

**“Our Armor: Helmet Of Salvation”**  
**Ephesians 6:17**

**April 8, 2018**

**SI:** Paul says context of Christian life is spiritual warfare against supernatural evil.  
But God has not left us defenseless.

He has given us his armor—Jesus Christ and all his benefits.

Each piece of armor is a different facet of the Gospel. Let’s just read verse 17

**INTRO:** There has been a lot written in recent years about pastoral burnout—  
studies, books, journal articles.

There are websites about it with pages for pastors to describe their own experiences.

Here are just two samples out of dozens I could have chosen.

I am sure there was a time in my life when I was not emotionally and mentally exhausted all of the time, yet I am having trouble recalling what that was like. I have been in the ministry for nearly 30 years. I am now in my early 50s. I am just tired of the same bickering, griping, complaining, and foolishness of these people to whom I am called to minister.

I'm forty-five years old. I've been in full-time ministry for twenty years. My wife and daughter have expensive health issues, and my salary is low compared to the cost of living around here anyway. God has always been faithful to provide, but my outgo often exceeds my income and that can't continue indefinitely. Things at the church aren't bad, but attendance and giving are down, and while nobody's blaming me to my face, there is subtext that if I was doing my job better then we'd be in better shape. Nothing I've tried in my current church has made a difference, and casting the net towards other ministry opportunities hasn't panned out. I'm envious of younger ministers who are in larger and better paying ministry positions than I am. I'm probably in a mid-life crisis, feeling like a middle-aged failure. I'm just tired. I want to get out of the ministry, but I don't know what I'd do.

One writer listed eleven major causes of pastoral burnout:

family, finances, psychological health, physical health, self-perception, sin,  
theology, church administration, expectations, workload, conflict

I’m not going to preach about pastoral burnout, but I mention it because it illustrates  
one of the strategies the Devil uses against Christians.

But not just pastors. This is not unique to them.

This happens to Christians in every vocation, in every walk of life.

The Devil comes to a Christian who is in a long period of struggle.

It might be conflict with people, impossible expectations, marital difficulties,  
financial difficulties, chronic illness or pain, a sinful habit,  
a wandering child, a toxic, critical person, a hostile workplace.

Things you've prayed about, wept about, worried about, tossed and turned about, shared with fellow believers, pleaded with God, suffered ups and downs.

The Devil comes and he says:

There's never going to be any change. Aren't you weary of the whole thing?

Aren't you weary of the whole Christian life?

You pray and try to live faithfully, but things aren't better, they're worse.

You just need to give up.

What does this have to do with the helmet of salvation?

Many of the old commentators and preachers say the first three pieces of armor—symbolize benefits of Christ that Christians put and walk around in every day.

Every day I understand my life in terms of the big picture truth of faith—belt.

Every day I affirm that God sees me in the righteousness of Christ—breastplate.

Every day I know I'm at peace with God through Jesus Christ—feet fitted.

But the next three pieces of armor, Paul says, in addition, take up.

And many of the commentators say these are for use in crisis.

You take up the shield, helmet, and sword when he attacks.

We saw the shield of faith is for when you get the midnight phone call, a sudden tragedy or crisis that the Devil used to try to strike you with terror and panic.

Well, I'm going to argue that the helmet of salvation is the armor you put on when the Devil tries to make you weary of the Christian life.

The majority of you are probably not weary at this moment.

But a time may come when this is how the Devil attacks you.

Things aren't going to change, what good is all your praying and faithful living, this is your life, you're weary and worn out, give up, give up.

When that attack comes, the helmet of salvation your defense

So let's look at this under two headings:

1. What the helmet of salvation is
2. How to put on the helmet of salvation

## **MP#1 What the helmet of salvation is**

There's one other place where Paul mentions the helmet of salvation is 1 Thes 5:8

Let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate,  
and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

Hope is the key word. What is hope? An expectation of something in the future.

So the hope of salvation obviously refers to salvation that is in the future.

Salvation that we don't have now but we will one day.

This comes into sharper focus in another passage. Romans 13:11-12

Paul says:

Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

There's armor terminology again.

But what I want to draw your attention to is the phrase:

“Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.”

Paul is obviously referring to a future salvation.

We don't have it yet but it's getting closer and closer.

A helpful way to understand this is to think in terms of

salvation past, salvation present, and salvation future—3 tenses of salvation.

In some churches, salvation is spoken about mostly in the past tense.

When were you saved? I was saved when I was 14 years old.

I gave my heart to Jesus at church camp.

Salvation is something that happened in the past.

That's one of the ways the Bible speaks of salvation.

It speaks of it in the past tense as salvation from the penalty of sin.

You've been saved. You've been forgiven and pardoned for all your sins.

You're no longer condemned.

Nothing you've done or can do will change your forgiven status.

Nothing you've done or can do will change God's love—

either make him love you less or love you more than he did the moment you believed in his Son.

Theologically we refer to this past tense salvation as justification.

