10-13-19

Ephesians 6:14-17 (5)

It is with cause for great rejoicing and thanksgiving that we are admitted into the Kingdom of God through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Without this one assured hope, our lives are futile. Without the truth of eternity with Christ, our lives are pointless and without meaning. But our lives do have meaning; the work we do for God is used by Him to bring His plan to pass. That should bring a sense of awe to our hearts; that the almighty God of the universe, who spoke all creation into being, would use us. That we would have the privilege of being His servants.

God will use all people for His own purposes; both believers and non-believers. The difference is that the believers want to be used by God and it will be to their ultimate benefit. The non-believers will glorify God, but their unbelief will lead to their eternal destruction. The difference is salvation.

Being a citizen of the Kingdom of God sounds very good, and it certainly is; there is no question that being anywhere else leads to death. The thing is that any kingdom throughout history has come under attack. When we say a kingdom comes under attack, that ultimately means the citizens of the kingdom. The Kingdom of God is no exception; we who are citizens come under attack simply because we are citizens. This can be disheartening, because we are promised so much good by being followers of Jesus.

But the Bible lets us know up front that we will undergo trial and tribulation as Christ’s followers. Satan and his hoards will attack us, the world will be against us, even our own carnal desires will cause us problems. We desperately need protection from the enemy. Now the Lord doesn’t simply take us out of harm’s way; He has work for us to do. But like a good king, He provides us with the proper armor to sustain us in battle. He provides what we need in this spiritual war. As we look about with fleshly eyes, it appears the battle is going very badly; that is when we take up the helmet of salvation.

The Roman helmet was made of strong metal and was taken up and warn in battle. Its primary function was to protect the head. Any blow to an unprotected head usually meant the end of that soldier. A head injury would often be fatal or at least incapacitating. The soldier would no longer be useful in the king’s army.

From this, we can think about the spiritual helmet protecting the mind. Our minds are where all the thinking is done; it is where we decide what we are going to do in any given situation. When we look around us at the way things are going in the world, in the church, and even in our own lives; it would be easy to decide that the battle is not worth it. It appears we are losing. It would be easy to simply try to step out of the fight, or even to give up and turn to the ways of the world. Our protection here is the helmet of salvation. Our salvation is what we turn to in order to stay in the fight and to not turn away from our Saviour.

Again, what binds our spiritual helmet to us is that spiritual belt of truth. The Bible tells us about salvation and what it does for us. Because of what the Bible tells us, we know that salvation is true and that believing in Jesus Christ is not in vain. This is what we cling to when tribulations make us want to quit the fight or wonder if it’s all worth it. Salvation is worth anything we endure and many times more. The fight to faithfully follow Jesus is worth anything it costs us; even if it costs us everything.

Let’s look a little bit at salvation. Salvation, or being saved, is given to us in its most basic and beautiful form in John 3:16.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Believing in Jesus, God’s only begotten Son, is the essence of salvation. It is that simple. There is no work we can perform to accomplish salvation; it is a gift from God. Now that belief runs deep; it is not a simple acknowledgement that Jesus existed. It is believing on Him for salvation, trusting in His work on the cross. We believe by faith, faith that is provided by the Holy Spirit. By this, we are saved. Saved from what? We are saved from the wrath of God. Jesus’ work saves us from the wrath of God because He took it on our behalf. This gives us right standing before God so that we can be with Him forever. Therefore, we “shall not perish, but have eternal life”.

Salvation is described in the Bible in several places and in different ways. It can sometimes be confusing to read these different descriptions until we understand that there are three different phases of salvation: past, present, and future. True salvation occurs at exactly the moment we accept that priceless gift that Jesus offers. In Acts 17, we read about the jailer who held Paul and Silas asking a very important question, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And in verse 31 we read the answer; They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

From this we see that salvation comes at the moment of true belief in faith on Jesus Christ. At that moment, our destination to eternity with Christ is secured. But there is more to salvation. We have some changing to do. Also, we still live in this world and we are still subject to sin. We have accepted Christ, that is past; what about now, in the present?

Philippians 2:12

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

If we have salvation, why do we need to continue to work it out? Remember that we are saved by becoming acceptable to God. This is done through Jesus Christ who paid the penalty for our sins, by which we are justified; and then by imputing His righteousness to us. God will only look with favor upon righteousness; when He looks at us, He sees the righteousness of Christ, so, we can stand before Him. But we ourselves are still sinners. Our goal is to really become like Jesus. This is where part of our sanctification comes in; the Holy Spirit works in our lives to make us more and more like Christ.

We have talked about this sanctification before; while it is the work of the Holy Spirit, it requires cooperation on our part. This isn’t easy; it takes deep changes on our part in the ways we act and think; we come to have a whole different view of life and what is important. This is how we work out our salvation. We cooperate with the process of sanctification. We work to become more like Jesus in our lives. This work doesn’t save us, but it is a part of our complete and ultimate salvation.

There is another part of salvation that we don’t have yet. It is the perfection that will come with Christ. In Romans 13, Paul talks about the importance of loving one’s neighbor as oneself, because the return of Jesus is imminent.

