

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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The Armour of God The Helmet of Salvation

*[Please note : sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.
The New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Introduction

I can't think about armour without it conjuring up images from my youthful imagination. I spent large chunks of my childhood reading, and that included books set in big, country houses which had dark, oak panelled walls, and suits of armour standing near the main entrance! I can still see them in my mind's eye while I am speaking to you! But armour is not just something from history, or from children's storybooks; it is part of our everyday lives as Christians, or at least, it ought to be.

Why We Have Armour

I live close enough to the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds to have visited it numerous times down the years. The suits of armour in the museum come from many different periods and range from pieces of leather and bits of chain mail to ornate, polished, and highly decorated items that once belonged to kings. But they all have one common purpose: to protect the wearer's body from harm. Men, and it usually was men, wore armour because they were facing an armed enemy in a dangerous and hostile situation.

Christian's ought to wear armour for exactly the same reason. We have an enemy, Satan, who is well armed and committed to harming and defeating us. The world which we live in is an increasingly hostile environment, so we would be wise to have our armour on all the time. I'm sure other speakers in this series will have pointed out that even the best armour is useless if you don't put it on! We are not to think of the "Whole armour of God" as some kind of 'fully automatic' protection that is placed on us the day that we become a Christian. Paul instructs the Ephesians to "put on" this armour, so it is clear that we need to take some steps ourselves to ensure that we receive the proper protection provided by each element of the wonderful armour which God so generously provides.

Summary of Talks So Far

So far, talks in this series have covered the following pieces of armour:

- The waist girded with truth – providing preparation for the battle
- The breastplate of righteousness – offering protection for the heart
- Feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace – helping us to stand firm, and
- The shield of faith – providing individual protection and for putting together with the shields of fellow-soldiers to make a protective canopy for them all.

Today, we come to the Helmet of Salvation.

Heart, Mind, Soul, and Bowels!

Since we are thinking about a helmet that protects our heads, I am going to make a brief diversion, at this point, hopefully a useful one (!), to take a look at some of the words that the Bible uses to describe what I might call our spiritual anatomy. Physical, human anatomy is the study of the structure of the human body and how it is composed of a whole range of different parts and systems. By spiritual anatomy I mean the different ways in which the Bible refers to our person, our thoughts, our feelings and our emotions. In the modern world, we often talk about the difference between our heart and our head, meaning the distinction between how we *feel* about things emotionally (the heart) and how we think about them rationally, or intellectually (the head). We might know, scientifically, that our heart is a pump that moves blood about our bodies, but we still use the word to describe how we feel about things. This probably derives from how we can feel a flutter in our chest at emotional moments. Many years ago, this made people think that their emotions were controlled by their hearts, and this common usage has stuck, even as science has moved on.

We can go a little bit astray if we apply this approach to how the Bible uses the same words, so we need to consider how people referred to the same concepts in Bible times. The following remarks are based on the New Testament use of these words, but the meaning of the equivalent words in the Old Testament is very similar.

I am just going to outline four different words that the Bible uses to describe our spiritual anatomy. There are more, but these four will do for today! You will notice that there is quite a lot of overlap in the meaning of these words, so don't try and use them to make sharp distinctions, because the Bible doesn't use them in that way! The four words are heart, mind, bowels, and soul, with the first two being the most important ones for today's topic.

Heart

In the Bible, the word 'heart' refers to the inner self where we have our feelings and emotions, and where we think. You could say that my heart is what makes me 'me.' It is everything that I am.

Mind

This is where our thinking occurs. It is where we perceive, understand, and make judgements. It is not connected to feelings or emotions. It can also be referred to as our 'thoughts.'

Bowels

The word bowels is used in the King James Version of the Bible. In more modern versions the word is often translated as affection, tender mercy, compassion, or even heart! It is the word closest to our modern usage of the term heart, and for similar reasons. Ancient people felt something 'in the pit of their stomach' and therefore associated their emotions and feelings with that part of their body!