You've been forgiven. You've been declared righteous in God's sight.

But there's also a present tense of salvation.

If you were asked the question: Are you saved?

You could say: Yes, I was saved when I was 14 years old.

I was saved back then from the penalty of sin when I trusted Jesus.  
But it would be just as biblical to say: I'm being saved.

It's happening right now. Every day I'm being saved. Present tense.

What we're talking about theologically is sanctification.  
Sanctification is being saved from the pollution of sin.

It's the active, present aspect of salvation.

Philippians 2 says: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling."

Work it out. There's work the Holy Spirit is doing, work you are doing.

A number of years ago I walked through a house that had burned.

The fire department had gotten there in time.

They had put out the fire. They had saved the house. It wasn't totally lost.

But what a mess. There was lots of work to be done to make it beautiful again.

Fortunately the owners had good insurance, so all the resources were there—  
but it was going to take time and effort.

That's a good picture of present tense salvation.

You've been saved from the fire. You've been forgiven. No condemnation.

But what a mess. You're not at all like Jesus in the way you should be.

There's fear, self pity, anger and all sorts of spiritual pathologies.

Guess what though? You've got all the resources inside you now to be beautiful.

You've got the divine life. You've got all the fruit of the spirit in seed form—

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, selfcontrol

It's all in there. Every day you cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

That's present tense salvation.

And there's also a future tense of salvation. Are you saved?

Yes, I was saved when I was 14 from the guilt of sin.

Yes, I'm being saved every day from the pollution of sin.

And yes, I will be saved from the presence of sin and its effects when I see Jesus.

As long as you live in this fallen world, sin is unavoidable.

Its nastiness is in you and around you and in other people.

You see and feel the effects everywhere.

But a day will come when you will be saved from the presence of sin.

It will be completely eradicated.

You will be the person you were created to be.

You will live in a society of beautiful, whole people in a lovely restored creation.

No more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things will have passed away.

The theological term for this is glorification. It's Christ's work consummated.

Meditating on future salvation called the hope of glory.

And this is what the helmet of salvation is.

It's using the hope of glory as a defense against weariness.

It's meditating on all the promises of Christ's return and his eternal kingdom until that relieves your weariness and gives you a different view.

Going back to the burned house.

Imagine the rebuilding is taking months longer than expected.

The family is stuck in a little rental apartment, cramped and uncomfortable, they can't find the stuff they need, because it's all in a storage unit.

A family member says: I'm going crazy here. I can't take this.

Some poor teenage girl who is having to share the bathroom with everybody.

Then mom or dad says:

I know, but won't it be great when we get back in our own home.

Everything is going to be redone and repainted and fresh—better than before.

It's taking a lot longer than we thought, but it's going to happen.

This in-between time, cramped in here, you know what this is?

It's family togetherness. Group hug, everybody!

That happens over and over in the New Testament.

The book of Hebrews was written to Jewish believers in Christ who were facing lots of pressure from Jewish community to give up faith, return.

They were getting weary from it. They wanted to give up meeting together.

Writer urges them not to be like the Israelites who became discouraged in the wilderness and who listened to the Devil when he told them they would never arrive in the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey.

Remember Jesus has a Promised Land for us too.

Have full assurance of hope until the end. Keep meeting together.

That's just one example of the many places in the Bible where believers are encouraged to deal with long-term struggles and weariness by reminding themselves what God has in store.

So that's what the helmet of salvation is.

Using the hope of future salvation, the hope of glory as defense against weariness.

But how exactly do you do it? How do you put it on?

## **MP#2 How to put on the helmet of salvation**

Let's explore this using an intimate case study of a weary believer.

We read it earlier. Psalm 73.

This Psalm was written by Asaph. He was a musician, singer, song writer, a music leader in the Temple. 1 Chronicles tells us he was a percussionist. Asaph had a way with words. This is as beautiful as anything David wrote.

In this Psalm Asaph describes three stages of a spiritual battle..

He describes going down, down, down into weariness and wanting to give up and quit living the life of faith. The Devil was attacking him.

Then he describes a turning point, where he put on the helmet of salvation.

Then he describes coming up out of weariness with a changed view.

Look at verse 1

Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.

but as for me, my feet has almost slipped, I almost lost my foothold.

On one level I knew that God is good, but something bothered me so much that I almost slipped spiritually. What was it that bothered him?

It appears to have been long-term financial or health problem or a combination.

You get that from what he says next, about unbelievers doing just fine in life.

I nearly lost my foothold because . . .

I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

They have no struggles. Their bodies are healthy and strong.

They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills.

This is what the wicked are like—always carefree, they increase in wealth.

These people don't care about God but they have plenty of money, they have no financial worries, their businesses are flourishing, they are healthy and at ease.

Wealth and health went together in those days just like it does in ours.

These were people who could afford the best doctors, get massages.

And people admired them. Their success made them popular.

“Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance.”

People were just lapping up everything these people did and said.

