

# The Armor of God Pt 5 - The Helmet of Salvation

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*Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*

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**Bible Text:** Ephesians 6:10-18; Nehemiah 4  
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## **Providence Church**

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to the sixth chapter of Ephesians, looking again at the armor of God. We come to our fifth message on this particular series from the sixth chapter of Ephesians. We're looking at the fifth piece of armor. There are six pieces of armor given there and today we come to the fifth piece of armor and so the title of the message is "The Armor of God – The Helmet of Salvation." The armor of God, the helmet of salvation. We have taken a detour from our study of the book Ezra-Nehemiah, in the English Bible two books, in the original Hebrew Bible one book, Ezra-Nehemiah and we are now in Nehemiah 4 and we came to a passage that showed us the people of God building the wall of Jerusalem, building the kingdom of God, doing what God had called them to do in their day, at their time of life, to extend and advance his purposes and what they find as they build the walls of Jerusalem is they become under attack from the enemies of God. To build for God is to have to fight and so we titled a few of our messages "We Build, We Fight," or we build, we must be prepared to fight. We talked about the sword and the trowel, the trowel to build, the implement of building the wall, applying the mortar to the wall so you can put the stones and continue to build the wall. You need a trowel but you also need a sword and in Nehemiah 4 we see that they have in one hand the implement of building, in the other hand the implement of warfare, and we've noted that this is the perennial position of the people of God, that to come into God's kingdom, to be born again, to know his salvation is to then be enlisted in warfare because the enemy of our souls hates us because he hates God. He hates what God is doing in our lives, he hates what God is doing in our fellowship and so he will come against us and we noted that in this passage we're about to read, and again that it's a spiritual conflict. We'll read as we read in a moment, that our struggle is not with flesh and blood. It's not with the people in this world. They're not our enemies. No, they are the mission field. They are the ones that God wants to bring into his kingdom. They're not the enemy but the enemy is very real and he is fiercely active to oppose God and to oppose us, and so we read about our need to be strong in the Lord in this passage.

So we'll read verses 10 to 18 of Ephesians 6.

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood,

but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

Be strong in the Lord. Take up the full armor of God. That's what God calls us to do and so this morning we look at the helmet of salvation.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, as we come again to Your word, we come with hearts that are grateful that You have given us Your precious promises in this glorious book, that You have revealed yourself perfectly in Scripture, that You have given us an anchor to our souls, a foundation upon which we can stand in the word of God. We come this morning asking that You might, Lord, grant us grace, open our eyes that we might see, open our hearts that we might believe and repent, and we ask that You might do this for the glory of Jesus Christ and we pray in His name. Amen.*

So the armor of God, the helmet of salvation. As we've been looking at this, we've seen that the Apostle Paul basically is in his instruction to the Ephesian church, is doing something that's really parallel to what's happening in Ezra-Nehemiah, that is, Paul is calling the people in Ephesus to build God's kingdom by building God's spiritual house; that what it means to be the church is that we follow Jesus Christ together and as Jess was saying earlier, that we build one another up, that we provoke one another to love and good works; that we try to encourage one another so that we continue following Jesus. This is what we're called to do and in doing that, when you are engaged in that kind of activity, you are building the temple of God. As the Apostle Paul unpacks what he has for the Ephesian Christians, he uses that metaphor in chapter 2, he says, "You formerly were far off," he's talking to mostly, a mostly Gentile church, that is, non-Jewish church. Most of the believers did not grow up in the household of God, the Jewish faith. No, they were Gentiles and so he's telling them, "You were far off but now you've been brought near by the blood of Christ. You're brought into God's family and you're part of God's household and you're being built into a spiritual temple," Ephesians 2:19-22; that Jesus is the cornerstone and we're being built into this temple and somehow our, as we are fashioned more and more into what God wants us to be, that God's presence in glory dwells more fully in the gathered assembly of believers. So he's using a very practical metaphor and it's one the New Testament uses again and again, the church is the temple of God. He's using this metaphor to say this is the interconnectedness of the body of Christ. This is the

purpose of God in your life is to build this temple, to build one another, to fashion each other and ourselves into the likeness of Jesus so that his glory can dwell here and a lost and dying world can see his glory and come to the light of the glory of God that they behold in our midst.

So that's what we're called to do, we're called to build, and so Paul's saying that and he's telling them various practical ways they can do that as you work through the epistle. Chapter 4, he changes the metaphor and says we're also building up a body. He continues to teach the same thing, he's saying, "Listen, it's like you're building up a body." You're growing in the same way a body nourishes itself, that you have various parts of the body, the digestive system, taking in nourishment, and then the vascular system taking that nourishment to the cells, you know, and the blood supply taking the nourishment to the very cells and building the body up. All the parts, you think about that, the tongue, the teeth that work in eating something. The esophagus, the stomach, the digestive working of the entire digestive system. Oxygen being taken in by the lungs. All of this working together to build up and strengthen a physical body to be able to be what it was designed to be. He says in the same way you're connected like that and you're to build one another up so that you can all as a group, now he changes metaphors, as we said, from the temple to the body, now he says so that you can look more and more like Jesus corporately. This is what you're called to do. This is what I'm called to do. Then at the end of the epistle before he finishes he says, "Listen, as you go about building the temple, as you go about building the body of Christ, be strong in the Lord. Be ready to fight. If you build, you must fight."