Soul

This describes something like the inner person or the individual personality. It is quite easy to see from these definitions that heart and soul can have similar meanings. It is also evident that the Bible can talk about thinking occurring in the heart, as well as in the mind, but it *never* connects the mind with our emotions or feelings. That each of these words can have subtly different meanings is clear from verses such as Luke 10:27, which says,

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul,
with all your strength, and with all your mind.

We must look carefully at the context before we can understand what each word means in any particular verse. For our purposes today though, we can confidently say that since the mind is

associated with our head, then the helmet of salvation is intended to protect our minds, that is, our thinking processes, understanding, and moral judgement.

The Helmet of Salvation

We will look at five questions to help us better understand this vital piece of armour.

1. What Is It?

The helmet was the final piece of armour that a soldier put on, probably because wearing it earlier would have made it awkward to pull on the other pieces of armour. I can find two other Bible references to the helmet of salvation apart from Ephesians 6:17, which is our key verse for today, and which says,

And take the helmet of salvation.

In the Old Testament there is a verse in Isaiah that refers to God intervening for His people.

For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak (Isaiah 59:17).

Now God certainly never needed saving (!), so the idea must be a little different in this passage. The whole picture is more of a soldier on the attack, seeking vengeance, than the defensive feel of the New Testament references. In Isaiah we see God pictured as a mighty Soldier, stepping in to save His people when there is nobody else who can help. In the New Testament, I think that Paul, directed by the Holy Spirit, takes up elements of the same image, to show us that God also sends out Christians in a spiritual battle, and that He gives them His own armour to protect them in the fight.

Writing to the Thessalonians, Paul says,

But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:8).

So, the wording is slightly different to Ephesians 6:17 and we have the helmet of the “hope of salvation,” rather than just the “helmet of salvation.” It is important for us to take notice of the word ‘hope’ in this context.

Salvation and the Hope of Salvation

Let’s just spend a moment looking at how the Bible uses the word hope. It sometimes uses it in the ordinary English sense of wishing for something to happen, for example, Luke speaking in Acts 27:20 about the shipwreck which he and Paul experienced on the way to Rome, says,

All hope that we would be saved was finally given up.

But whenever it refers to spiritual things it signifies a confident certainty of something good happening. It is hope, simply because the event is still in the future and has therefore not happened yet, but there is no element of doubt involved, because God Himself guarantees that the thing will occur. A good example would be 1 Peter 1:3, which says,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

In a similar vein, Hebrews 6:18 says,

That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

So, the “hope of salvation” is not hoping for the best; that maybe we will be saved in the end. Rather it is the complete confidence of our salvation being certain.

It is often said that salvation in the New Testament is spoken of in three tenses: past, present, and future. In the past we were saved from the penalty of our sins the moment we trusted Jesus Christ as our Saviour. In the present we are saved from the power of sin over us, being set free to live righteously. In the future we will be saved from the very presence of sin, when we will be in the Father’s home, having new bodies, and every trace of sin will be completely gone. Using these terms, we can see that the “hope of salvation” can be applied to both the present and future elements of salvation, with the emphasis being perhaps more on the future where that hope will be totally fulfilled.

If the helmet consists of salvation, or the hope of salvation, we can ask the next question...

2. Why Do I Need It?

Our head is the home of our mind, and the Bible has quite a lot to say about the importance of our minds. Paul clearly thought that the minds of the Corinthian Christians needed protection when he wrote to them saying,

But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3).

On the positive side, the mind is represented as being the place where renewal can occur. “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind,” Paul exhorted the Ephesians in Ephesians 4:23. In the better known words to the Romans, he says,

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2).

If the mind is the seat of God’s renewal for us, then it is well worth protecting.

We might think that peace is something that we experience in our hearts, and therefore, that is where it should be protected. But Isaiah says,

You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You (Isaiah 26:3).

