

Ephesians #06: Ephesians 6:17a

Ephesians

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Our text words are Ephesians 6:17a, "And take the helmet of salvation." With God's help we wish to consider with you the Christian soldier's helmet of salvation. In the first place, a helmet of hope; secondly, what this hope of salvation is; and thirdly, the ground and fruit of hope. The Christian soldier's helmet of salvation: the helmet of hope; what this hope is; and the ground and fruit of this hope.

We are still considering, dear congregation, the Christian soldier's armor as detailed for us in Ephesians 6, pieces of armor all of which we have seen are needed in order for the Christian soldier to stand in the day of battle. We have seen that the Christian soldier needs to be adorned by the grace of the Holy Spirit, with the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shodding of his feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and the shield of faith. All of this leaves one major area of the body unprotected, the head, and we need not many words this afternoon to convince you the importance of protection for the Christian soldier's head. Even in natural society, if we see motorcyclists or bicyclists, we see that the one piece of protection they often wear is a helmet. We know that our head is a very vital place of our body and we can be outfitted from our shoulders to our feet but if our head is left unprotected, our chances of survival are slim indeed. Therefore the Christian soldier must have a helmet and Paul is thinking here of a Roman soldier's helmet as he has been considering Roman gear or Roman armory all the while. The Roman soldier's helmet was a kind of cap made of leather and to the leather was attached or fixed plates of metal to give it greater strength. On top of all this was a crest or plume for the purpose of ornamentation. And so Paul having this in mind says to the Ephesian believers, "Take the helmet of salvation."

Now what is the spiritual application of this helmet? What does Paul mean when he says helmet of salvation? Salvation is a very broad term and it can very well imply many different aspects. Some think here that salvation, the helmet of salvation refers especially to the awareness of the believer that he is saved, thus to assurance of faith, and while that may be included to some degree, we think we are more accurate when we refer this helmet of salvation to a helmet of hope in God's salvation. The helmet of hope. And why do we say that? Well, we believe that Paul has in mind here the same kind of thing he is speaking of when he writes the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 5:8. There Paul says to the Thessalonians who were very discouraged because the Lord Jesus Christ had not

returned as quickly as they had hoped, "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." So here we have especially the picture of hope. Hope for the discouraged, downtrodden, spiritually depressed and needy child of God.

Paul is very much aware, you see, that God's people have their down times, their times of trial and disappointment, discouragement and frustration over the lack of spiritual progress especially in their own hearts, and Paul is acutely aware of his own struggle. You recall Romans 7, the chapter where he struggles against himself, "The good that I would, I do not. The evil I would not, that I find myself doing." It is for the struggling believer who wars within himself, who feels the agonies and the powers of sin, and who longs for holiness and freedom from sin, who longs to serve and glorify the God he loves that he says, "And take the helmet of salvation." The helmet of hope.

And indeed, my friends, I hope that many of us may need this helmet this very afternoon. Oh, how often, how often a child of God feels his need for this helmet, for how often Satan is shooting his arrows, exercising his powers toward the head of the believer, toward his mind, seeking to give him a fatal blow, seeking to reason with him and discourage him, seeking to whisper in his mind, "If you are really a believer, how could you be in such a sad and dry, such a barren and backsliding condition? If you are really a Christian soldier, how could you be so unjealous for the cause of your Master? And beside that, have you not been in this battle for a long time but where is your progress? Where is your holiness? Where is your sanctification? And look," Satan says, "how many times you have stumbled." And then Satan tries to get the believer to say and to think, "All my lifetime I'm going to spend in this holy warfare without making progress. Oh, where is my hope?" "Where is your God," Satan says. As with pointed sword, he pierces the very being of the true believer and he asks him, he searches him, he says, "Where is thy God?" And you know his goal. You know his goal. His goal is always always to get the believer to disbeliever in the almighty power and strength of his God. His goal is always to get his child to say, to get God's child to say, "What's the use? What's the use of serving and of fearing the Lord? What's the use of bowing before him and worshipping this God? All my attempts to holiness just wash away again. It all seems vain and hopeless."