So we build and we fight and so in this passage, he tells us how we are to fight. We need to be strong in the Lord. The Lord must be our strength. And he exhorts us with great emphasis to put on the whole armor, the full armor of God, and then he gives us a point by point picture of the armor that we need to put on, and Paul as a Roman citizen writing to other Roman citizens in Ephesus, he knows that they see Roman soldiers every day and they see this armor every day, and Paul has certainly become acquainted with it, being arrested and imprisoned and many times chained to a Roman soldier. He saw the armor up close and personal and so he uses this metaphor to say this is how we need to prepare for battle. As you build and you fight, you need to put on this armor and so he goes through the six pieces of the armor and we've looked at the first four in previous weeks and today we come to the fifth piece of armor, the helmet of salvation. It's important to remember to put on all of the armor, not to leave off any piece. What soldier would go into true battle leaving part of his armor behind carelessly? We need to prepare and the helmet of salvation is what we're looking at today. The helmet of salvation.

Now we're going to do is consider this under three points. We're going to use the same basic three points I used last week. I think that helped me to follow myself as we were working through that, and the first question, it's three questions. First question: what is the helmet of salvation? That's our first point. What is the helmet of salvation? What is he talking about? Well, to understand that, first of all, we need to consider sub point #1. What is the helmet of salvation? The practical significance of a helmet in warfare. I mean, this is pretty straight-forward but it's important for us to carefully listen to God's

word. A helmet protects the head. As a breastplate protected the vital organs in the trunk of the body when we talked about the breastplate of righteousness, how important that is to protect the vital organs, how important it is to protect the head because the head is the place where the brain, we find the brain, no organ more vital than the brain. I mean, all of them, you've got to have all of them, that's why they're called vital organs. You can't do without any of them but the brain is essential and to protect the brain is of the highest importance. Good hand-to-hand tactic. They were engaged in hand-to-hand combat, you know, soldier-to-soldier, battling sword-to-sword, spear, clubs, ax. They were engaged in a fight to the death. Well, good tactic was to try to strike at the head of your enemy, to take your broad sword and to try to strike the head and especially if there's no helmet then the head is exposed. So a sword or an ax or a club that comes down upon an exposed head is almost certain to bring a mortal wound, result in fatality and death. But even if the sword doesn't or the ax or the club doesn't bring about death, even a glancing blow that makes contact with a head that is not protected, it will leave the soldier dazed, you know, concussed, disoriented, and a soldier on the battlefield when armies are clashing who is dazed and disoriented is completely neutralized, will soon be dispatched. So it is of vital importance to keep your wits about you, to have on your helmet so that the blows that come don't crack open your skull or don't even cause you to be concussed and rendered inactive by your disorientation.

So that's obvious practical necessity of the helmet, the practical significance. 1B, the spiritual significance. We're talking about what is the helmet of salvation, the spiritual significance, 1B. In the same way it's necessary for you to have a physical helmet on your head as you go into a physical battle, so it is necessary to have a spiritual helmet on your head as you go into a spiritual battle. When Paul has been dealing with the different pieces of armor, he has categorized, I mean, basically we're putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and there's some sense there's overlap in all of these concepts but each one is kind of tailored with a unique twist and this, to think about the protecting of the head, you're protecting the brain. You're protecting the computer of the soul. I think that's a good way to think about, a good biblical way to think about the brain. It's the computer of the soul. It's not the mind itself, it's not the mind is not completely encapsulated in the brain. The Christian worldview is that there is an immaterial part of man. The soul, the inner man, the spirit, the heart, these are words that the New Testament and the Old Testament use to describe the inner man exists after the body is dead. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. You leave your body, you leave your physical heart, you leave your physical organs, you leave your physical brain behind but you still are and you still have a mind.

So the mind biblically is something more than the brain but it's not less. It interacts with the brain. And so in the same way that we use a computer, I think it's a fairly good analogy, the way we use a computer to accomplish things, you are not the computer, you use the computer. There's a sense in which the brain functions like that but it's much more important than just your computer. You can go out and buy a new computer, you know, if you have the funds and now they're getting cheaper. I think that's one of the great things about technology, you just wait a little while and technology gets cheaper. But anyway, so but this brain you can't buy another one and so you need to protect it. Well, I think

what Paul's getting at is think about what our brain does for us and how Satan wants to attack it. It's not like he's really trying to attack the physical brain, he's trying to attack the part of the function of the mind that the brain closely resembles or approximates. The brain is the instrument of computation. It's the instrument of counting and calculating. It's that part of the mind that assesses and evaluates. So to count, to compute, to calculate, to assess, to evaluate, even to survey, this is the part of the mind that Satan attacks and that the helmet of salvation is to protect us in this area.

Now let's think about this because Satan loves to attack and seek to neutralize us with a blow to the head. Now if you're in Christ, Satan cannot deal you a mortal blow. Your salvation cannot be killed. Your salvation is secure. If you are truly in Jesus, you have truly repented and placed your faith in Christ, nothing can change that. All the legions of hell cannot change that but Satan wants to deal you a blow to the mind that will leave you dazed, disoriented, discouraged, and if possible despairing. This is his objective and he uses the tendency and the natural God-given ability of the mind to calculate and to measure and to evaluate and to survey, and so what he does, this is kind of a, this is an attack that sees the, that is an attempt to help us become discouraged about the whole fight.

