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."¹³

Verse seven, why did God save us? Look at this. Oh, man. This is where we have got to be charismatic. We have to jump up and be excited because it is huge. Verse seven:

¹² Ephesians 1:11-12.

¹³ Ephesians 2:6.

“...so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”¹⁴

That is one of my favorite verses in the whole world. God has got so much riches of kindness that we can't count it. And what he wants to do is the reason he saved us was so that for all eternity he might pour that kindness out upon us and it is never going to come to an end. All of eternity he is going to be pouring out his grace upon us. So when Satan comes and tries to deceive us into giving up by telling us that we have no future, we need to go back and remember that our salvation includes this great eternal reward.

Well, we will just do a couple more here. I know it is almost time. We won't get through all 22, but nine... or no, it is not nine for you. It skipped six, seven. I can't do anything significant. I don't have what it takes. I will never make it. I am in this on my own. I am trapped. I have messed up too badly. I have no future. And I can't do anything significant.

And so, again, this one feels a little bit ... it feels a little bit humble, because we look at our lives and we just say, “You know what? Who am I? Who am I? I am not a very important person. I don't have any real great gifts.” And so we almost think, you know what? I am not going to really engage in this spiritual war, because, you know, I... it is not going to matter if I don't. I am just a guy. I can't do anything significant.

And the apostle Paul actually tells us that when we think things like that that is not actually, again, a reflection on us. It is reflection on God and his great work in salvation, because Ephesians chapter two verse 10 tells us part of what God is doing in our salvation, verse 10, Ephesians two says:

“For we are his workmanship.”¹⁵

Whose workmanship? God's workmanship. We are God's sculpture. We are God's piece of art.

“...created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”¹⁶

Here is an amazing picture. God saves you and he saved you for a purpose, to glorify him and to do good and he didn't only just save you to do good, he actually prepared good works for you to do. And you are looking at those good works that God prepared for you to do and you say, “God prepared when?” In eternity past. And you are looking at these good works that God prepared for you to do and you are saying, “It is just not significant enough.” I don't think that this that important.”

¹⁴ Ephesians 2:7.

¹⁵ Ephesians 2:10.

¹⁶ Ibid.

No. You are part of something big, bigger than your little life. It is the glory of God.

Ephesians chapter two, look at this. This is us as a church, but we are part of this if we are Christian. In him, in Christ, you are also being built together into a dwelling place of God by the Spirit. God is making himself a temple in which to dwell and we are part of that.

Ephesians chapter three verse 10. He takes our salvation and our little lives and he says God is actually using us, the Church, us as individuals, he is doing something that is bigger than what we can see. He is actually using the Church as an illustration for angels of his own wisdom.

You say, “I am not part of anything significant.” God is using us as a church to put his glory on display to angels. Look at it. He is talking about the mystery of the gospel, all these things, the Church. Why did God do it? Verse 10:

...so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.¹⁷

Maybe one last one for now, but another lie we are tempted to believe and we ought to put on the helmet of salvation. We have to believe that, yes, God has saved us for a purpose, his glory, but a tenth or another lie, I think eight. I am afraid God doesn't like me. If you really want to mess up a child as a father all you need to do if you really want to mess up a child as a father is to get that child to doubt that you like him or you love him. If you meet a child who grew up in a family where they were always questioning their father or mother's affection you re going to meet a child who usually, except for the grace of God and amazing glory of salvation, is going to have some significant struggles in his life. You take away a father's affection and you really, really can twist a child's mind. And the same is true spiritually. Satan knows, of course, if he can get us to doubt the love the God has for us he has put us in a very dangerous place spiritually. And so it is easy for us in the middle of a war to look at our circumstances and to feel like, hey, you know what? God is just far away from me. God doesn't... maybe he saved me, but he doesn't love me. He doesn't like me. And this is when, again, we need to put on the helmet of salvation because the gospel is the good news of the Father's love. And we see this again all throughout Ephesians.

Ephesians chapter two verse 13 and 14.

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace.”¹⁸

Chapter three verse 19, we read this earlier that Paul's prayer is:

¹⁷ Ephesians 2:10-11.

¹⁸ Ephesians 2:13-14.

“...and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”¹⁹

And, guys, what Paul is saying is God, Christ’s love for his people is more than we can ever know. It surpasses knowledge. Ephesians chapter five verse one and two.

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.²⁰

As believers, it is vital that we continually delight in God the Father’s love for us. And if the love of God will not make you delight in him, what will? If the fact that the creator of the universe, the King of kings before whom the angels are saying, “Holy, holy, holy,” if the fact that he loves you will not give you courage, what will? If the fact that the one who said, “Universe come into being,” and the universe comes into being, if the fact that the one who defeated death, if the fact that the one who is in charge of all things, if the fact that he loves you does not give you confidence to fight this spiritual war, what will? What will?