So Satan wants to move the believer into the position of Asaph. You recall Asaph's position? He was discouraged and downtrodden. He looked about him and he saw the world with its carefree pleasures. He saw them seeming to enjoy life. He saw that they were free from that intense internal agony and struggle and fight with the three-headed enemy within which he was struggling with, and he saw how little progress he had made, and when he looked on his godless neighbors he said, "Lord, what's the use? Is there any profit in serving and in fearing the Lord? There are no banes in their death, he's observes. There are no struggles in their walk of life. Their eyes stand out with fatness and my hands hang down, and my knees are feeble, and my face so dim, my hope so distant."

So Satan comes, you see, to tear away at hope, at hope, for Satan knows that a person cannot live without hope. He knows Scripture says by hope we are saved, and if he can

removed the grounds of hope, he can tempt the believer to become a soldier who deserts the army of King Jesus. A deserter, or as we say today, to tempt the believer to go AWOL. A-W-O-L, that's what soldiers talk about today. Be it in boot camp or be it in regular army service, did he go AWOL, absent without leave? And in a spiritual sense, you see, that's what Satan is trying to get the true Christian soldier to do, to absent himself from the army of King Jesus, without leave, without the permission of the King of kings. He says, "There is no hope. There is no future for you in this army of King Jesus. Desert the ranks of the believers. Break with the communion of saints. Break with the life of God. Go back to the world. Go AWOL. There is no hope."

My dear friend, do you know that temptation? Maybe there was a time in your life where you immersed yourself in the world, you tried to taste and drink of the world's pleasures and the Lord has stopped you and brought you under conviction, and he has brought you back to his house and to his truth, and you have tasted and seen something of his worthiness and of his glory and his beauty, but the more you strive for communion with him, the more you feel how hopeless it is and sometimes Satan is there to urge you on in that hopelessness and to say, "What's the use?"

Oh, that fatal three word question, but how Satan can put that in capital letters in the heart of the most holy child of God, "What's the use?" What's the use? And Satan does that, my friends, to both the unconverted and the converted. He does that to young and old. He says to very young people, he says to teenagers, "What's the use of seeking the Lord?" He tries to convince them that salvation is for older people when they know better, and history tells us better. He comes to the middle-aged who are busy with the cares of life and he says to them, "What's the use? You have too many cares to seek the Lord now." He comes to the elderly and he whispers, "What's the use? The Lord won't receive you when you are in your 70s or in your 80s. What's the use of seeking him?" He comes to little boys and girls and he tries to push away all impressions made by God's word even in the hearts of little children by saying, "What's the use?"

Have you heard him say that to you too? What's the use? And how do you defend him, then? How do you defend yourself rather against him? How do you argue against Satan? Well, by nature we try to find arguments from within ourselves. We try to point to things of ourselves, what we have done, how we have felt, what we have experienced. And you know, Satan's not afraid of those arguments. John Bunyan once wrote, "Satan is not afraid to challenge me in any one of my experiences." And Martin Luther once wrote, "Satan has more power in his tail," he pictured him here as an animal figuratively speaking, "he has more power in his tail to knock my conversion out of me than I have power in all my reasoning ability to preserve my own salvation." Do you hear what Bunyan and Luther are saying? They are saying, my friend, when we rely upon self-reasonings, upon self-reliance, upon self-help and self-hope, Satan will get the best of us and that's why Paul says we need protection against these reasonings, we need a grounds of hope, we need a solid substantial hope, and that hope is the hope of the helmet of salvation, that hope is the hope of God himself. Hope. The hope of future salvation. The hope of glory as Paul speaks of in Romans 8. The hope of God's returning grace. The hope of the mercies of Jehovah. It is this hope that Paul says the Christian soldier needs

to be adorned with to keep Satan from wrecking his mind, from doing havoc with his mental powers. "Where is thy God?" The believer must answer, "Why am I cast down, O my soul? Why disquieteth within me?" When Satan comes with this question, "Where is thy God?" Answer him, "Hope thou in God. There's my hope, in God." The helmet of salvation.