It comes through thoughts like this, you're fighting, you're battling, you're on the battlefield, you know, you put up your shield, you've dealt with fiery thoughts, your breastplate has helped you ward off attacks on your trunk, the breastplate of righteousness, your feet are shod, your belt is on, but a head blow comes and the head blow is something like this, "What is all of this accomplishing? Look how little ground I've gained after all of this fighting, all of this struggle, all of this effort. Has it even made any difference?" You see, you're assessing, you're thinking. It's like in the middle of the battle, you know, you're dealing with the moment by moment needs. You know, think about someone fighting a real hand-to-hand battle. It's one of the things that makes you grateful about living today, at least if you fight somebody you're probably going to shoot somebody. If you're in war that's terrible too, but I'd rather do that than personally, that's just me, then somebody chopping my head off. I'd rather get shot with a bullet. So anyway, but if you're sitting there and you're fighting, aren't you glad I could bring that up? Okay. So a sword is being swung at you, you lift up your sword to stop the sword. You know, a spear is aimed at you, you use the shield. The fiery darts are coming, you use the shield. You know, you're moving around in the battle, you're responding, but the head blow is more of a, it's not a moment-by-moment response to an immediate stimulus. I mean, there is something that's happening but it's more of an overarching kind of temptation.

You're becoming weary of the battle and so Satan works through the world and works through the flesh to present suggestions to us. It may come from someone saying something like, "You'll never change. What point is it? It's of no use. Look how little ground I've gained in this struggle against this sin. Have I made any progress? As I've tried to minister to this person, is anything, is it even happening, is anything even getting through?" This is an attack on the head of the soldier, the Christian soldier. It appears to be of no use. He's discouraged, disillusioned, and can become despair and defeat,

hopelessness. Satan's goal is to produce hopelessness and despair. He attacks the brain, the mind, the inner desire to evaluate and assess. He presents a convincing case to you and your flesh cooperates with that. "Yeah, really what progress am I making? Look how hard this is. Look how unsatisfying this is. Look how we labor and we labor and we labor and we have nothing to show for it, it appears." This is the head wound attack of the enemy and if you don't have on the helmet of salvation, it can daze you, it can disillusion you, and it can lead to despair.

The spiritual significance of the helmet of salvation, let's talk about the helmet of salvation and the question is what is the helmet of salvation. We looked at the practical necessity of the helmet, the spiritual necessity of the helmet, 1B, now we come to just really the helmet of salvation proper. What is this? I mean, how is salvation a helmet? You could say that's 1C. How is salvation a helmet? What does God mean by this? What is Paul talking about here? Well, one of the things that's important for us is we need to have, to examine our theology and understanding of salvation. So often the case we have areas where we just don't think biblically and this is an area where we often struggle and sometimes the things that are most basic are the things we're least clear on. The things that are most important ironically Christians, as Christians we can be the least clear on. You don't even think that you're not clear on it. You see this from time to time, somebody asks you a question, maybe a child says, you know, "What does it mean to be saved?" That's a great question for a child to ask you. If your child asks you that, this is like fantastic, what a dream day. Well, and so, now that's not one that hopefully you would be able to talk about the Gospel clearly, but if you really want to think about what salvation is in a deeper way, it's something that we will often come up short on fully describing and understanding. There are other things that are even more convicting.

You know, it's something, I remember, I think I mentioned a while back Sinclair Ferguson in one of the books I was reading recently said he was asked about something and he said, they said, "What is this?" And he thought to himself and then he actually said to them, "Until you asked me, I was sure I knew how to answer." Until you asked me, "and then I realized I didn't know how to answer." There are a lot of things that we don't examine well enough and think well enough about and salvation actually is one of them. We tend to have a truncated version, a kind of a miniature version of what salvation is biblically. The Bible pictures salvation as the whole purpose of God in all of Scripture. His plan of salvation goes from eternity past to eternity present. It is something tremendously glorious and rich and too often what we think of salvation merely in terms of salvation from the wrath of God, which is a key part of salvation. To be saved is to have placed your faith in Jesus and to know that you're going to heaven and you're not going to hell. That's a part of salvation. That's an essential part but there is much more to salvation merely than being saved from the wrath of God. That's part of what the Bible does say, that we are saved from the wrath of God through him, praise God.

But salvation, let's talk about it for a moment. First of all, as we see it begin to be unpacked in the Old Testament and Ted mentioned the song of Moses where he says, "The Lord has become my salvation, has become our salvation," as the Scripture begins to unfold this meaning of this word, to be saved, the Hebrew word that is the foundation

for the New Testament words that we're looking at, salvation, it means to save, to help, to bring aid, to deliver. The actual etymology of the original Hebrew word that you find translated "salvation" in Exodus 15 is a word which in its original meaning, the practical meaning of it was to make wide. To save was to make wide and that's because one of the words that the Scripture uses to describe misery and suffering is the idea of narrowness, to be narrow, to be pressed in, to be restricted, to be bound, and to be saved is to be brought out of that narrowness into a wide area. So out of the bottleneck into freedom. So salvation is to be delivered from the distress that is caused by that being pressed in upon. It's an inner distress, an affliction of the soul that comes from that and God's using something that they could relate to, being pressed in and being unable to move, and now being set free. That's a picture of salvation.

So to save is to deliver from that kind of bondage and to bring out of bondage into freedom and we see this in the song of Moses. We mentioned he's talking about salvation, what's happened. They've been delivered from the bondage of slavery in Egypt, in darkness, spiritual darkness, oppression, they're mistreated, they're not free and so salvation is God delivering them from that. That metaphor becomes the picture of salvation throughout Scripture. As I mentioned you find the song of Moses in Revelation because it is the, it's a type of salvation that spans all of Scripture. To be delivered from slavery is what we need.

