

We've been learning about the Armour of God, and that's God's way of protecting us from all of the nasty things that Satan would want to do to us. And today's topic is "The Helmet of Salvation". And the helmet of salvation – well, it's not a motorbike helmet – it's not a pushbike helmet – it's not a skid lid... – because those things are designed to guard against accidents..., and there's nothing accidental about the Devil's attacks.

The armour of God (as we've been discovering over the last few weeks) is described in terms of military armour... Because the armour of God protects us from the purposeful and directed attacks of the Devil.

As we walk, day by day, following God, we **are** in a spiritual battle.

- All sorts of temptations;
- all sorts of burdens;
- all sorts of trials;
- All sorts of hardships;
- pain;
- suffering;
- sickness;
- disease;
- trouble;
- misery;
- worries;
- anxieties;
- tribulations...

– All sorts of attacks, are hurled at us, by the devil...

And if you think becoming a Christian suddenly makes life easy, you're wrong... This is **God's** armour that we're talking about – this is armour that **Christians** are outfitted with,

because they need it. The Devil doesn't so much need to go attacking his **own** foot-soldiers – they do **themselves** enough harm... He concentrates his fire, on **God's** children...

And we're told in the Scriptures, to stand strong against these attacks, and the only way we can do it – (we can't do it in our own strength) – The only way we **can** stand strong against the schemes of the Devil, is to take up the armour of God. – because it's **God's** battle, and it's God's armour that gives us protection....

Now, in a battle, obviously one of **the most important** parts of the body to protect, is the head. *There's a reason roo shooters shoot roos in the head – because as long as you don't miss, she's all over. And in a battle, there is a specific term to describe someone who has been foolish enough to go into battle, without a helmet. Does anyone know what it is???? It's a corpse.... The head needs protecting.*

V¹⁷ says "and take the helmet of salvation...." .. The word "take" actually means "receive"... It doesn't mean to steal away, or to lay hold of it – It means "God is offering us Salvation, but there's something we have to do – we have to receive it."

We've just had Christmas, and isn't it a lovely time (particularly when there's kids). And imagine you've gone out, and you've searched for the perfect gift for your child. You've saved up, and you've bought it, and here it is – this beautiful gift, all nicely wrapped up, and you know it's something your child will love and need and use, and

Christmas morning, you hand it to them, and you say “Merry Christmas, Mum and Dad love you very much, and we want you to have this.” ... And your kid says “No thanks.” and leaves you there holding it..... What would you think, if your child, for doing that????

God is wanting to save us. But we have to be a people, who **want** to be saved.

And so I guess the first thing we have to decide is “Is this salvation thing that we’re hearing about, something that’s even worth receiving????”

If I were to offer you a Mars bar, you have a choice whether you take it, or whether you say “No thanks. I can do without the calories”

You’ve got to decide whether it’s worth while eating that Mars bar...

But this is no Mars bar we’re talking about – We’re talking about salvation... Is salvation worth having???

- Who can save me from this mess that I’ve made of my life?
- Who can save me from my wickedness?
- Who can save me from death?
- Who can save me from sin?
- Who can save me from God’s righteous anger that He holds against me, because of all the injustices that I’ve been party to?
- Who can save me?
- Who can save you?????

Well God can, and that’s what salvation is all about?

You know, we might think of “salvation” as some grand religious term that we could never possibly understand... But it simply means “to be saved by God”. And salvation begins at the cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified.

In 1 Corinthians 1:¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Now, I know it sounds crazy – the cross sounds like a **terrible** defeat. Jesus Christ, who came to save the world, was killed... and so the cross just sounds like foolishness... That’s the way it sounds – but not to those **who are being saved**. To them, the cross is **the power of God**... How can that be??? Well, it’s because the cross was **not** a defeat – it was a victory. Yeah, Jesus was killed, sure enough. But He’s not dead any more, is He??? He conquered **sin** in His death, and He conquered **death** in His resurrection. The cross was a victory, and **to us who are being saved it is the power of God**.

God was determined to save us, and there was no **other** way to do it... If there was, don’t you think God would’ve done that??? The night before Jesus was crucified, He prayed that we could be spared from the pain... He said, ^{Luke 22:42} “...
“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me....
And we’re told:

⁴⁴ And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Can you imagine the anguish??? Jesus didn't **want** to go to the cross... But it's the only means to salvation.... And so He prayed, "**Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.**"... I'll do it...

What we all have to realise, is salvation is something we need – it's something we cannot do without, but it's out of our reach. I can't be your saviour. You can't be mine. None of us can possibly attain salvation. The Scriptures say, ^{Romans} 3:10 "There is no one righteous, not even one; ...

Salvation's completely out of our reach..... **Except for the fact that God gives it to us for free.** Jesus Christ died on the cross – to save us. That's mercy. And He gives us salvation for free. That's grace... And that, is the whole purpose of why Christ allowed Himself to be nailed to the cross...

And so there it is. Salvation is paid for, it's available, and it's on offer... All we have to do, is take it – receive it. *Just like that child just had to receive the present and open it.*

The fact that Jesus died on the cross doesn't mean that we all automatically get into heaven. We only get salvation if, when we hear the good news of Jesus, we receive it, believe in Him, and trust in Him...

^{2: 8} For by grace you have been saved through faith. (do you know what faith means? It means I believe) For by grace you have been saved through "I Believe!!!" And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Are you getting this??? There's no way – there's no grounds – that any of us can go boasting in the church... There's no way that anyone in the church can look down their nose at somebody else, “because you're not as good-a Christian as me – Look where you came from – you were so naughty....” Do you know why not????....