So Paul says to the Christian soldier, "When you feel discouraged, when you are ready to give up, when are you ready to go AWOL in the army of King Jesus, seek grace to cling to the Christian hope. In the midst of wars and rumors of wars inside, in the midst of great tribulation inside, in the midst of all the warring factions that seek to gain mastery over the old man principle and thereby intrude upon the new man and gain control of the territory of the soul of man's soul, seek the strength of hope in God." Hope. It's hope. It keeps the believer going. It's hope that grants him to believe in God's grace in the past. It's hope that gives him strength for the present moment. It's hope that gives him energies to face the future. It is hope which keeps him from being discouraged.

Jesus never promised the believer an easy life in this world. He knew that the true believer would wrestle with powers and principalities. A new life, my friends, means to have a new seed planted in a heart in which the old seed is not fully extinguished and these two will war against one another. It is true the new seed will gain the victory in the end, but the old seed may trip up the believer, may cause him many stumbles and falls in the interim period before he comes to glory. And all these things, you see, the true believer meets trials and tribulations, temptations and battles, and he can expect these because his Master encountered these and where the Master has trod, his disciples must follow. Therefore Jesus one day when all his elect shall come into glory to be with him shall stand, says Samuel Rutherford, with a soft cloth to wipe away the tears of the eyes of his redeemed, and he shall say, "These are they which have come out of great tribulation. These are they whose hope is now turned to everlasting fruition, whose hope is not made ashamed."

The Thessalonians were longing for Christ to come. They were a persecuted church. Thessalonian believers were losing their jobs, they were being imprisoned, they were facing possible death for embracing by grace the powers and truths of Christianity, and they were longing day by day that Jesus would come on the clouds. They were saying by faith, "Come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly." And Paul said, "Now, Thessalonians, don't give up hope." And so here he says to the Ephesians, "Take the helmet of hope. He who delays shall come, but even when he delays, he shall give you in his hope the strength you need to live day by day in the strength of the Lord God."

My friends, I hope you know what this means experientially. This is a very profound truth, a very broad, sweeping experience in the life of God's people. Indeed, I would say that there is not one thing in the Christian experience that does not touch upon the concept of hope. Their past, their present, their future, it is all connected with hope. When they look back, what is their hope but that the Lord who has worked these things in them, the things of true grace, the things of saving conviction, the things of being stripped down of their own righteousness and having room made in their souls for the righteousness of

Christ, that these things give them hope, not in their experiences themselves but in the God of their experiences. He who has formed that seed within them, he who has begun a good work, it is their hope that he shall finish it unto the day of Jesus Christ.

So when they look to their past, they live by the hope of the helmet of salvation. When they look to their present, what is their hope but the helmet of God's grace, of God's saving power? They see themselves remaining sinners, they see how poor they are, they moan and they groan over the ongoing poverty of their sanctification more than over anything else, "Lord, how can I be what I am when what I am is so far from what I ought to be? What is my hope? My hope is the need for the daily forgiveness, the daily cleansing blood, the daily continuance of the sanctifying powers of Jesus Christ. In that sense, my hope is a hope of salvation as an ongoing process for my ongoing sin and need." But then there is also a living by hope that is future. This is what Paul especially means here, not only to hope to be adorned with the hope of the helmet of salvation for the past and for the present, but to take and to bear my trials and to bear affliction, and to bear the fruits of sin, and to bear discouragement, yes, even to bear the depression of my soul under the weight of the glorious hope of the future of the church of God when Jesus Christ shall come and shall gather his church unto himself. You live, die, hope, the hope of salvation.