So, we can conclude that protecting our minds is the way that we will find peace. The Helmet of Salvation then, is intended to protect our minds; remember that is, our thinking processes, understanding, and moral judgement. It is worth looking at some of the things that our minds need to be protected from.

i. Wrong Worldview

What I mean by this, is the way that non-Christians look at the world, life in it, and the choices that we have to make. We might still have ideas and patterns of thought that started before we became a Christian. Even if we have been a Christian as long as we can remember, we are all more

strongly influenced in our thinking and priorities, by the culture around us than we usually imagine. The Helmet of Salvation is designed to protect our minds from these things.

ii. Doubt

Doubt is probably one of Satan's most effective weapons. Ever since he asked Eve the first question recorded in the Bible, "Has God indeed said...?" he has been putting questions and doubts into the minds of men and women. He especially wants to make us doubt the things that God has stated plainly. Doubts occur in our minds, and they can adversely impact our thought processes and therefore the decisions and moral judgements that we make. If we are starting to wonder if God really does love us, or whether everything we read in the Bible is true, then doubt is starting to win over faith, and we need to look again at how effectively we are wearing the Helmet of Salvation.

iii. Wrong Focus

I wear glasses for reading and working on the computer, but if I try and look at anything more distant while wearing them it looks out of focus. My glasses are designed to make me focus on things that are 'up close' and they do that job very well, but it would be very dangerous to drive while wearing them! Our natural focus as human beings is on the 'here and now' of this world. This is reinforced more and more by the impact of 24-hour news and perpetual social media feeds on our minds. But God wants us to focus on the things that are eternal, not short term.

Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth, we are told
in (Colossians 3:2).

Our minds are naturally 'short-sighted.' God does not give us 'spiritual distance glasses,' He renews our minds to have the right focus and we need to have our minds protected to stop them slipping back into bad habits and a wrong focus.

iv. Loss of Hope

Loss of hope is crushing; it removes any incentive to carry on. We have already considered the absolute certainty of New Testament hope, so you might think that Christians can never be tempted to give up hope, but almost anything can happen if our minds are not properly protected from Satan's attacks. The "hope of salvation" as a helmet (1 Thessalonians 5:8), is *particularly* relevant here, but it is time to look at our third question...

3. How Does It Work?

How does the Helmet of Salvation protect our minds? One way to think of it is that it makes our minds more like the mind of Christ. The Lord's mind was clearly strong against the attacks of the enemy – think of His response to the temptations in the wilderness. We read in 1 Corinthians 2:15-16,

But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged
by no one. For 'who has known the mind of the Lord that he may
instruct Him?' But we have the mind of Christ.

These verses do not mean that we have the infallible mind of the Lord Jesus, but, if we are in a good spiritual state, we can have His mind to be able to judge things properly. We need our minds protected in order to maintain that good spiritual judgement and the Helmet of Salvation does that. You might say it prevents the damage that would lead to the reverse of the "renewing of our minds" which the Lord promotes.

In simple language, you could say that Satan laid traps for the Lord in the temptations recorded in the gospels. The Lord identified these traps and used quotations from the Bible to disarm them.

The Helmet of Salvation will help us to spot Satan's traps and tricks by protecting our minds. Philippians 4:7 says,

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

It is this guarding, or garrisoning, of our minds that we need. An army garrison, stationed inside a walled town, would be able to protect it from any attackers. Philippians pictures the peace of God doing this for our minds. We have already seen from Isaiah that we will have peace when our minds are fixed on God.

We can now start to see how the Helmet of Salvation can protect our minds. If we have complete confidence in the past, present, and future aspects of that salvation that we spoke about previously then nothing will be able to shake our minds. We cannot be afraid about our forgiveness and our position before God if we know for certain that all our sins were forgiven and their guilt removed. We will not be shaken from the conviction that it is possible for us to live fruitfully for Christ today if we are fully persuaded that we are saved from the power of sin each and every day. We will have an unshakable confidence for the future if we know our salvation includes our final escape from even the presence of sin.

