

“Putting On the Helmet of Salvation”

Ephesians 6:13-17

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Ephesians 6:13-17 (PowerPoint)

Preface

Has it been about three weeks? Continuing on, I would like us to keep learning about the armor of God that the Lord our God has prepared for us.

Up to now, we have learned about the belt of truth fastened around the waist, the breastplate of righteousness worn on the chest, the readiness of the gospel of peace put on the feet, and the shield of faith.

This and next week, over two weeks, I would like us to consider the next one, “putting on the helmet of salvation.”

First of all, I would like to explore what “the helmet of salvation” means in the first place.

When we say “salvation,” perhaps the first thing that comes to mind is “the assurance of salvation” that comes through believing in Jesus Christ.

“The assurance of salvation”—that is, the fact that, through the One who loved us, no battle, neither death, nor life, nor nakedness, nor danger, nor anguish, nor hardship, nor any created thing, nothing at all, can separate us from the love of God; we are overwhelming conquerors.

We are overwhelming conquerors.

However, one question arises here: “If we are overwhelming conquerors, then why do we need to put on a piece of armor like a helmet?”

Even though we are overwhelming conquerors with plenty to spare, who have no need to take a defensive posture.

Why do we need to put on a helmet—the helmet of salvation—that protects the head, which for us human beings is the most easily understood, the most immediately noticeable, and the most vital spot?

The reason is clear.

It is because there are—and we receive—the fierce attacks of the rulers of this world of darkness, the various evil spirits and demons, who try to shake our unshakable, glorious status of having been saved by the grace of God and made overwhelming conquerors, as if that status were something that could be shaken.

How do we receive it? To carry through to the end, to fight all the way through, the salvation given to us through Jesus Christ, is no easy matter—to the point where we are made to feel, and end up feeling, “Ah, let me just quit this faith thing. I’m tired now. That’s enough.”

Part One

Let us consider: “In the course of our life of faith, what is the trial we receive

most often, the fight of faith? What, right now, is the believer wrestling with? What is the trial or crisis of faith that causes the saints who believe in the one true God, who believe in the Lord Jesus, to stumble?"

What is it?

It might be pride, or doubt—a doubting heart—or it might be laziness, spiritual dissipation.

Of course, those too can certainly be called crises and battles of faith.

However, when we read the Bible, we discover that what the apostle Paul, the author of Ephesians, most frequently and consistently urges, encourages, and refers to, in all the epistles of the New Testament that he wrote to Christians who believe in Jesus Christ, is not "be careful of" some particular thing, or "possess this and that," but "be patient. Endure."

The patience spoken of here is not merely meaninglessly suppressing pain and unpleasant feelings; it is the power to positively accept and endure through—to win through—one's present circumstances and hardships for the sake of a purpose or goal; the power to endure through and win through the exhaustion and discouragement that could be called the greatest trial in living out the life of faith.

And I would like to confirm, by the words of First Thessalonians, that this very patience is "putting on the helmet of salvation."

Let us go to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5.

1 Thessalonians 5:7-8 (PowerPoint)

"Putting on the hope of salvation as a helmet"—to the words of Ephesians, "putting on the helmet of salvation," here in First Thessalonians the word "hope" is added: "the hope of salvation as a helmet."

That is, "salvation" is not something that "was done once in the past, and that's the end of it"; rather, it is "hoping for salvation," a "salvation to be hoped for," "there is a salvation, a promise, to be reached in the future," "there is an outcome of how things will finally turn out."

The "salvation" the Bible speaks of, strictly speaking, seems to be of two kinds.

Two kinds: "the salvation that has begun" and "the salvation that is reached."

"The salvation that has begun" is "the fact that we sinners, who could only have come to eternal ruin, were saved through the atonement of the cross of Jesus Christ"—that is, the salvation, the confession of faith, that the believer once experienced in the past.

When we say "salvation," it seems we generally use it with the awareness that it refers to this "salvation that has begun"; but it becomes clear that the "helmet of salvation" of Ephesians chapter 6—"to put on, to keep putting on the helmet of salvation"—is a phrase that means "the salvation that is reached."

When we finally stand before God, stand before the Lord of glory, and, while every tear is wiped away, are given the crown of righteousness that has been prepared—the armor needed to reach that salvation is "the helmet of

salvation,” and the action to be taken in order to reach it is “to put on, to keep putting on the helmet of salvation.”

That is, the armament of “putting on the helmet of salvation” is armament against exhaustion, weariness, discouragement, and depression, which can be the most fatal hindrance in the life of faith for believers; and what corresponds to the head—the most easily recognized, fatal vital spot in battle—is the discouragement and exhaustion experienced in living out one’s faith.