So that's what salvation is as far as a definition but as you look at the New Testament, what we see is that salvation, or look at the Bible but particularly as we come into the New Testament we see that salvation becomes clearer and clearer that what we need to be saved from is sin; that salvation is salvation from sin, it's from the bondage and the constriction and the distress that is caused by sin; that we are under sin. And so salvation is to be delivered from sin. In fact, the name Jesus in Matthew 1:21, when Gabriel speaks to Joseph and tells him, "Listen, the child that Mary has in her womb is of the Holy Spirit. She's not been unfaithful to you. This is of God and you shall call His name Jesus." Why? "For He will save His people from their sins." The name Jesus itself actually means Yahweh is salvation, Yeshua. Shua, salvation. Yah is short for Yahweh. Yah is salvation or Yahweh saves. So his name means "the Lord is our salvation." But what is salvation from? It's from sin. It's not from just unhappiness. It's not from a sense of purposelessness. Those are symptoms. God didn't send Jesus into the world to give you a purpose-filled life. That's not the primary reason. He sent Jesus into the world to save you and me from our sins, from sin. Salvation is salvation from sin and we forget that far too easily and we'll see how that impacts us as we go on.

So one of the things that we need to understand too to understand the biblical portrait of salvation, salvation is salvation from sin but it's a multifaceted word. Salvation is multi-dimensional. Three dimensions the Scripture makes clear of salvation: a past, a present, and a future dimension of salvation. This is what Jesus has come to do and when it comes, when salvation comes to you, when it comes to your house like it did Zacchaeus, what does that mean? There's a past dimension of salvation, that is, you can say, "I have been saved. I have been saved from the penalty of sin. I have been saved from the penalty of sin." There is a present tense dimension of salvation, "I am being saved." You say, "I

have been saved from the penalty of sin," that's the wrath of God, the judgments that I deserve, the condemnation that was upon me, but now present tense, "I am being saved from the power of sin." Jesus is actively at work in me by his Spirit, through his word, with his people, to save me from the power of sin. "I am being saved." Salvation encompasses all three aspects. You can't have one or two aspects. All three. Jesus came to bring salvation from sin and it's sin necessarily, to be saved from sin necessarily involves all three of these aspects.

So the past, "I have been saved from the penalty of sin." Present, "I am being saved from the power of sin." And the future dimension, "I will be saved from the presence of sin. I will be saved from the presence of sin." There will be a time that comes when Jesus comes back or when you die and go to be with him, you will put off sin and you will be separated from sin never to be stained with sin again, never to feel its pull again. "I will be saved from the presence of sin." And I think a better way to say this, actually, is not so much from the "I will be," think of this, the Lord is the one who saves so really it's "the Lord has saved me from the penalty of sin," that's past tense. "The Lord has saved me from the penalty of sin. The Lord is saving me from the power of sin. And the Lord will save me from the presence of sin." And that is actually justification, sanctification, and glorification. The past sense of salvation is that you have been saved from, you have been saved by the Lord from the penalty of sin, that is, you've been justified by the righteousness of Christ. You have repented and placed your faith in Jesus. You have seen that he bore in his body your sins on the cross, that he's taken them out of the way, that he's given you his perfect righteousness, that he rose again from the dead to show that he is a great Savior and able to save to the uttermost, the one whose hope is in him. And by placing your faith in him, you have been declared righteous forever, justification, saved from the penalty of sin. There remains therefore now no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus. That is past tense salvation. That's the wonder of what you enjoy in the present but it happened and it's done, it's finished. Your sins have been, the penalty of sin is taken away forever.

So that's justification. You are declared righteous. You are justified in the sight of God. The present tense, "The Lord is saving me from the power of sin. He's saving me from the power of sin." That is sanctification, what we normally call sanctification, that is, the separation of the soul more and more and more from sin in our practical experience. It's a battle that continues throughout the life, our entire lives, though, and it's a battle that as we grow in holiness, we actually grow in the awareness of remaining sin. So you actually become experientially more and more like Jesus and yet your brokenness continues to track right along with you. You may have less sin but you're more broken over what you now see that you didn't see before. So humility goes all the way along with this, all the way to heaven, to glory. We should be growing in humility and growing in holiness at the same time. It's an amazing paradox and then growing in the treasure, the way that we treasure a Savior who can save from this kind of thing.

So that's sanctification, being saved, the Lord is saving you from the power of sin, and then glorification is what will happen ultimately not just when you die, glorification really happens when Jesus returns and gives us, because to be glorified is to have a new

body. When you die in Christ, you're absent from the body, present with the Lord which is wonderful, incredible. You are in the presence of him in whom there is fullness of joy, at whose right hand there are pleasures forevermore. There is nothing but delight in the presence of God. Believing people who are now in heaven are delighting in God's presence, glorying in who Christ is, and the wonder of now seeing him face-to-face, and yet there's a greater blessing that awaits them and that is when Jesus shall return and give us glorified bodies that are now physical bodies that are not tainted with sin, physical bodies that are just like the glorified body of Jesus Christ. That's glorification.

So we will be saved from the presence of sin. "I have been saved from the penalty. I am being saved from the power. I will be saved from the presence." That is the biblical doctrine of salvation in an overview form. So when he's talking about the helmet of salvation, he's not just saying that you know that you prayed and asked Christ into your heart. He's saying put on the helmet of all that what your salvation really is. This will protect you from that temptation to despair. Remember we're getting head blows that are basically saying, "Look at what's happening in your life. Look at how little progress there is. Look at how little progress you're having in this area. Look at how little progress you're making as you try to minister to your child or to your friend or to a neighbor. Look how little is happening. Why do you keep at it?"

You have to put on this helmet of salvation because the helmet of salvation is what infuses us with hope. It's interesting Paul uses this same metaphor in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 where he uses the breastplate and the helmet. He says, "But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation." The hope of salvation. The helmet in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 is the hope of salvation and I think he's getting at the point that when you put on the helmet of salvation, what it is infusing you with is hope. It is strengthening your hope. It is grounding your hope.