Salvation in the past is justification from God's side, that he has taken you and begun his work. Salvation in the present is sanctification. Salvation in the future is glorification. And now all three of these, lo, through the canal of the blood of Jesus. Jesus Christ is the justification, the sanctification and, yes, even the glorification of the true believer. So Christ who is the shield of faith, Christ who is the girdle of truth, Christ who is the breastplate of righteousness, Christ who is the shod feet, Christ is also the helmet of hope and only in Christ the believer goes on with hope, real hope, tangible hope, living hope, and looks to himself, at best he can only conjure imaginary hope, at death he can only lay hold of elusive hope that comes and goes day by day, but Paul says you must take the helmet of salvation, you must wear that helmet just as you must wear all the pieces of the Christian armor.

You must wear it and live, live, that means day by day by this hope. In other words, Ephesians [unintelligible], don't listen to the devil. He wants you to reason on the power of your own reasonings. He wants to bring you into the fray and meet you as man against man, and he knows you will lose. He wants to meet you apart from your God and he knows you will lose and Paul says, "Don't wrestle with him. Don't fight him on his own terms and on his own ground without the outfitting of God's grace and God's strength. Only God working in you and through you, adorning you with the helmet of the hope of salvation, he shall give you the strength to wage war in his strength against the powers of Satan." This is the hope of every true believer to a greater or lesser extent. Many of God's people have very little consciousness of this but the more they advance in grace, the more they will cancel their own sanctifying powers and the more they will learn to find their strength for ongoing sanctification in being like Christ by grace, in living out of Christ by grace, in living unto Christ by grace.

This is the hope of the helmet of salvation, and so salvation we have considered with you is like a long chain, every golden link has its own link and here the true believer as he seeks to wrestle with discouragement lays hold by faith on that link of Jesus Christ as sanctification, and he says, "For all my ongoing poverty, there is the ongoing riches of the great and glorious Master, and I who seem not to persevere in anything, oh, he perseveres. A one such as I am, I give unto them eternal life. They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man," and we could add no Satan, "is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

The ground, the fruit of this hope is most beautiful because it is God-centered. The chain of salvation is of the Father from eternity through the Son on Calvary and by the Spirit working in the heart. That ground we will consider a bit more after we sing first from Psalter #120, stanzas 1 and 2, "Judge me, God of my salvation. Plead my cause, for Thee I trust." And what follows, 1 and 2 of 120.

"Judge me, God of my salvation,
Plead my cause, for Thee I trust:
Hear my earnest supplication,
Save me from my foes unjust.

O my soul, why art thou grieving?
What disquiets and dismays?
Hope in God, His help receiving,
I shall yet my Saviour praise.

On Thy strength alone relying
Why am I cast off by Thee,
In my helpless sorrow sighing,
While the foe oppresses me?"

Now what is the ground and the fruit of this hope? One thing to know is this helmet is a helmet of hope and to know what this hope is but to have a good hope, it must be well-grounded and it must bear tangible, worthwhile fruit.

What is the ground and fruit of this hope of salvation? Well, my friends, the ground of salvation, the ground of hope, the ground of this helmet is threefold. The first ground is the promises of the Father. The promises of the Father. God's eternal work of sovereign predestination as we saw last week, his eternal heart and bowels of mercies toward his own, his eternal word of covenant unbreakableness by which he says in Psalm 89, "I will not alter the thing that has gone out of my lips." This eternal word of promise which he has inscripturated in 66 books of holy Scripture, this promise of God which is yea and amen in Christ Jesus, this is the solid foundation of the helmet of salvation, and that's why we read in Titus 1:2, "in hope of eternal life which God hath promised."

Now we all know that the promises of God are numerous, and we know that the Reformers and Puritans especially developed a whole theology around the concept of faith and hope in the promises of God. They believed in the importance of the promise. Indeed, my friends, it's too bad there's so few people, so few of God's people realize today that sometimes they learn more under the promise that is not fulfilled than under the fulfillment that is not appreciated. When God's people learn to live under the promise of hope, they learn a ground of hope that teaches them valuable lessons because when our hope is fixed in unfulfilled but valid promise of God, we learn to live out of the grace of God. We learn to live, then, by grace and that's the Spirit's work leading the child of God that way. We learn by grace to live out of the promises of God rather than out of the vows of self.