I myself feel I have passed through this discouragement and exhaustion many times, and am being made to pass through it even now; but what has become the strength to endure at each such time has been a kind of holy “fire-scene superhuman strength” of faith that says, “I must attain this salvation! How could I let it end without laying hold of the glory—the crown—that awaits at the end of this salvation!”—or a small, faint, quiet, yet certain power, like a tiny plant seed breaking its shell and sprouting to the surface of the soil in order to live and grow. I feel I have lived on while being enabled to exercise such power.

Without ceasing to keep putting on the helmet—the helmet of salvation that is in the Lord Jesus.

I once asked Pastor Hobo, who used to be the associate pastor of Megumi Church, “Pastor, have you never thought about quitting being a pastor?” At that time, Pastor Hobo answered me like this.

“There is such a time. But I can’t quit. Because if I quit being a pastor, it would mean betraying the people I have met up to now,” he answered.

I cannot forget these words of Pastor Hobo; and now that I think about it, I am made to think, “Without realizing it, I had grasped these words of Pastor Hobo as words of continuing to put on the helmet of salvation—which keeps exercising patience in the Lord—even when feeling exhaustion, discouragement, or depression.”

Part Two

I would like to look once more at the words of First Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 (PowerPoint)

We Christians who believe in Christ are those who know the “conclusion,” the “destination we arrive at.”

We are those who know that this world is not everything, but that there is a world to come; that our living now is not everything for us, but that there is a coming age; that what is valuable here and now is not what is truly valuable, but who know what the eternal value is.

Unlike those of the night, those of the darkness, who sleep in this world of darkness, deluding themselves as if here, this world, were everything—eating, drinking, getting drunk, and carousing—we, as those of the day, as children of light, stay awake, are self-controlled, and endure.

The word “be self-controlled” in verses 6 and 8 is rendered in the English Bible as “self-controlled.”

Recently, a phrase the youngest child in our home often says to me is, “Dad,

control! If you don't control that appetite, your blood pressure will go up and you'll die early." In faith, too, we are called to make full use of this precious free will given by God, and to control ourselves.

Of course, that being said, the Father God did not call us out and grant us to obtain salvation through the cross of Jesus Christ in order to test us, saying, "Let's just see whether you all can or cannot do it"; rather, He called us out in order to make us stand in the place of glory.

The reason we feel difficulty or experience suffering in living out our faith is not because God lacks the power to give us good things and so it is painful, nor because God's hand is too short and so it is agonizing; rather, it is the process of being led and advancing toward the place of glory that God has promised.

This, I think, is what these words of 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 are trying to say to us now.

If I take the example of the people of Israel who came out of Egypt, it may be a little easier to understand.

The Lord God brought down ten plagues on Pharaoh, king of Egypt, made him completely surrender, and rescued the people of Israel from a slave life lasting as long as 400 years.

But what was the first thing that blocked their way forward?

The sea.

The vast sea spread out before them, blocking the way forward, and the pursuing Egyptian army closing in from behind.

But here too the Lord pushed back the seawater with a strong wind and turned the sea into dry ground, and the people of Israel crossed over through a place where the water stood like a wall to the right and to the left, and were saved.

Then this time, the problem of drinking and eating arises.

There is not enough food for more than two million people to drink and eat.

As if they had completely forgotten that they had been in a painful, bitter slave status, they made an uproar with complaints and grievances, saying, "There is no meat," "There is no bread."

So then God, this time by a method that would be impossible under ordinary circumstances, split a rock and brought out water, and rained down daily from heaven a mysterious thing like a thin flatbread with the delicious taste of honey, called manna, and thus fed them.

Not by their own power, but by a method that only God can do, He fed them.

And so, in order to lead them up to the promised land of Canaan, flowing with milk and honey, He made them advance through the wilderness.

But this time, with the promised land of Canaan right before them, they refused to enter that land.

"We can't go to a place like that. We can't go to such a frightening place," they began to deny the words of God's promise.

Then at last, the Lord God, who possesses eternal generosity, said, "I will

destroy all the people of Israel except Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb.”

At that time, Moses immediately spoke to the Lord.

“Lord, when others see it, will they not say, ‘This one called God rescued them from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, well enough, but in the wilderness He did not have the power to feed such a large multitude, and let them die, making them go hungry’? Lord, for the sake of Your glory and in Your name, such a thing must never be,” he appealed to the Lord.

Then God immediately forgives them.

This is not that Moses skillfully persuaded God with words; rather, through Moses’ mouth, it was proclaimed what kind of One the Lord God is—One who is slow to anger and rich in grace, who forgives iniquity and transgression, and who, no matter what happens, will surely do what He has determined to do.

Rather, He is One who, while using the difficult place of the wilderness, remakes the people of the Lord into a people befitting the Lord, and in the end leads them up to the land flowing with milk and honey.

And yet, the people of Israel could not fix their eyes on this “salvation that is to reach” of the Lord God, and said, “Rather than living in this empty wilderness, that Egypt where we were in slave status is better. It was far better when we could eat meat and bread to our heart’s content”—they would not look at, and did not see, the promised land of Canaan they were to reach.