And hope is such an important concept in Scripture. In Ephesians actually chapter 2, verse 12, he says remember when you were strangers and alienated before God brought you in, brought you near. You were far away, you were without God and without hope in the world but now God has brought you near. Then he says actually in Ephesians 1:18, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may understand what is the hope of His calling," and here he comes back to this idea here, the hope of his calling and the helmet of salvation are two ways of saying the same thing.

Hope. Now let's think about, it's important for us to define our terms. The biblical word "hope" is different than the English word we normally use. We use the word "hope" and basically there's some similarity but there's an important distinction. Hope in English and in Scripture both, this is what it has in common, it is the desire for some future good. It's to desire some future good, some future benefit, some future blessing. You hope for it. But the difference between hope in our language and hope in the Bible is that the Bible, there is an element of certainty. It is an anticipation, it's a longing for, it's a desire but it's coupled with a confident expectation. It's a desire of future good and the confident expectation that you will have it. Hope and faith go hand-in-hand. The fact that you

believe God and you believe his promises, your hope, the desire for future blessing is rooted in the promises of God that you believe and so your hope grows in proportion to your faith. As you believe God, you have more and more hope.

So the helmet of salvation is learning how to put on the promises of God and the hope of God and what our salvation is and to bring into context our present experience, our present experience and difficulties, to see them in light of this larger reality. This is essentially what we're gonna see the helmet of salvation is. So what is the helmet of salvation? It is an understanding of all that salvation is and the hope that that inspires that we put on our heads, as it were, by remembering these promises and that prepares us to go into battle and to take the blows to the head that Satan tries to bring. Okay, so that's what is the hope of salvation.

Second point this morning: why do we need the helmet of salvation? We've looked at what is the helmet of salvation, secondly, the second question, why do we need the helmet of salvation? I mean, it's really obvious. If you go into a physical battle without a helmet, a wise enemy soldier is going to aim for your head. That's the vulnerable point. And so if you don't have on your helmet, then Satan's going to aim for your head, and in fact, he has used this tactic to great effect throughout history. We mentioned last time, you know, Satan is not omniscient, he doesn't know what's going on in your mind unless you say something out loud and, of course, you're not really dealing with Satan himself anyway, you're dealing with demons that are his underlings, but he's not omniscient but he is tremendously skilled with tremendous experience, thousands of years of deceiving people. And he's the one orchestrating the world system like we talked about last week, the values and beliefs that dominate our culture. He's the one who programmed, as it were, your flesh. He was in charge of that because before you knew Christ, you were under his dominion. And he knows that this is a very effective way to neutralize otherwise able soldiers of God. This is a very effective way to neutralize and he has done this through history against many noble and able soldiers.

I want to mention a couple of examples I think you see in the Bible of this same kind of thing. The first is the story of Elijah. I think Elijah took a head wound from the enemy, you find this in 1 Kings 18 and 19. Turn there, we'll look at a few verses there. 1 Kings 18. I'm gonna put it in context for us here just to remind, many of you are familiar with this story but some of you may not be. Elijah was a prophet called by God. The Lord called him, gave him his word at a time when the northern kingdom of Israel, there were two kingdoms of Israel after David and Solomon had been king, Israel was one country, now it's split into two after Solomon's death. The northern kingdom now called Israel, the southern kingdom now called Judah, Elijah was a prophet to the northern kingdom. The northern kingdom is reigned over by a man named Ahab and his wife Jezebel. They are ungodly and wicked people. Jezebel especially is a promoter of Baal worship and Asherah worship, and so she is promoting, actively promulgating the departure of the people of God from Yahweh, from the true, one true God to worship Baal. And the people are now becoming syncretistic. They're doing both, they're not just worshipping Baal, they're worshipping Baal and the Lord, and so Elijah's message is, "Why do you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is the Lord, worship Him. If Baal is the Lord,

worship him." And the people are like, "Okay, this is definitely an important decision we need to make." But they aren't even convicted at this point and so Elijah basically challenges the priests of Baal, 450 of them, to a contest to see whose God is truly God, and what he does is, he says, "The God who is truly God will answer by fire. You prepare an offering for Baal and then cry out to him to answer by fire, and we're looking for fire to fall from heaven here, and I will, the only prophet of God here, I will do the same. I'll make an altar and an offering and I'll ask God to answer by fire." And the people think this is a great idea, "This sounds like it's gonna be really awesome." Baal's priests go at it for hours and hours. They cut themselves with knives trying to wake Baal up and Elijah taunts them, "Look, maybe he's asleep. You need to talk louder." And they carry on in all kinds of spiritual frenzy, just intense effort trying to stir Baal up. Elijah after they're all done, he gets and he basically prays a brief prayer, there is no need to run around and do anything.

We'll see what happens here in verse 36. "At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said," this is his prayer, "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, are God, and that You have turned their heart back again.' Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God.'" They kill the priests of Baal. It looks like a revival has broken out and what you find after this in the next chapter, the beginning of the next chapter, Jezebel hears about what happened from Samaria and sends word, "Listen, Elijah, I heard what you did to the prophets of Baal. If the same thing doesn't happen to you by this time tomorrow, I mean, I'm gonna do the same thing to you or let it happen to me." Basically, "I'm gonna kill you."

He's afraid. He runs for his life and he finds himself after running for a while, asking God to take his life. In chapter 19, verse 4, he says, "he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, 'It is enough; now, O LORD, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers.'" Now how could a guy go from the mountaintop experience literally, mountaintop experience of Mount Carmel to now wanting to die? He has been attacked and the circumstances that have happened have led him to the same kind of thing that we can find ourselves in.

