

## CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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### The Christian's Armor: The Helmet of Salvation

The Bible describes the human condition after the Fall in terms of *bondage*. Humanity is in bondage to sin and bound in spiritual darkness. The imagery that is used is of *chains* and *prison* (Isa. 42:7 and 61:1) this is why Jesus declared that he came to set the captives free (John 8:32-36, see also Rom. 6:7). We are told that we are born in bondage to the Law (Gal. 3:23). In addition to all this, we are told that Satan has the ability to take people captive to do his will (II Tim. 2:26). Stott writes, "Behind the scenes, invisible to men on the stage and in the audience, a spiritual battle is being fought out. The devil's grim activity is graphically depicted. He is likened to a hunter who captures his quarry alive in some clever 'snare' or trap. He also drugs or inebriates them, for the word used of his captives' escape (*ananaph*) means literally to 'become sober' or 'come to one's senses again' (AG) after a period of diabolical intoxication. From such a captivity, in which men are both trapped and doped by the devil, only God can deliver them by giving them repentance unto an acknowledgement of the truth."<sup>1</sup>

The arena where this takes place is the mind. He uses smooth talk and flattery to deceive minds (Rom. 16:18)<sup>2</sup> as well as deceitful scheming through cunning and craftiness (Eph. 4:14). Satan's designs are to keep men in a state of blindness (II Cor. 4:4). He uses various means in order to corrupt the mind and conscience (Titus 1:15) and to sear the conscience by false doctrine (I Tim. 4:2). These include: Pride (Matthew 16:23; Luke 4:3-13); Cares of the world (Philippians 3:19; Colossians 3:1-2; Matthew 13:22); Money (Matthew 13:22; 1 Timothy 6:5, 10); John 12:2-8; Acts 5:1-11); Sexual temptations (Proverbs 6:23-29; Proverbs 7:6-27; I Corinthians 5: I Corinthians 6:12-20; Revelation 2:20-23, II Timothy 2:22).

REVIEW: We have come to the second division of the Christian's armor. The shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit are pieces that are "taken up" after the first three pieces of armor are attached and fastened to the body. All of the armor is appropriated *after* one is "made strong in the Lord's mighty power." The armor is for those who have the strength to don it. Only after we are armed can we stand – otherwise our Christian lives are going to be a wreck. Mark the words of C.H. Spurgeon, "If you were not soldiers, you would not need armour; but being soldiers, you need to be clad from head to foot in armour of proof. I suppose every Christian here knows, as a matter of theory, that he is a Christian soldier, and that he has been enlisted under the banner of the cross to fight against the powers of darkness until he wins the victory. But we all need to have our memories refreshed upon this matter, for soldiering, in time of war at any rate, is not a very pleasant occupation, and the flesh constantly attempts to give it over... You must ever be on the watch. You are a soldier, man; remember that."<sup>3</sup>

#### I. THE HELMET OF SALVATION

*Take* (DEXASTHE, aorist middle imperative – you do this for yourself – at once! The word DECHOMAI, is lit. to receive, B.F. Westcott says the word "suggests a personal welcome of

God's gift, and a glad appropriation of it: II Cor. 6:1; 8:17; II Thess 2:10.”<sup>4</sup> However, we should not imply from this that the rest of the armor are gifts to any lesser degree. I think it is simply Paul's constant habit to stress at all times the “gift-nature” of salvation (comp. Eph. 2:8). *The Helmet* (PERIKEPHALAIAN, made up of the preposition PERI, around, and KEPHALAI, head – used only here and I Thess. 5:8 in the N.T.) of salvation (TOU SΩTΩΡΙΟΥ – genitive of apposition lit. the helmet, that is, salvation.)

A. The Nature of the Armor.

The Apostle is referencing Isaiah 59:16-17 which says, “He saw that there was no one, and he was appalled that there was no one to intercede; so his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head.” This is a reference to Christ. The difference, as Hughes notes, is that, “In Isaiah, God's Helmet of salvation is what he does; in Ephesians, it is what he *gives*.<sup>5</sup> The helmets of ancient soldiers, esp. the Romans, were designed not only to protect the head, but to identify. They were therefore usually crowned with plumes or crests. “A helmet was made of leather, bronze, iron, or in special cases, gold. What was originally no more than a protective cap developed – especially by the addition of crests – into a heavy, decorative, and expensive item. An inside lining of felt or sponge made the weight bearable. Nothing short of an ax or hammer could pierce a heavy helmet, and in some cases, a hinged visor added frontal protection. Roman soldiers wore a bronze helmet equipped with cheek pieces. Other helmets, sometimes very decorative, were worn by officers at official occasions.”<sup>6</sup>

