

Christian Warfare

The Helmet Of Salvation

Ephesians 6:12-17

12 . . . we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts 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. (Ephesians 6:12-17 (NASB))

The “Precept” that we will be examining today will be the “Helmet of Salvation”. In Psalm 119:27, we read,

“Make me to understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works”. (Psalm 119:27)

A truth that becomes evident as we study through these scriptures is that the “precepts” of God are intricately woven together and interrelated with the others. Each precept having an anchor of its foundation sunk deeply into a related precept, with the whole truth being founded precept upon precept.

What do I mean by this, and what does the word “precept” mean, and why is it important that each precept be in agreement with all the other related precepts? The bible dictionary defines a “precept” as being a commandment, or instruction, or order intended as an authoritative rule of action. And please note those words carefully. God’s precepts not only instruct each of us about the truths of God, they also have an impetus, an “unction” within them empowering us to move forward to do them. In Isaiah 28 we read,

9 “To whom will he teach knowledge, and to whom will he explain the message? Those who are weaned from the milk, those taken from the breast? 10 For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.” (Isa. 28:9-10 ESV)

In these words, God acknowledges that we are just at the beginning stages of our learning, much as little children who are barely weaned and much in need of a correct understanding of the concepts and the “precepts” that form the basis of His word. And from those beginnings, He exhorts us to follow His carefully designed steps toward finding that right understanding of them.

And that is so for all of the truths and doctrines of God, both great and small. God has put special precepts into place to guide our hearts and minds to know and to do His will in each of them.

And that is so with the precept that we are examining here today, that of the “salvation of our souls”. And here too, God has graciously provided precept upon precept that will lead us to salvation.

What are those precepts? The first precept that we are to understand about “salvation” is found in Romans 3.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."(Romans 3:23)

We are, in the core of our being, “sinners”, and we each have sinned. We have all done things that violate the laws and the holiness of God. There is no one who is innocent or righteous, no not one. And there in Romans 3, God gives a long and detailed picture of what sin looks like within our daily lives.

The second precept that leads to salvation is found in Romans 6:23 which teaches us about the consequences of sin.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

The punishment that we have earned and that we deserve for the sins we commit is death. And not just physical death, but eternal death! But Romans 5:8 declares,
But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Jesus Christ died for us! And by His death He paid the price for our sins. And His resurrection proved that God accepted His death as the full and complete payment to atone for our sins.

The next precept that leads to salvation is Romans 10:9. There, we read

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

Jesus' death on our behalf is all that is needed to save us. All that remains is for us to believe in Him, trusting in His death as the payment for our sins, and we will be saved!

Then Romans 10:13 confirms that precept again by saying

For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. (Romans 10:13)

Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins and rescue us from eternal death. Salvation, the forgiveness of sins, is available to anyone who will trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

The final precept that we are to understand about salvation has to do with the results of salvation. In Romans 5:1 we read,

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)

Through Jesus Christ you and I and everyone who receives Him as Savior and Lord can have a relationship of peace with God. And then Romans 8:1 goes on to teach us,

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)

Because of Jesus' death on our behalf, we will never be condemned for our sins. Our debt has been "paid in full" and completely wiped away.

And then, as further confirmation of these precepts, we have this precious promise of God from Romans 8,

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

This is the way that God teaches precept upon precept, line upon line. And this is exactly the manner of teaching that we find in these instructions regarding the "full armor of God", clearly and plainly given, item by item, precept upon precept, line upon line.

First we are told why we need the protection that is found in the "armor of God". The days we live in are evil! And we have enemies from the "spirit world" who continually reach over from their realm into ours to attack us. And on our own, we have no good defense against them. The "armor of God" is our only protection.

Then, God begins to instruct us as to how we are to "put on" His protective armor, first, the precept of "truth", then the precept of Christ's imputed righteousness, then the precept of the gospel of peace, then the precept of the shield of faith, and now today the precept of salvation; all intended to lead and guide and urge us on into God's loving plan for eternal life.

Again, why does God find need to instruct us in this manner? At the risk of sounding too critical of our childish hearts, it is because we are not only “slow of understanding”, we also seem always to need prodding, stirring and urging before we will move ahead and do the most needful of things.

And that is so with the precepts upon which this “full armor of God” is put together. Look again at each of the pieces of the armor. We began by “girding our loins with truth”, Christ Himself being truth itself. Then we “put on the breastplate of righteousness”, Christ’s own righteousness being imputed into that breastplate. Then we “shod our feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace”, Christ Himself being the power within and the solid foundation of the “gospel” of salvation. Then we took up the “shield of faith” to extinguish the flaming darts of the evil one, Christ Himself becoming our shield. And now today, we are told to put on the “helmet of salvation”, the very name “Jesus” signifying that He will bring salvation and save His people from their sins. In Matthew 1, even before Jesus was born, the angel told Joseph . . .