Think back, child of God, to your beginning days in your spiritual pilgrimage. What were you living out of? Your own vows or God's promises? Your own vows. "I will do this and I will do that." But you had to be stripped of your vows to learn to lean on the vows of the heavenly Father and to learn that his vows for the sake of his only begotten Son are never broken, and that is the ground of hope. You see, your vows, your vows are like an unfit structure which must be condemned. You can't walk on your vows very long before you will crash through their floor, but God's vows are like a fit structure, an impregnable structure that cannot perish. His vows are yea and amen. My promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. They cannot be broken.

The second ground of God's well-grounded hope for his people is the work of his only begotten Son. As the Father has promised all things to his people, and all those promises hinge upon the fruition of his Son's mediatorial work, so the Son of God in his mediatorial work in his sufferings and dyings, in his active and passive obedience, in his resurrection, ascension and intercession, in his coming again to judge the living and the dead, he is the substance, he is the ground, he is the firm foundation for the hope of eternal glory. Jesus Christ and what he has done and what he is doing and what he shall do is the ground, the solid ground that is no sinking sand for the believer's true hope. My friends, we must be stripped of our righteousness. We must find out that our hopes are sinking sand shall we appreciate, shall we need, shall we receive by faith, shall we receive by hope the work and the salvation of the Son of God. And now Scripture calls twice who dwells within his people the hope of eternal glory. Do you hear that? Their hope is in the Father's eternal promise. Their hope is in the mediatorial work of the Son but the fruit of that mediatorial work is that the Son dwells in them and that Son dwelling in them is the hope of eternal glory. The internal dwelling of the Son of God is their hope.

And then thirdly, their hope is grounded in the influences, the saving influences, the illumining influences of the Holy Spirit. You see, my friends, of themselves God's people can do nothing. They can't come to the promises of the Father. They can't come up to the work of the Son. But the Spirit is the one who illumines their mind with hope. He is the one who shows them their darkness and in the midst of that darkness, he causes a light to shine and he leads them. Just as we shall see in some weeks, that the wisemen were led by the light of the star to Bethlehem's manger, so the Holy Spirit by enlightening the mind leads the believer, as it were, the convicted darkened sinner to the fullness of the

glory of the born babe of Bethlehem's manger to see in Jesus Christ the full answer for all his sins. It is the Spirit's role to take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto the believer.

So you see this beautiful foundation of the hope of the helmet of salvation is nothing less than God Triune, the promising Father, the working Son, the applying Spirit. There is an infallible ground and now that ground will work fruit. Whenever the Triune God is the ground of something, my friend, the fruits will be good. When we are the grounds, the fruits will be rotten, good for nothing but to be trampled underfoot and spoiled of men. But what God does on God's grounds abides forever. That's why God's people have to lose so much of their conversion in their life because they have to learn when the Lord sifts them, you see, that there's so much chaff with the wheat. But what is the wheat? The wheat is what God does. The wheat are those things that are grounded in God. What God does shall abide the fire.

And when God gives a well-grounded hope, my friends, that hope shall bear fruit. And what is that fruit? Well, that fruit could be considered from many different aspects, of course. The fruit of hope could be considered in every single area of salvation, thus we must confine ourselves, in this afternoon in this last thought I want to confine myself to the very thing, to the very text that the apostle is presenting to us, to the very issue of conflict in discouragement. Jesus Christ, God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, are the grounds of hope for the believer when he faces discouraging conflict. Then a Triune hope bears a threefold fruit.