What's happened? We're gonna see if you read on and I'm not gonna take time to read it, I'll tell you about it. Read it yourself later. He's gonna go to Horeb, the mountain of God, and he's gonna have a conversation with the Lord. The Lord's twice gonna ask him, "You know, why are you here, Elijah?" And Elijah is essentially gonna say this, "Listen, I alone in Israel, the only prophet that You have, I'm the only one left, everyone else has, Israel has forsaken Your covenant, they've torn down Your altar, they've killed Your prophets, I'm the only one left who cares about You in the whole land." He says it twice. God asks him twice, "Why are you here?" And he asks him again and both times he

answers that same way. What's happening? He's basically done what happens to us. He gave everything he had to little apparent effect. It's not really made a dent in the people and to have seen God answer so miraculously, to see God's power come out in that kind of way, and to see that the people really don't care about the Lord after that? So the enemy, his flesh, Jezebel's words to him, "I'm gonna kill you," basically, he says, "What use is it? I'm no better than my fathers. There's no hope. There's no need to go on."

John the Baptist is another example. I think this is absolutely astonishing when you really think about it. Now I'm gonna mention some verses that I'd encourage you to look at. I'm gonna summarize it for you. John the Baptist, God chose as the prophet to go before the Lord Jesus Christ. He was actually a cousin, apparently a second cousin or so of Jesus. They lived a good ways away. He's in the hill country of Judea. He's born there. Jesus is born in Nazareth. But their moms meet when they're both in the womb, remember? After Mary conceives Jesus and the angel came to her, she goes for a while to spend time with her cousin, Elizabeth, who in her old age has conceived her first child, a supernatural conception that an angel appeared to her husband, Zachariah, in the temple and told him, "You're gonna have a son and he's gonna go before the Lord." And so now Mary having conceived, been told by the same angel that, "You're going to bear the Son of God," now comes down to see Elizabeth. And so John the Baptist in Elizabeth's womb, Zachariah, his father was told, "He will be the one to point the way for the Lord. He will be the one to say, 'This is the One. This is the Messiah.'" He's the one that's gonna come and recognize Jesus and point him out to everybody. That's his role. And think about it, in the womb, Mary walks into the house, you can almost see her, basically she says, "Elizabeth! Is anybody home?" It doesn't really say for sure she said that but she said something like that, and when Elizabeth heard that greeting, the baby in her womb leaped. She was in the sixth month of her pregnancy. The baby leaped in her womb and she was filled with the Holy Spirit and she said, "Why has the Lord blessed me like this, that the mother of my Lord should come and visit me?" Now what's happening? John the Baptist in utero is recognizing Jesus. I mean, that's phenomenal. There he is. He recognized he's in the room. Jesus barely conceived, John the Baptist a fetus, and yet he is fulfilling his mission, recognizing the Messiah.

Okay now, fast forward. They don't see each other again for many many years until the time when John is baptizing and in John 1 you read when John lays eyes upon Jesus, they've been asking him, you know, he's having this great ministry, he's going out preaching, he's saying basically, "You guys need to repent. Israelites, you're just as filthy as Gentiles. You need to be baptized. You need to go." Baptism was Gentile conversion, a sign of Gentile conversion. Gentiles who wanted to become Jews, they have to be baptized. He goes to Israel and says, "All of you Israelites need to be baptized." In other words, "You're as filthy, we're all as filthy as the Gentiles. Get ready, God is sending His salvation."

Well, people are going out from all over to hear him and so they're asking him, this is the first prophet that we've had in over 400 years and they're saying, "Are you the Christ? Are you the Christ?" And he says, "No, I'm not the Christ. In fact, the Christ is coming after me. He's before me. He's greater than I and I'm not worthy to untie the thong of His

sandal, that's how great He is. He's the One that's gonna bring salvation." And so he says that, sometime after that Jesus walks into his line of view and when John the Baptist sees him, he says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." He didn't need to see his ID. He said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." He sees. He recognizes.

Look with me at Matthew 11. Shortly after this, John the Baptist is put in prison and Jesus begins his ministry. Before he's put in prison, actually, Jesus begins his ministry, after he's baptized John recognizes him, a couple of his disciples leave and follow Jesus, become Jesus' disciples. Some of his other disciples are like, "Hey, this isn't really good. What happening here? More people are following Jesus and going to hear Him preach than are coming to hear you preach." John's disciples, they don't know the big plan, right? And John says this, "He must increase. I must decrease. I only came to point to Him." All good so far in his ministry but you come to Matthew 11:2. Now think about all that background and now listen to this. "Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to Him, 'Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?'" This must have been like just an incredible gut punch to Jesus. "Are you serious? John, he's doubting? He recognized Me in the womb." Jesus because he's the perfect Son of God, he answers and he says to John, verse 4, he says to those disciples who came sent by John, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me." A little bit of a stern word there on the end basically saying, "John, straighten up. Don't take offense but you don't understand. My ministry looks different than you expected. Don't take offense at Me." But he gives him the proof, "Look around you. Look at what's happening. These are the marks of the Messiah." But think about that gut punch to Jesus and think about that gut punch is coming from the fact that John has been assaulted by the enemy of our souls. He's received a head wound from Satan.