20 . . . "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:20-22 (NASB))

Again all of the precepts regarding Christ Himself are closely joined with other precepts and then also seen clearly to be the same as each part of the “full armor of God” illustrating the necessity for our putting on the “whole armor” and not just select pieces of it. And yes, simple logic will tell us that we will be far better protected if we are covered over completely by the person of Christ by wearing every piece of the armor. But understanding these “precepts” behind the logic brings far more wisdom to our unlearned minds.

Here today, we are told to put on the “helmet of salvation”, again a gift of imagery to prompt our minds to visualize God’s precepts and His purposes. At first reading, our minds immediately go to the simplest meaning of “putting on the helmet of salvation” that of first believing in Christ and receiving Him as our Savior and Lord. And that is certainly the absolute first requirement, as we have just learned. However, bible scholars point out that “salvation” actually has three distinct stages to it.

Yes, we are initially saved when we first receive Christ as Savior. But then, in Philippians 2 we read that our salvation is also an “ongoing” process,

12 . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.
(Philippians 2:12-13 ESV)

Salvation is clearly also an ongoing process which is still being worked out in the daily life of each believer. And that process will not be finally completed until the Last Day, which is when we will finally be with Christ in heaven. And Romans 13:11 speaks of that future aspect of our salvation. There we are told,

"And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed." (Romans 13:11)

These and other verses like them give a more complete understanding of God's plan for our salvation. As one bible scholar put it . . .

"Salvation is a process which begins when a person first becomes a Christian, then continues through the rest of his life, and which concludes on the Last Day." That definition allows a faithful Christian to embrace all three of the aspects of salvation which are given in the bible by saying, "I have been saved; I am being saved; and I will be saved."

As to this precept of "putting on the helmet of salvation", the bible commentator, John McArthur, tells us that before a person can "put on" any one part of the "armor of God" they must already have received the initial salvation of their souls. Because of that, rather than the "helmet of salvation" being an initial call to salvation, it is rather a part of the on-going process of salvation, the "working out" of our salvation with fear and trembling.

And that belief is further borne out by the understanding that this instruction to "put on the full armor of God" is a daily reminder to each of us as we live each day, working out the matters of our salvation within our families, within our workplace, within our neighborhood. Each day, as we are exposed to all the many opportunities for the "evil ones" to launch their attacks against us, we need to continually be putting on the full armor of God.

So then, in response to this understanding of the meaning of salvation, may I say to each of us? If there be anyone in this church who has not already truly surrendered their heart to Christ and received His blessed salvation, then you must be warned. You simply will not be able to put on any of this "armor of God". It is really not a possibility, because you must first have received Christ as Savior.

And also, as you will recall from an earlier message, the "putting on of this armor" is really the "putting on of Christ Himself". Listen to those words again in Romans 13!

14 . . . put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. (Romans 13:14 (ESV))

Simply put, you cannot “put on Christ” if you do not have Him as your Savior and Lord. Thankfully, most all of us in this church, have made and confirmed our professions of faith. Because of that, we will then assume that this special instruction about “putting on the helmet of salvation” as part of the “full armor of God” is to be part of the daily “working out’ of each of our own salvation.

With that being true, what then should the “putting on of the helmet of salvation” look like, as we engage ourselves daily with this world, the flesh and the devil? Since the first and most powerful work of salvation had to do with wiping away our sins and freeing us from the power and control of sin within our souls, that would seem to be a good place to start with putting on the “helmet of salvation”.

One of the difficulties that we each encounter as we step across that threshold into salvation, is that a residue of our old sin nature still lingers within most all of our habits and behaviors, pulling and drawing us back into our old ways.

And it is in those conditions that our three enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil are most effective. Before our salvation, we had become so accustomed to willingly taking part in the ways of the world, our flesh readily enjoying those ways and habits and behaviors, self-centeredness, pride, lies, deceit, drugs, alcohol, and on and on. And then, to add to that, the tempting whispers of satan ever-flowing into our ears, Again, this is why we must understand the “precepts” regarding salvation, and especially the precept regarding “working out our salvation”. By our intentionally stopping each day to remember to put on the “helmet of salvation”, we will then be better prepared to “work out” all the different matters and difficulties that we will encounter, beginning first in our homes with our family members, then as we go out from our home into our neighborhoods and then on out into our work place and to all the many other encounters of our day.

All these are the testing grounds of our faith and of our salvation, temptations abounding, drawing us back into our old habits and behaviors. But as we go back and rehearse these precepts that we have learned about our salvation and as we obediently begin to follow step by step, the protection of the armor will gradually become our help. And yes, the temptation to sin will always be present. But because of our salvation, we have been set completely free from the power and the control of sin and of the world and the flesh and the devil. And folks, our daily life will really begin to show a difference. We will begin to be able to walk freely through many of the sinful circumstances of our day and not be touched by them. And no, it is not an easy path to walk, but thanks be to God, because we are saved and have the presence of Christ living within us, we are now fully and completely able to do it.

Consider, as we close . . . you and I have been set completely free from the power and the control of sin by the precious shed blood of Christ. And when the Son, the Lord Jesus, shall set you free, you shall be free indeed. Those words from John 8 . . .

31 Jesus said . . . “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. (John 8:31, 36 (ESV))