 *Do* this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.

We are saved when we accept Christ, but we are not yet perfect and complete salvation requires perfection. The Bible lets us know that this will take place immediately upon meeting Jesus. Either when we die and come to Him or when He returns and takes His people to Himself, we will be changed into His likeness.

1 John 3:2

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

What a magnificent thing to look forward to! We will become perfect just as our Saviour is. This will be the fulfilment of salvation. And this is how we will spend eternity.

So, how does this salvation protect our minds? How can it shield us when satan points out how bad things are going and how little impact our Christian lives or the Christian church is having on the world? There is an example of this type of attack on a person in the Old Testament. We can read about it in Psalm 73. Psalm 73 and several other Psalms were written by a man named Asaph. Asaph was a Levite who was a leader of some of the temple choir during the kingship of David. He was a holy man; evidenced by some of his writing being in the Bible, which means that it is divinely inspired. In Psalm 73, he recounts his struggle, wondering if being a follower of God was worth it.

He makes a confession in verses 2-3:

But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling,
My steps had almost slipped.
For I was envious of the arrogant
*As* I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Next, Asaph explains what he saw that almost caused him to slip:

For there are no pains in their death,
And their body is fat.
They are not in trouble *as other* men,
Nor are they plagued like mankind.
Therefore pride is their necklace;
The garment of violence covers them.
Their eye bulges from fatness;
The imaginations of *their* heart run riot.
They mock and wickedly speak of oppression;
They speak from on high.
They have set their mouth against the heavens,
And their tongue parades through the earth.

Therefore his people return to this place,
And waters of abundance are drunk by them.
They say, “How does God know?
And is there knowledge with the Most High?”
Behold, these are the wicked;
And always at ease, they have increased *in* wealth.

How often have we observed something similar? Why does God not send lightning bolts? How are these blasphemous people getting by with these things? How are these churches that have strayed so far from the Bible drawing such large crowds? If we let these thoughts go long enough, we will eventually begin to wonder why we are going to the trouble that we are as Christians. This is what Asaph did.

Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure
And washed my hands in innocence;
For I have been stricken all day long
And chastened every morning.

If I had said, “I will speak thus,”
Behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children.
When I pondered to understand this,
It was troublesome in my sight

But then, Asaph realizes his salvation as opposed to those he had become envious of.

Until I came into the sanctuary of God;
*Then* I perceived their end.
Surely You set them in slippery places;
You cast them down to destruction.
How they are destroyed in a moment!
They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!
Like a dream when one awakes,
O Lord, when aroused, You will despise their form.

We are faced with the world daily. The evil seems to constantly become bolder and worse. There are no consequences to the deeply spiritual evil that abounds. It is easy for us to become tired as we battle to remain true to Christ. We don’t need to come to the fight, it seeks us out. These things wear on our mind and make us question whether or not we should keep clinging to Jesus.

This is where we protect our minds with the spiritual helmet of salvation; and we can use all three of its phases in our Christian life. We know that we are saved. No amount of trouble, no amount of demonic harassment, nothing in all of creation can take us from our Father’s hand. Salvation is given to us by Christ and we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. We have found and taken that narrow gate that few find; those who cause us grief are on that broad road that leads to destruction. The Bible tells us that many take that broad way, that is why it seems that so many are against us.

Our continuing salvation that is being worked out by the Holy Spirit shields our minds because we know that the problems we face are good for us. God’s word tells us to count it joy when we face trials and it also promises that God will not permit more than we can handle. These thoughts give us strength to continue, knowing that we bring God glory and that we will ultimately benefit from these difficulties.

Finally, there is that future salvation that is complete; that time when we will be like our Saviour Jesus. This is the strongest part of the helmet. Paul speaks of it in 1 Thessalonians 5:8, “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.” Notice how he refers to the helmet this time, it is “the hope of salvation”. This is what we are looking for, the sure hope of Christ’s return and our own glorification in Jesus. Paul gives us perspective regarding our troubles and the world’s crises in 2 Corinthians 4:17, “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison”.

I have no intention of downplaying anything that anyone is going through. Things in life are hard. But that is why we need the helmet of salvation. It protects our mind. It helps us to realize that anything we deal with during this lifetime will seem as nothing in the life to come. As encouragement along those lines I leave you with a description of Jesus’ attitude described in part of Hebrews 12:2.

Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross.

Prayer

Almighty God, we praise You and thank You for the salvation that You have provided us through Jesus Christ Your Son. Lord Jesus, we are eternally grateful for what You have done for us out of obedience to the Father and out of love for us. That salvation saves us from the wrath we deserve and perfects us for eternal life with You.

Thank You for these good promises You have for us. They are strong and we can use them for defense against spiritual attack. May Your Holy Spirit ever remind us of salvation, so that we do not become dejected by the evil in the world.

We understand that satan is currently the prince of this world; but we know that he is a defeated enemy and that You are in control. Your Kingdom will come and reign while his will be destroyed eternally. We praise You; come Lord Jesus!

It is in His glorious name we pray

Amen