Because sin, the cross, and salvation, are the great leveller within the church – that's the one thing we all have in common... We were all deeply in need of a saviour, and in Christ, we receive salvation.

There is absolutely no one here today, who are here because they've been such a great person – so wonderful in fact – that God says “Oh mate, you're fantastic – I want you in my Kingdom....” Does anyone here think that they're that person??? Of course not...

The Christian church, is a community of sinners, who have undeservedly been given (and received) salvation... And so, if you're a sinner, you'll fit right on in... But if you're self-righteous, well I'm sorry, but there's no room for you in God's kingdom... Because self-righteousness is precisely the thing that prevents us from receiving salvation.

You cannot fit a helmet on a swollen head.... (think about that for a moment) If you think too much of yourself, self-righteousness, means you cannot get salvation.

And that's what we found with Jesus. Jesus was totally frustrated with the religious leaders, because they were so full of self-righteousness, and He said, ^{Matthew 21:31} “You mark my

words **the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.** Because you don't believe, and they do....

You see, those who are down and outcast and broken, are the ones who **know** they need a saviour... but those who are proud and full of self-righteousness and "I'm actually a good person"..., feel they have no need of salvation. And so, the lost are saved, and the self-righteous are lost.

So that's what Salvation is, and how we get it – and yes, it's certainly worth having – it's the only means of eternal life.

The second point I want to make, is Salvation is a process.... It is begun, but it isn't yet finished.

Back in chapter 1, Paul said: ¹³ In him you also, when you **heard** the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and **believed** in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the **guarantee** of our inheritance **until we acquire possession of it**, to the praise of his glory.

What he's saying, is salvation has begun, but we haven't yet got the fullness of it... He's saying that it's an inheritance we've been promised, but we haven't yet got it. We know we're going to get it, because the Holy Spirit, living inside of us – we've been sealed with the Holy Spirit – That's God's stamp, saying "You're mine. I have saved; I am saving; and you will be saved..."

Salvation has begun. Salvation is continuing. Salvation will be complete – but not until Jesus returns. When Jesus returns, He's going to come as judge, and there's going to be a lot of people, who are going to be very shocked. Jesus is coming to set right every wrong, to punish every evil, and to comfort the righteous. When Jesus returns, finally, Satan and his demons are going to be thrown into hell, along with all of the wicked – along with everyone who said “No thanks – I don't need your salvation.”

And as God intervenes into this world with His righteous judgment, all those who are believing in Christ, and have been longing for His return, will experience the complete salvation of God.

So, when you first believe in Jesus, and make Him Lord of your life – that's when you begin the journey of salvation, and it **is** a journey – a journey that will continue – Christ will continue to be your saviour – because let's face it – we keep letting God down – we continue to be in need a saviour, and God is faithful – Christ will continue to save us, until His final salvation at His second coming.

And so it's a process of salvation, and that brings us to our third point... “Can a Christian lose their salvation?”

What we read today, is a little snippet of a letter. It was a letter which was written to a church. And in his letter, the Apostle Paul is telling this little church in Ephesus, to take/receive salvation as a helmet. In fact, that's what He's been telling us about all of the armour of God.

6:¹³ Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

Salvation, is for those who **are** believing in Christ. It's not for those who once believed in Jesus. It's not for those who have thought about "Maybe it might be a good idea to perhaps believe in Jesus." It's not for those who's parents believe, or for those who believe they live in a Christian country, and therefore they're a Christian. And it's certainly not for the self-righteous.

One of the best known bible verses is John 3:¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

In the original Greek, the word "believe", grammatically, is a "verb, present, active". Which means, "whoever **is believing** in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

It's a tense that means we've actually got to be believing in Him. We can't just start out and then give up.

There is a man-made phrase that says "Once saved, always saved." – Don't you believe that for a minute. You read your bible, and see what God says about it. You will find, time and time again, Christians being urged to hold on to their faith – to stand firm – to endure – to not deny Christ – don't lose your salvation.

Keep your helmet on – it's just so important...

So, it's a spiritual battle. We're told to pray in the Spirit at all times. Put your armour on, and stand firm. So, what's the spiritual reality about what's going on here?

Well, I'll tell you:

In Christ, we are spiritually alive. But without a helmet, Satan's got ya – instant spiritual death.

For those who don't yet know Christ, you need to know, the starting point to victory over Satan and all of his disruptive and conniving schemes – the starting point for victory over death – is salvation...

2: ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

The starting point of new life, is salvation – believing in the Lord Jesus Christ ; receiving mercy, forgiveness, grace, salvation...

But remember this letter is written to a church – it’s written to a bunch of Christians...

Value your salvation. It is the most important thing that you possess. Don’t be proud. Don’t be self-seeking. Don’t be self-righteous. Remember and celebrate the immense worth of Salvation.

The devil wants you to devalue what Salvation is, but I’m telling you, you keep your helmet on... It keeps it real. That’s one of the key reasons we come together in this little hall for church... We’re keeping it real... Jesus is alive, and He’s given us life. He’s given us hope....

Who feels good about that? Who wants to celebrate that? Who wants to shout out “Yahoo!”

We don’t just sing songs for a social community outing. We’re praising God – the author of salvation... We’re keeping it real.

ⁱ Heiser, M.S. & Setterholm, V.M., 2013; 2013. *Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology*.