Now what's happened? He's in prison. What's happened? There's not much good happening in prison. He's looking at those walls around him, he knows that he just got put in prison for preaching the truth to Herod and now he's under the threat of death and he's thinking, "This wasn't what I signed up for. This wasn't what I expected." He's thinking, "Look, has it really made any difference? All those crowds of people, all those crowds and yet really there doesn't really seem to be lasting change and righteousness. Are You the expected One or do we look, or are we to look for another?" You see, what's happening is the mind is assessing, evaluating, looking, counting. "Look how much effort I put in. Look what return I've got on my investment. There's a problem. This isn't adding up." That's what happened to Elijah. "This isn't adding up. Look what God did. Look at the incredible display of God's glory and look how little is coming of it. It just is of no use." Like the Psalmist says in Psalm 73, "Surely in vain have I kept myself pure." The same problem, Psalm 73.

That happens to you and me. When we look at all the effort we're expending, we look at all the labor we're expending, we've been reading, we've been meditating, we've been

fighting against sin, we feel like we've been trying harder than we have in years and yet we're not making the progress, the breakthrough hasn't happened and that suggestion comes from the enemy, "It's not worth it. Stop fighting." That's why you need the helmet of salvation because the enemy of Elijah, the enemy of John the Baptist is the enemy of every blood-washed saint of God today. Still operating the same way and so you can come from a mountaintop experience even, and then you can be assaulted to the point of despair. You can know with such clarity the truth at one moment that you boldly testify for it, and then in another, in a moment of weakness your faith is ready to crumble. So you and I need the helmet of salvation.

We come to the third point: how do we take up the helmet of salvation? We've looked at what it is, why do we need it, how do we take it up. This is now the third point: how do we take up the helmet of salvation? In a sentence, what we need to do is we need to enlarge, what you and I need to do is enlarge our perspective. You see, what's happening is we're looking at circumstances, we're looking at data or data, I say it either way. You're like that data, data. Anyway, tomato, tomato. I never say tomato but I do say data and data. Anyway, so you're looking at data, real data, these are things that are really happening, I look at my life and this isn't changing, I look over here, this isn't changing, I think I'm observing it pretty correctly, I know what investment I've made, I know what investment others have made, I look at this data and I make a conclusion, "It doesn't appear to be working." Given my data and what I'm looking at, I can argue for it and the enemy comes in and he continues helping and the flesh is acknowledging, "Yeah, this makes perfect sense. What are we doing? We're not making any progress. This is a lost cause." And what has to happen is we enlarge our perspective.

It doesn't mean that you ignore the data that you've seen. No, it's real. I mean, now listen, we twist and distort things that we even see, correctly see, we twist and distort it. You've got to make sure it's not being twisted and distorted but essentially the problem we have is that what we see we don't have enough perspective on. We need to expand our frame of reference. We need to see this data in context of more data, in context of all the data. It's not that we're ignoring real data. You hear that? We're not ignoring the facts, we are putting the facts in perspective of all the facts and to put them in perspective of all the facts means I have to look at my circumstances and what I'm dealing with in light of what God is doing in history and is doing right now that I can't see, but that his word tells me about. And when I make now an informed decision, I'm making a correct decision because I'm now seeing all the data. This is something you've got to watch out for today. One of the things that's happening all over our culture today is people are getting statistical information but they are divorcing it from all of the data because they want to twist it. And remember who's in charge of this anyway, Satan. So much data is ignored. Look at this, statistics don't lie. No, they don't but people lie with statistics continually.

I had a professor this last class applied empirical research, it was one of my classes in my doctorate that I'm doing in biblical counseling, and he basically, he's actually a medical doctor who now became a PhD in theology like Martyn Lloyd-Jones, you know, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. He was actually a doctor and a pastor. And he was basically saying, he's teaching us statistics. He knows it, we don't. It's all this, you know, pastors and Bible

teachers who don't know statistics and he's basically saying, "Listen, every time you hear somebody say something with statistics, expect them to be lying to you, and then make them prove by looking at everything else, make them prove that they're really telling you the truth because when you bring the other data in, it changes how you see this selected piece."

Now get back to us in real life. So I'm feeling like it's making no difference. I'm fighting against sin, I'm making no progress. Look, I've only inched forward a half an inch in two years. That's what I see. Enlarge your perspective. Put it in light of what you know about God and his plan of salvation. Examine your perspective. A sub point here, examine, reexamine your perspective. Remember that you don't know much at all, that you don't see much of reality; that even though it's your experience, you're talking about your life or what you may have been trying to reach someone and you've been talking to them, you've been pleading with them, you've been sharing with them, and you're tempted now to give up on them but you still have a very small, even though you have a better perspective than most people around you, relative to God's perspective you have a small piece of the perspective.

That's essentially what John the Baptist had, he had a small piece of the perspective when he's sitting in that prison cell and he's saying, "Things aren't going very well for the kingdom right now." He didn't have all the data and Jesus gave him a little bit. Jesus said, "Hey, guys, look around you." When you read that passage in Luke's Gospel, it talks about all the people he was healing right at that moment, the parallel to Matthew 11. It's like he's healing all kinds of people and Jesus says, "Look at them. Look at them. Look at them. The blind see. The lame walk. The deaf hear. Read your Old Testament, read the data of the Old Testament. Look at this and remind John, 'Of course, I'm the One. If you look at everything, you see that.'"

So apply this to us. You and I don't see what's going on. We don't know and we don't have the big perspective God has. Like John the Baptist didn't know that God's plan was for him to come and prepare the Jews and still most of the Jews were gonna reject Jesus. This was God's electing purpose, sovereign purpose that most of the Jews would reject Jesus and a small number would be saved. John doesn't know that. He's interpreting from his data, "We should see a lot more people following. We should see a lot more people being saved and righteous." But he doesn't know. No, God has his purposes and you and I are not the ones that make the call on the strategy. We are simply called to be faithful at the point of attack where you and I have been placed. We're not there to try to second guess the General's dispositions of troops. We're not there to try to second guess his strategy. His strategy is perfect. He's accomplishing exactly what he wants to accomplish. Every moment of every day of your life, God is accomplishing what he wants to accomplish around you and through you, and sometimes, oftentimes in spite of you. So we're not to second guess his strategy.

