

The Great Teachings of the Bible and What They Mean for You: The Armour of God

Part of the armour of God, as described by the apostle Paul, is the "helmet of salvation." What purpose did the Roman helmet serve? And more importantly, what does it have to do with salvation? Let's find out.

Helmet of Salvation

In Ephesians 6, Paul talks about the "helmet of salvation" as part of the armour of God. What exactly does the Bible mean by salvation, and why is it portrayed as a helmet?

It's hard to deny the importance of a helmet. *The Lansing State Journal* ran an article on June 23, 2009, about a 36-year-old involved in a skateboarding accident:

"It was a death that could have been avoided, officials said. "Paul Maxim, who was not wearing a helmet, suffered a skull fracture and other head injuries in an accident June 18 at Ranney Skate Park near Frandor. He died Saturday. "A simple helmet would have saved his life,' said Lansing fire public information officer Steve Mazurek."

This story stands in stark contrast with an article that appeared in the *Manchester Evening Newson* July 4, 2008: "Savannah Haworth, 11, was knocked unconscious after falling into the path of the car. "The wheels went over her arm and top of her helmet, but she escaped with a swollen elbow and bruising to her face. "Her parents say she would have been killed without the helmet and are now urging all cyclists to wear them."It's incredible to think that the absence or presence of a helmet can make so much of a difference that a skateboarding accident can prove fatal without one while being run over by a car can be survived with one. One of the pieces of our spiritual armour is the helmet of salvation, and, as we can see from these two stories, a helmet is not a piece of equipment to be underestimated.

Taking the Helmet

When Paul wrote to the Ephesians about the helmet of salvation, some of them may have found the analogy to be a familiar one. In the book of Isaiah, a description of God shows Him as having put on both the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation (Isaiah 59:17). In referencing this Old Testament scripture, Paul drives home the point that it is in every sense of the word the armour of God—the same armour He Himself wears. But it also leads us to consider what salvation is, what it has to do with a helmet and what it means for us.

What purpose did the helmet serve in the Roman army?

The Roman helmet, like helmets today, protected the head from the attacks of the enemy. There is some evidence to suggest that the Romans had special ceremonial helmets used in parades that denoted rank and standing.

What is salvation?

Salvation basically means to be saved or delivered from something (see examples in Exodus 14:13 and Micah 7:6-8). In the New Testament, as we will see, it is generally used to refer to deliverance from the eternal death penalty of sin and deliverance into God's Kingdom.

What is the penalty of our sins, and how can we be saved from that penalty?

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 5:8-10

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more than, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

John 3:16-17

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

1 Timothy 2:3-4

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Luke 1:77

To give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins...

Every human being has thought and acted in ways that are abominable to God. Our sins break God's beautiful living laws designed for our good. Sin is so vile to God that it requires the death penalty. God's justice requires that penalty. But God's loving mercy provided the most incredible substitute. Jesus Christ, our Creator, was willing to die in our place! To be *saved*, we need a *Savior*.



How do we receive salvation?

Acts 2:38

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

It is important to understand that salvation cannot be earned. It is a gift from God and not something we can obtain through the right actions, thus obligating God to give it to us. Still, as we've seen in the scriptures covered so far, repentance (abhorring our sins and seeking God's forgiveness and help to obey His laws), faith, accepting Christ's sacrifice and coming to the knowledge of the truth are all steps in accepting the free gift. In no way do these efforts make up for our sins that caused the death of our Creator and Saviour!

Is salvation a permanent, irrevocable gift, or does it have to be maintained?

The New Testament tells us that we "have been saved" (Ephesians 2:5), that we "are being saved" (1 Corinthians 1:18) and that we "will be saved" (Matthew 10:22). What does this mean for us?

Ephesians 2:4-8

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God...

Paul makes it clear that "have been saved" equates to the forgiveness of sins and coming under God's grace. We have been taken off death row.

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.

Salvation can also describe the ongoing conversion process. Paul also calls this being "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). This involves having God's laws written in our minds and meditating on them, so we can better follow them (Hebrews 10:16; Psalm 119:97-99). As we saw in the lesson on the breastplate of righteousness, God expects us to obey His commandments.

Matthew 10:22

And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

Our ultimate salvation depends on whether or not we choose to endure to the end.

What does salvation have to do with a helmet?

1 Thessalonians 5:8-11

But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

We can receive tremendous hope and comfort by focusing on the incredible sacrifice Christ gave to save us and the amazing Kingdom that is the goal of our salvation. This hope works like a helmet to protect our minds from the discouragement and despair in this world.

John 17:15-16

I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

Christians have been called out of this world. Though we remain in it, we are not of it and remain separate from it. Our way of living and even of *thinking* should differ from the world's. We are to develop the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5), and as we have seen, that means having God's laws written on our hearts and minds, so we can remember to always obey God.

1 Peter 5:8-9

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

Our enemy hates that we have chosen this path and will stop at nothing to destroy us because of it. Just as the helmet protects the vital but vulnerable head from otherwise fatal blows, the hope of salvation can protect our thoughts from our enemy's attacks and temptations to disobey God.

Matthew 13:22

Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

Without the helmet of salvation, we will be unprotected from the "cares of this world" that bombard our thoughts and feelings. Imagine not knowing what the future ultimately holds. The worries and problems produced by living in this world would overwhelm us!

Psalms 27:1

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

With the helmet securely fastened, we can have the same confidence that Paul did that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). We understand that *it doesn't matter* what happens to us now. No matter what trials we face, we know that at the end of it all waits God's Kingdom and an eternity of His perfect reign—and what could be better than that?

How do I keep the helmet secure?

Psalm 3:8

Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing is upon Your people. Selah.

Remember that salvation comes from God, and that God is on our side. If we commit to fully follow and obey Him, it is impossible for us to lose our battle or our salvation.

Revelation 21:1-4

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also, there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

This is the salvation we are fighting for—to enter this glorious Kingdom! Never lose sight of this. This coming Kingdom, with its worldwide peace and prosperity, makes every price in this life worth paying. No matter what comes, no matter how vicious the attacks our enemy lands on us, we know that as long as we remain with God, we are moving slowly but unstoppably toward an eternal victory. What *wouldn't* we give for that?

Reflection

How well am I expressing godly love? (See 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.)

Is my outlook on life characterized by joy or pessimism?

Am I a peacemaker or a troublemaker?

Am I patient—even in stressful situations?

Do I express kindness to others through willing acts of service?

What kind of media do I allow into my life? Does the entertainment I enjoy live up to God's standards?

Do I stick with my commitments, even when they become difficult to keep?

Is my approach to settling disagreements to verbally assault the other person, or do I handle things gently and with respect?

Am I able to put what *needs* to be done before what I *want* to do?

What areas did you find yourself strongest in? In what areas are you weakest? How can you improve? Take time to research your weakest trait and design a plan for self-improvement in that area. Don't overlook prayer as the most important step!