B. The Nature of the Metaphor

The word “salvation” conjures up in the minds of most Christians their initial conversion experience - they *have been saved* - and the word is used in this sense throughout the Scriptures (cf. Acts 15:11; 16:31; Titus 3:5). But the term is used not only in the past tense, but in the present (we are being saved, cf. I Cor. 1:18; Phil. 2:12), and we will be saved completely in the future (Rom. 13:11; I Pet. 1:5; II Thess. 2:13; II Tim. 5:18; Heb. 9:28). I think Paul is using the last of these, the future redemption, in this context. This is borne out by the same imagery in I Thess. 5:8, 9, where the Apostle speaks of the helmet as *the hope of salvation*. Furthermore, the obvious allusion in Isa. 59:17 pictures the final and complete salvation revealed in the end. Therefore, it is, as Calvin says, “that salvation which is promised us” that is pictured as a helmet.

C. The Importance of the Armor

Naturally when we think of a helmet, we think of the head and therefore of the mind. What is the connection here between the head and salvation? Surely, the assurance of salvation is involved. If one doubts the reality or possession of salvation he will be ill equipped “to stand.” Likewise, if one doubts the eternal nature of salvation he will be easy prey for the devil's schemes. (Let me put it this way. Those who deny, e.g., eternal life, by their very belief (or disbelief) declare that salvation in the ultimate sense may be lost - a belief that by its very nature destroys not only the complete assurance of salvation, but the efficient ground of salvation – the finished and keeping work of the *Savior* - since their doctrine, to some degree, makes them something of their own savior or keeper.) It is the guaranteed assurance of the hope of glory that equips the Christian soldier to endure the battle. The Apostle knew what lay ahead and therefore he did not faint. It is at this point that the “mind” is so important - for once we begin to doubt or question the quest, then our energy and effort weakens. This is generally true in life. If we do not consider the matter worthwhile, our attitude is “why bother?” We often hear the expression; “my heart is just not in it.” The reason is because the mind has first vacated the premises!

CONCLUSION: The Apostle Paul knew where He was going. He had a *clear conviction* about the Gospel. His conviction had eyes, so to speak. He understood what he believed. “When we really

believe the Gospel of the Grace of God - when we really believe that it is the power of God unto salvation, the only power of salvation in this wicked world of ours - it is a comparatively easy thing to preach it, to preach it in its purity, to preach it in the face of a scoffing, nay, of a truculent and murdering world.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore, Paul could endure. He could afford to go without, to be abused, to suffer hardship. Nothing could separate him from his Savior (Rom. 8:31-39). He had his eyes on the eternal, and not the temporal (cf. II Cor. 4:18). Because of this, he had his heart set on things above (Col. 3:1-4). Note Philippians 4:6-7, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the Peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Compare that with Isaiah 26:3, “You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.” This is how the helmet of salvation protects us. When we take our thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:5). Our obedience to controlling our thoughts is a critical aspect of spiritual warfare.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> J. R. Stott, *Guard The Gospel* (IVP, 1973) p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> *Smooth talk* renders a word found here only in the New Testament and which BAGD explain as “smooth, plausible speech.” *Flattery* is a word always elsewhere in the New Testament used in a good sense, but here NIV gives us the sense of it. Paul is describing people whose conduct is base, but whose words are excellent. Such people may easily *deceive*. The *naïve* are the guileless, the innocent, perhaps we could say here the simple. They are people who are innocent, indeed, but not because of a reasoned understanding of what is good and what is evil. They are too simple to know and thus they readily fall prey to the plausible deceiver. Paul looks for Christians to avoid both gullibility and cynicism. L. Morris, *The Epistle To The Romans* (IVP, 1988) p. 540.

<sup>3</sup> C.H. Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit V* (rpt. Zondervan, 1964), p. 81.

<sup>4</sup> B.F. Westcott, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (MacMillan, 1906), p. 172.

<sup>5</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ* (Crossway, 1990) p. 241

<sup>6</sup> M. Barth, *The Anchor Bible: Ephesians II* (Doubleday, 1960), p. 775.

<sup>7</sup> B.B. Warfield, *Faith and Life* (rpt. Banner of Truth, 1974), p. 63.