So reexamine your perspective. I don't know what really is being accomplished here. I don't know why I'm holding this point and not making any progress. I remember reading a while back, I'm reading a biography of Winston Churchill and it was talking about the

Battle of Dunkirk. There was a movie on that a couple of years ago, not such a great movie, but it was okay. It could've been a lot better if they'd told the story better. But anyway, I'm sorry. I diverge. The point is Dunkirk was the evacuation of more than 300,000 British, French soldiers from the continent during World War II in May/June of 1940. They were extricated from certain annihilation by the Germans who had blitzed across Western Europe. One of the things that happened in that, I mean it's an amazing story, it's just incredible, but one of the things that was really pivotal was there was a force of about 20,000, I think it was about 20,000 British troops and I forget the name of the town, but they were on a little peninsula south of Dunkirk, I want to say about 20 or 30 miles, and Churchill sent word to them, "Hold to the last man. Hold to the last man. Don't surrender. It is of the highest importance that you hold to the last man." So they fought and they fought and they fought and they lost until finally they had to surrender. There was no more. "We've got no more ammunition." But do you know what they did? They didn't know what the strategy was. Their message was, "Be faithful and hang in there and fight and fight and fight," and what was happening is the bigger picture, they were occupying a significant portion of German troops that could've been used to circle all those at Dunkirk. They were a part of delivering that massive troops from Dunkirk that kept the British army intact so they could continue fighting until we came into the war. It was a tremendous strategic moment but if you were those soldiers fighting while you're surrounded on that peninsula, what would you have been thinking? "Why are we doing this? This is pointless. This is useless."

You see, you and I often feel that way in our lives and you don't know and I don't know when we are fighting, when you're fighting against sin and you're not making progress, sometimes what God is doing is he's going around behind that sin you're dealing with and he's destroying a bigger sin. You may think your problem, your number 1 problem is anger or it's lust or it's fear, but God knows your number 1 problem is self-reliance and spiritual pride, and so he may be using even your continued lack of success to bring humility and brokenness and deliverance, and God is winning a great victory but you don't even know it and I don't even know it.

So the thing is put your, put on the helmet of salvation means, remember we don't have perspective, God is doing something that goes from eternity past to eternity future. He knows what he's doing. He's got a perfect plan and my call and your call is to be faithful, to stand and hold the ground he's put us on, believing the Gospel, believing that he knows better than we do. And also the other part of salvation, so in the present you're thinking, "I don't know everything." Remember past, present, future. "Thank You that You have saved me from the penalty of sin, Lord. Thank You that You are saving me from the power of sin. Somehow even this You're doing beyond what I can see things are happening. Beyond what I can see things are happening in my brother or sister's life that I'm discouraged about. You're doing things. You may be doing something in somebody that's watching what I'm doing over here but I'm gonna be faithful and I'm gonna keep trusting." But that's the present tense. The future tense, but also putting on the helmet of salvation means that one of the reasons the Lord allowed I think what happened to John, what happened to Elijah, what happens, has happened to faithful Christians every century

of the church and you read your Old Testament carefully, you read about Abraham, you read about David, you read about Jacob, what you see is you see people who love God but who are flawed individuals and who stumble, and who fall, and who falter, and yet God is showing his glory all along the way. And one of the reasons that I think the Lord doesn't give us the kind of victory we would like because we would like to just be free, we want to be delivered completely from sin and that's good that we want that but putting this helmet of salvation means put your, see God's perspective. That freedom we're talking about isn't until heaven.

So remember in the present, adjust your expectations but don't just settle, anticipate glory. As you fight and as you're weary, as you're battle weary, let that drive you to anticipate what it will be like to see Christ's face, to be holy as he is holy. John says we don't know what we're gonna be like, we don't know what our glorified bodies are gonna be like, but we know this, that we will be like him for we will see him as he is. We'll see Jesus in glory and we will be like him, and so when you have that mindset, "Lord, I'm passing through. It's a fight. What am I expecting? Of course, it's gonna be hard. It's not supposed to be easy. I know You're doing more than I can imagine and it makes me long to be with You when I will be separated, finally saved from the presence of sin." That's what God has called us to and when you have that mindset, you are going to be a faithful and powerful soldier in the army of Christ.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, how grateful we are for the glorious salvation that You have made known in Jesus Christ. Lord, we know that salvation is of the Lord. We could not hope to contribute anything. Lord, all we bring is our sin and our sinfulness, evil unbelieving hearts, Lord, that's all we came into this world with and yet we praise You that You are a God who speaks light into darkness, and You're willing even today to speak into the darkness of hearts in this room, in this place who don't know Jesus. In the same way you spoke into the darkness of creation and said, "Let there be light," You can speak into the darkness of the unsaved heart and you can say, "Let there be light," and You can send forth the true knowledge of Christ. We ask You to do that and, Father, we ask You, Lord, to help those of us who have come to know the glorious light of Christ, to not be discouraged, to not be disheartened, to not allow the challenges that assault us to cause us to be unfaithful. But Lord, let us put on our helmet of salvation, let us take up the whole armor of God and let us stand having done everything to stand firm until Jesus comes. We pray this in His name. Amen.*