The present tribulation, difficulty, hardship, and anguish became everything, and they forgot the “salvation to reach,” and gave up on the deep plan and will of the Father God—that it is training to become fittingly attired so as to partake of the “salvation that is reached.”

That is, they did not “put on the helmet of salvation, keep putting on the helmet that is the hope of salvation.”

They did not know, and did not try to know, that the present journey through the wilderness was a necessary process to accomplish the beautiful thing that would be done afterward.

Part Three

Let us go to 2 Corinthians chapter 4.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (PowerPoint)

The frightening point of the New Testament seems to lie precisely here.

It is where what was accomplished over the long time and labor of the Old Testament is expressed like this, in just a single word.

Every believer has hardship.

The preceding passage of Scripture says this.

2 Corinthians 4:8-10a (PowerPoint)

Because those who believe in the Lord Jesus always carry the death of the Lord Jesus in their bodies, they are afflicted from all directions, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down; but they are not crushed, not driven to a dead end, not forsaken, and not destroyed.

That is, “nothing can obstruct the road of glory heading toward the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

Of course, it is a fact that it is hard.

And when it is hard, what kind of thoughts do we begin to have? We come to think, “That’s enough. It’s plenty now. I’ve quit.”

The most fearsome enemy in living out one’s faith is the thought, “While living in this world, I want to put on hold for a while living as a saint of Christ”—this, I think, is the greatest battle of faith.

And this very thing, they say, is the same as having one’s head pierced, having one’s head shot, on the battlefield.

It could become a fatal wound.

When the head is struck without a helmet on, that becomes fatal.

The thing that saints who believe in Jesus Christ must be careful of in the course of conducting the life of faith—the one place that must not be wounded—is this: to let slip and give up on what we are heading toward, where we are looking, and for what purpose we are now advancing on this road, and thereby to render empty the life of faith that we could, as a matter of course, conduct vigorously—that is the same as having a sword thrust into the head, being in critical condition, in a state of unconsciousness.

There are words that Jesus repeatedly speaks in the Gospels.

They are the words, “He who has ears, let him hear. He who has eyes, let him see.”

That is, it must have been a state in which, even though people had ears they could not hear the voice of God, even though they looked with their eyes they could not see God, even though they touched with their hands they could not feel God.

And we ourselves, too, are made to think about how many times we have met, and are meeting, this trial.

Without hearing, seeing, or feeling “toward what destination we are advancing, and being led on this journey,” we cannot help but feel that only living here, in this world now, is the problem.

People who do not believe in God appear to be living a far better life; those who succeed within a worldview that denies God seem to have laid hold of far greater success; gold appears to shine far more than Jesus Christ; and the hand of God, working upon my way of living now to bring me to salvation, is not seen, not heard, not felt.

Or, though the Bible calls the one who says and thinks “there is no God” a “wicked person,” such people seem far more intellectual, far more rational, even learned, and while receiving even praise from people and being delighted in, their way always prospers and cannot help but appear to shine.

Psalms 73 confesses about the believer himself, who is in such a spiritual

state, like this.

Psalm 73:21-22 (PowerPoint)

“Full of the bitterness that seeps out from sin, feeling as if the suffering before one’s eyes were everything, and unable to find the hand of God—the figure at such a time is exactly like an unhearing, unseeing, unfeeling, foolish and thoughtless beast,” the believer himself confesses.

But it does not end here.

The believer who sang this Psalm 73 confesses that even in the midst of such a state, “I kept putting on the helmet of salvation.”

Psalm 73:23-28 (PowerPoint)

“Even in the midst of being like an unhearing, unseeing, unfeeling, foolish and ignorant beast, still I was continually with You, O God. I never gave up on the attainment of Your salvation, never resigned myself, never thought of quitting; I strove to comprehend Your instruction as You held my right hand, and I hoped for the glory that lies ahead. My happiness is not in possessing much of something, nor in expecting something from someone; being right beside You is my happiness. You Yourself are my very treasure”—the singer of this Psalm 73 kept putting on the helmet of salvation.

Conclusion

We must keep putting on the helmet of salvation.

Because there is a “salvation that is to reach.”

Just as the apostle Paul says in Philippians, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

Right now, we are indeed vessels in the making, in the hand of the Lord Jesus, who is the potter.

We are vessels in the making, destined to be remade into splendid vessels.

Therefore, as was also spoken in Pastor Sai’s message last week, without becoming discouraged, without giving up, expecting to reap when the time comes, let us do good in the Lord, sowing not to the flesh but to the Spirit.

Finally, I would like to close by reading the words of Romans.

Romans 13:11-14 (PowerPoint)

There is no doubt that the content of these words is our helmet of salvation.

I wish for us to be those who keep putting on this helmet of salvation.

Let us pray.

Benediction: 1 Thessalonians 5:8