It is not hard to see how an understanding of our salvation and the hope of salvation can help us to deal with the four problems we highlighted before. Non-Christian patterns of thought and worldviews will be broken if we remember that we were saved from such things and that we have "escaped the corruption that is in the world" (2 Peter 1:4). Doubts will be dealt with if we remember that victory over sin and death has already been won for us by Christ and that He is the One who is, "Greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). When we contemplate the certain hope that is a vital part of our salvation, we will find our focus shifting towards heavenly things and, far from making us less useful in this world, it will transform the way that we live, and give our lives in this world an eternal purpose. It is very obvious how the hope of salvation will correct a loss of hope. The hope of our salvation is not *just* for when we leave this world and go to be with our Saviour. It also gives us a bright hope of living today in ways that bring joy and satisfaction to the Lord and to ourselves.

4. How Do I Put it On?

If this Helmet of Salvation is so powerful, the obvious next questions are how quickly can I put it on, and how do I do so? The first question is answered easily enough; there is no need for any delay; the helmet is freely available today, for immediate use! Remember that we are instructed to take action to ensure that we are wearing the armour which God has provided for us. Ephesians 6:11 tells us to, "Put on the whole armour of God" and verse 17 says we are to "take" the Helmet of Salvation.

The first step is to know where to find this helmet! Since it is formed of salvation and the hope of salvation, we know that it must be in the Bible, since that is the only place where we find knowledge of these things. The first step then, is to read and understand what the Bible tells us about our salvation. That needs to include the past, present, and future elements about which we have already spoken.

Just reading every Bible reference to salvation, is not a bad thing to do. Indeed, it is a very good start, but it will not really place the helmet firmly on our heads. We need to apply what the Bible says about our salvation to our whole way of thinking, understanding, and deciding. Odd as it might sound, the Helmet of Salvation is to be worn inside our mind rather than outside it. Our minds are to be so shaped and renewed by the contemplation of our salvation that they are protected against doubts and deception. We may not be able to stop doubts arising in our minds, but we can quickly apply the hope of salvation to them and so defeat them. The Helmet of

Salvation will be increasingly effective as our thinking, and the mind that does the thinking are increasingly reshaped. We need to have Christ's way of thinking so that we can understand and appreciate more of the salvation which He has purchased for us.

5. Will I Need it in Heaven?

I think the answer to this question is a simple, no! Once we have been changed into the Lord's image and have put on incorruption and immortality (1 Corinthians 15:51-54) our minds will have been perfected, just like our bodies will have been. When we have received every element of our salvation, including the deliverance from the very presence of sin within us and around us, there will be no more sin or evil for us to need protecting from. So, I can see no need for a Helmet of Salvation in heaven.

Conclusion

However, there is every need for it in the world in which we live today, with our current bodies and minds! Three pertinent scriptures will help us round things up. Paul's advice to the Philippians is a good means to train our minds in the right way:

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things (Philippians 4:8).

Psalms 73:25 illustrates where our hope of salvation should be centred and what our focus ought to be:

Whom have I in heaven but You? Besides you, I desire nothing on earth.

The following words from Romans are very appropriate as we wait for the Lord's return,

The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light (Romans 13:12).

If we wear the helmet of salvation every day, our minds will be protected against our own sinful desires and against the suggestions, and traps which the enemy sets for us. So, we will be able to think and choose in ways that honour Christ as our minds become increasingly in tune with His.

Father, we thank you for giving us the protection which we need in the spiritual battles that we face. Please strengthen us to always put on the armour which You have given us. We know that our minds are vulnerable and constantly under attack. Help us to so value our salvation that it protects us from assault. We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

Thank you for listening to this Truth for Today talk in the series The Armour of God, The Helmet of Salvation, talk number T1461.

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