And what is that fruit? Well, in the first place, a well-grounded hope bears the fruit of preparing the believer for conflict. Preparing the believer for conflict. You know, if you have a son, perhaps you're in a trade and you had your son work for you when he became a teenager, and you allow your son to do as much as he is able to do for the age and the strength he presently had. You don't push your son to do more than he can do. As a father you don't make him work all the time. You don't make him carry a heavy load. You know that youth is a time in which there must be time for pleasure and for playing. You know that. You try to taper your assignments to your son to the right balance of what your son really needs, but as your son grows older and begins to assume more responsibilities, you gradually place upon him an additional task. Maybe if you're a carpenter or say you're a block layer, maybe at the beginning he carried the 42 or the 48 pound blocks, but maybe later as he becomes a stronger young man, you let him carry the 72 pound blocks, and you recognize, you see, the progress he is making but you give tasks according to that progress. So the very muscles he is developing, the very skills he is being trained for, those very things help prepare him for greater tasks to come. Now in a similar way spiritually God through the hopes he gives his people, the spiritual leading and training, gives them preparation for great conflicts to come.

Have you ever noticed, my friend, that so often God's people who are very advanced in grace sometimes, not always but very often are those who are exercised with a very great many conflicts? The Lord is able, you see, to broaden their shoulders, to bring them to spiritual maturation, he tailor makes not only their spiritual blessings but with that he

tailor makes their afflictions also. And so well-grounded hope serves already at its root as true preparation for conflicts to come, and so it is well-grounded hope which enables the believer to say, "I know in whom I have believed and I know that God is able to keep that which I have committed to him." The believer is one who leans on God more and more, and the more he leans on God, the more God prepares him for the maturation of spiritual conflict.

Secondly, true fruit in a well-grounded hope sustains in discouraging conflict, not only prepares the believer for that conflict, it is the strength of his undergirding hand, it is the foundation that goes beneath him as he engages in the warfare, enters the conflict, and endures the suffering to which he is subjected. And in that conflict, you see, he will receive blows. He will receive blows across his head, across his body, but only if he keeps this hope and he keeps wearing this hope, and that's only by grace, the helmet of salvation shall protect him, the helmet of salvation shall sustain him, the helmet of salvation shall carry him through.

And how does it do that? Well, because it is built by the very sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. That helmet like all the other pieces of Christian armor, are the fruits of the blood of Christ and as that blood perseveres, and as Jesus persevered in all his sufferings, so the believer shall persevere in all his conflicts for the name and the sake of a Master who gives him on the basis of his own merits, persevering strength.

Jesus. We read in John 18:2, I think, having loved his own, loved them to the end. To the end. And because he loves them to the end, dear child of God, he shall give you the strength you need through the hope of the helmet of salvation to the end of your conflicts. He won't desert you. Satan's a liar when he says it. He never forsaketh of the works of his own hands and that is a never that is written that his suffering blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, a never that is written with the promising will of the eternal Father, a never that is written to the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, a never that is written in the grounds of this Triune God thus you see that all of God's doings are grounded in God himself. And I believe, for one, that if God's people could really realize that more, even their mind could realize it more, they would be lifted up above many many discouragements. Their Master did not fail. Their Master could not fail and because he could not fail and still does not fail at the right hand of the Father, they shall not fail by the power of his grace.

And finally, not only does the hope of the helmet of salvation prepare us for conflict, sustain us in conflict, but it brings us victorious through conflict. The child of God does not always have down times. The child of God does not always have to battle with depression and with discouragement. There are also times where the child of God may say, "Thanks be unto God who has delivered this wretched man from this body of death through Jesus Christ our Lord." He comes through victorious. He comes through praising the name and the greatness and the glory of God Almighty. He comes through saying, "O Lord, it was good for me to be afflicted. It was good to endure that conflict. It was good to shoulder that burden because I have seen throughout it all especially now as I look back that thy grace was sufficient, that thy strength was made perfect in my weakness,

and therefore I take pleasure in infirmities and persecutions and in crosses and in trials for when I am weak, then am I strong." Victorious by hope, well-grounded hope in the Father and Son and in the Holy Ghost.