Asaph thought: Here I am, a believer, serving in church year in and year out, working as music minister, struggling financially, having health problems, church people don't treat me like that. They don't admire me and appreciate me.

All this built up over time to push him to the lowest point. That's verse 13.

“Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain I have washed my hands in innocence.

All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning.

What's the point of being a Christian if those who are not Christians get

the blessings I want and I get troubles instead.

You might be tempted to give Asaph a slap and say: Quit whining. Count blessings

But look ahead to verse 21 of his assessment of his mindset during this stage.

“When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant.”

You can't tell a senseless and ignorant person to snap out of it—

even a born-again senseless ignorant person.

There's some pastoral advice here for us dealing with fellow believers who are suffering under this kind of spiritual attack. Gently encourage and wait.

So what was the turning point for Asaph? It's in verse 16.

When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me

till I entered the sanctuary of God . . .

He was spiritually weary but he went to church.

Lots of times spiritually weary Christians quit going to church regularly.

They don't want to be there. They don't want to see people.

They don't feel like they're going to get anything from it. Maybe feel fake.

That's why the book of Hebrews specifically encourages weary believers not to give up meeting together. Because that's our tendency.

Poor old Asaph had to go to church. It was his job. He was a music minister.

He went to church and he didn't have any new revelations—

but instead some things he always knew and always believed came back to him.

And what came back to him was future salvation, the hope of glory.

He expresses it negatively and positively.

The negative expression is that he remembers there's going to be a judgment.

Then I understood final destiny of the wicked.

So what that they have money and health and the admiration of people?

Their future will undo everything they ever lived for. Their lack of faith in God will eventually cause them to lose all they have and face God's wrath.

They are on slippery ground. They will be cast down to ruin.

Completely destroyed, swept away with terrors. Despised as a fantasy.

It's not at all that he's glad people are going to hell—

it's that his view of eternity and God's final judgment has been restored.

He sees how dumb it was for him to envy them. That's the negative side.

The positive side of future salvation is where he goes next.

As a believer he knows that his future is bright with hope and joy.

He sums it up in verse 23.

You hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take

me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. There's plenty of present tense blessing in those verses, the Lord holding his hand, guiding him by his counsel and so forth. But a big part of his change of thinking is a future focus.

After you hold my hand, guide me with your counsel through this life, what then?

You take me into glory. There it is. Future salvation. Hope of glory. And you also see it when he says God is the strength of my heart now—and my portion forever. There's future salvation again.

That word “portion” was a loaded word for the Hebrew people.

Because it was used to refer to the land that was divided among the Israelite tribes and families after the Promised Land was conquered. Everyone got a portion. But one tribe didn't get any land. The Levites, priestly tribe did not get a portion.

The Lord said to them: I am your portion. I am your inheritance.

It was to be a visible lesson to Israel that their priests relied on the Lord.

You have to wonder if this played a part in the financial problems that were part of Asaph's weariness. He didn't own land. So would never have the prospect of financial stability like people who did.

But putting on the hope of salvation as a helmet enabled him to say—the Lord is my portion. Not just now, in this present life.

But that will be fulfilled gloriously in future.

We aren't told how long this took—whether it was weeks or months.

It's a poem so everything is compressed and he presents it like a bolt of lightning. But it might not have happened that way. Could have been more gradual.

We aren't told what God used—the singing of a hymn, a prayer, a Scripture reading, or a sermon. Old Testament worship was more like ours than you think. See, it wasn't just going to church per se, it was through worship Asaph got a clear sight of God again. In worship his weariness relieved by the hope of glory.

His imagination was renewed.

That's really what happened, and why worship so crucial.

Weariness narrows our focus, it makes us near sighted.

Worship lifts us. It doesn't get rid of troubles, but lifts above for a bigger view. Think of that poor teenage girl who can't take it anymore in the cramped apartment. Her parents try to get her to use her imagination.

Imagine how great it will be to get back to our home and to your old bedroom.

It's going to be fresh and bright and you'll be able to stretch and breathe.



But she has to make an effort to quit being grumpy and let that imagination do its work on her present outlook.

What about this. In John's first letter he says that the moment we see Jesus—we're going to be instantly transformed to become like him.

Then John says that everyone who believes has this hope.

Are you growing weary about a weakness or sin or failure in your life?

Ponder this. Imagine this.

You'll see Jesus Christ, and instantly you will sense inside yourself a tremendous change—power, purity, clarity—you'll feel all the chains fall off.

Or what about this: In 2 Corinthians Paul gives an extensive list of trouble, distress, persecution, the pains of living in a world afflicted by sin—but he says we don't lose heart because . . .

Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

Imagine that. The heaviest thing you've ever felt weighing you down will be light and momentary compared to the weightiness of glory.

But this wonderful future salvation is only for people who are trusting Jesus Christ.

If you don't trust Jesus and give him your life, then the weariness you feel now will become an eternal weariness in hell with no relief.

So don't delay, and give yourself to him.