As believers putting on the helmet of salvation means going back to what God has done and what God has accomplished in Christ, enjoying what that salvation means, appreciating and delighting in the significance of the fact that we have been saved and applying that reality to the way we think, evaluating our thoughts, identifying whether or not we are thinking truths or lies and choosing to act not on the basis of things that are not real, but to act on the basis of things that are.

As we have ... certainly we have a great enemy. We are involved in a serious war. But God in salvation has neutralized every weapon that Satan has. In his war against believers.

“O death, where is your sting?”²¹

Satan is a fearsome enemy. He used to... he is not... and one of the reasons Satan seems fearsome to us is because of the power of death. But Christ has defeated the one who had the power of death. He can’t use that weapon. Sin that would be a great weapon, wouldn’t it, our own sin? But Christ has neutralized that weapon, hasn’t he? He has provided forgiveness in righteousness. The fact that we were enemies of God in our minds, that we were hostile to God, something was twisted in our nature that we were running away from God. In salvation God has provided a new birth which a new nature. So now we delight in God. Our future, that is a pretty big weapon that we are going to go into the ground. And the mess this world has made and in salvation God has provided the hope of eternal life.

¹⁹ Ephesians 3:19.

²⁰ Ephesians 5:1-2.

²¹ 1 Corinthians 15:55.

Now if you were a general and you were talking with a soldier who had to go into war against an enemy who in the past who had been fearsome, who was a great fighter, you would understand that this soldier had to go into war against this enemy who in the past was fearsome and a great soldier and how had supposedly had many weapons. You could understand that he would be a little nervous, right? But then as a general, if you were able to prove and able to show him that though this was a great enemy and a fearsome enemy every single weapon that had been neutralized, every single weapon that he had to use against you has been stripped from him and actually you have been provided all the armor you need to fight against him. If that soldier who was told that and approved that still sat on his chair and said, "But he is too strong..." You would say, "No. No. Be strong in the Lord."

Believer, yes, Satan is a fearsome enemy, but God is a better Savior. And in Christ God has provided the salvation you need, the rescue and deliverance that you need, that you desperately need. And so it is vital that you as a believer protect your thinking. You are not on the losing side. This war is not in doubt. Jesus has won. So will you. This salvation is not just words in a book. It is real. And it needs to be applied. Get to know it. There is nothing more sad or shameful or tragic, hardly anything more shameful or tragic than a believer who doesn't know the breadth of his own salvation. Get to know it. When you hear people talking about salvation or the Word of God, talking about salvation, study it. This is real. This has happened to you.

If I was saved from drowning, I would like to hear that story. Can you tell me more about that? If I was better than that raised from the dead, I would not be bored when somebody talked about it. {?} again. I was in the... I was actually in the coffin and the guy came in and he rose? Wow. Who was that guy? Tell me how he did that.

This has happened to you. It is a miracle. Get to know it. Practice thanking God for it deliberately, intentionally, on a daily basis. Thank God for the salvation that he has provided for you and specifically. God, thank you for saving me from the penalty of sin. Thank you for saving me from the power of sin. Thank you of saving me from the presence of sin. And put of lies. Any thought that comes into your mind that is not based on the reality of what God has done for you in Christ, treat that as poison. If somebody comes and I am drinking a cup of water and he says, "You know what? I have just got a little bit of poison here I am going to put in there, just one drop."

I am not like ... {?} bring it on. No, I say, "Get that stuff away from there. This is my life we are talking about."

And when lies... when people start telling you lies or you start thinking lies that don't match up with truth, you have to know truth to be able to know that, first of all, that lies that don't match up with truth. Don't say... don't let that stay there. Put it off. I will not think that. That is not true. And honor God. Honor God in your life as a believer by displaying a humble confidence in this great spiritual war.

I have the resources. God has provided this great salvation. I will believe it and I will put on my helmet. I will protect my thinking.

Let's pray.

Lord, thanks for your Word. Awesome. And thanks that we are not talking about something that happened to somebody else a long time ago. We are talking about what you have done in our lives presently. You have saved us. You are saving us. And, Lord, we look for the day when you will save us. Help us to be a church where salvation is not just a word in a book that we debate, but it is the food that we eat and drink that we enjoy, that we have tasted your kindness and tasted the kindness of your salvation. And we protect our thinking by believing it. And we pray this in Jesus your name. Amen.