And when the believer emerges, you see, from the other side of a heavy conflict be it internal or external, and he looks back and he sees once more his mercy endures forever, oh, then he develops, as it were and I say this with reverence, he develops, as it were, his own Psalm 136 where the Psalmist says 26 times in a row, "This happened but his mercy endureth forever." And again and again the believer may write behind the events of his life, "His mercy endureth forever." Not once, not twice, but again and again and again the well-grounded hope proves to be true. The hope that is fixed on God, oh, it proves that God is no deserter.

Why does the believer not go AWOL in the end? Why is he not a deserter in the end? Because Christ never deserted his mission. Because Christ this very moment is completing his task in the very courts of heaven. Because Christ through all his sufferings persevered. Because Christ at times where any human being would have been discouraged, because when he even wept over Jerusalem or when he saw the ignorance of his disciples, when he was cast down in soul, as it were, he persevered. Because his mercy, the Father's strengthening mercy to him and his own sustaining divinity upheld him to the very end and he merited everlasting mercy for his people, therefore his mercy shall never desert them. Everlasting mercy. There's a wonderful little booklet called "Everlasting Mercy" by Reverend Thomas Adam.

Everlasting mercy. That's the hope, the hope of the believer, and that's his ornament that he wears on top of his helmet. The helmet is made out of the power of Christ's blood. Its metal is the strength of Christ as he went through the furnace of affliction. And on top of that Roman helmet we said to you there was an ornament and anyone could see that when they saw a Roman soldier, oh, he has a plume on top of his helmet, he belongs to the Romans. My friend, where there is a true Christian and he has come through trial after trial and he has confessed with his walk of life and he has confessed with his mouth his mercy endureth forever, that everlasting mercy becomes the plume on his helmet of salvation, and those who see him and those who know him and those who commune with him and are intimate with him, they know, they feel he is adorned with hope, the hope of the helmet of salvation. They see the ornamentation of everlasting mercy upon him.

And now, dear friends, are you wearing this helmet? And does the ornaments of this helmet show in your life? Are you living by truth? You know, everyone has hope in this world that's so often evident by even attempts of people to take their own lives. It is only the fully suicidal that have lost hope. The question this afternoon is not do we have hope, the question is do we have a well-grounded hope? Is our hope experientially fixed in the promises of the Father, the work of the Son, the application of the Holy Spirit? Have we learned in our lives to be stripped of all self-hope? Have we seen, have we felt, have we bitterly and painfully tasted the power of sin, the hopelessness of self-salvation? Have we wrought nothing but iniquity in God's sight from our perspective? And have we learned to write across all the efforts of self-salvation, "Ichabod, the glory has departed"? Have

we learned that from our side there is nothing but death of the pods, and out of the ashes of the ruination of self-hope as the Holy Spirit formed within us a new and living hope and raised us up to hope in a Triune God?

My friend, where is your hope? Where is your hope? Are you hoping in the poor empty things of this world? Oh, I hope not. Even if they were to give you some form of happiness for some years, they would not endure forever. Are you hoping in mere human relationships or in perhaps lawful endeavors or in some occupation or some goal? It too shall be temporary at best. My friend, you and I need a hope that abides. We need a mercy that endures forever, not even just 26 times like we read in Psalm 136, but that 26 times, that's symbolic of everlasting mercy. The hope of salvation turns to total fruition. In heaven there's no need for hope anymore but the contents of that hope, you see, will abide forever and forever and forever. Throughout all eternity the foundation of God's people will be the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. We need that foundation in this life.

What, my friend, is your hope? Are you prepared to meet God? Are you wearing the helmet of salvation? It's still available. No sinner has sinned too much. The Lord still invites you to come with all your sins to receive of his hand true hope, the helmet of salvation. May you ask for it. May you seek it. And may you have no rest until you are adorned with it and others too can see that you are ornamented as a soldier in the army of King Jesus. Amen.