

**The Believer's Armor, Part 5: The Helmet of Salvation, Part 1**

Ephesians 6:17

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Again this morning we have the wonderful privilege of coming to our study of Ephesians chapter 6. As you know if you've been at Grace Church for any length of time, we are committed to an expositional type of ministry, unfolding the truths of the Word of God verse by verse. And every once in a while we come to certain passages that are so weighty, have so much implicit truth, that really we wind up with kind of a theological study, and we become a little more topical in some sense because we dive a little more deeply into one thought or another.

And that has been the case in studying Ephesians 6; although we have treated it, in a sense, as exposition, flowing through the text, we have been unable to go along very rapidly insofar as moving through the text, and have just up to this point, discussed one piece of armor each week. And believe it or not, this morning we're going to take one more, only we won't even finish that; we'll have to save the remainder for next time.

But we've been having a tremendous time discussing this whole Book of Ephesians, and most recently the armor of the Christian. And I want for our setting this morning to read to you verses 13 through 17, Ephesians 6:13 through 17. "Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girded about with truthfulness, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the readiness of the gospel of peace; on top of all that, taking the shield of faith, with which ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Now, in that tremendous passage, we have Paul presenting to us the resources for gaining the victory in the Christian life, at least as far as the battle with Satan and his demons is concerned. Now, we've been studying this for many weeks, and I want just briefly to introduce it, because we've introduced it so many times, and then go right on. But I was thinking this week how it may seem strange to some of you who have been studying this with us, that in an epistle like Ephesians, which gives to us the greatest unfolding of the believer's privileges, we would also have this tremendous issue of Christian conflict.

In an epistle where, frankly, for 5 chapters we are dealing in the grandiose glories of the heavenlies, we all of a sudden wind up dealing with hell in chapter 6. In chapter 3 we sort of gloried in the testimony to the angels, and in chapter 6 we run right into the demons. In chapter 1 we were seeing the tremendous majesty and power of God as He unfolded His eternal plan, and in chapter 6 we face the ugliness of the monstrosity of Satan. And so it is a book of ultimate contrasts; it begins in the heavenlies and it ends in dealing with hell. It begins with the angels, and ends with the demons; it begins with God, and climaxes in antagonistic results that are brought to bear upon God's work by Satan. It begins with high and holy inestimable privilege, and ends with a conflict against sin that

seeks to take away the privileges.

So it's a book of contrast, ultimate contrast. And I guess we could say again, the greater the privilege the greater the conflict. The greater the reality of our belonging to the Kingdom of God, the more obvious is going to be Satan's attack as he tries to dethrone Christ. Spiritual privileges always lead to conflict with the enemy, and we've seen that. And so after having said all that Paul has said about the believer's position and practice, after extolling all of the blessedness of being blessed with all spiritual blessings, after giving to us all the resources and all of the functions of a believer through the end of chapter 5 and on into chapter 6, he now says, "Get ready for a conflict, because it will not be easy. You will be withstood, you will be sidetracked, you will be attacked, you will be thwarted at every possible angle where Satan can succeed."

Now, remember this also, that the Bible discusses the Christian life's conflict in three dimensions. In Galatians chapter 5, for example, there is a conflict seen in the life of a believer between the flesh and the spirit. In John chapter 15, there is a conflict seen in the life of a believer between the Christian and the world. And really, Paul is not zeroing in either here on the world or the flesh, but he is zeroing here on the conflict between the believer and the demon hosts themselves.

Now, you can't really extricate them from the other two, because they will work through the world and the flesh; but he gets to the core of the matter here. How does a believer live this life in victory with the tremendous amount of opposition that he's going to get from what verse 11 calls the wiles of the devil, and what verse 12 calls principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and wicked spirits in high places? How can we really gain the victory in this very sophisticated warfare? Well, if you go back a little bit let me just give you some basics.

Back in chapter 3 verse 20, we have a great truth. This is the summation of the first three chapters. Because of all that Christ has done for us, because of all that is really involved in being in Christ, "Now unto him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." This is the sum of the believer's position; we have the power, we have the resource needed. "Therefore," chapter 4 verse 1, because the power is there to glorify God, because the power is there, "we are to walk worthy."

In other words, we have the resource, and we're to walk worthy. The key to that, chapter 5 verse 18; how do you tap the power to walk worthy? "Be not drunk with wine, in which is *asōtia*, but be filled with the Spirit." We have the resource, which makes us responsible to walk in the right way; we tap the resource through the filling of the Spirit. "You shall receive power after the Spirit is come upon you," said our Lord, and when we tap that power, we will be victorious.

Now, when you come to chapter 6, there's really nothing to fear, you see? The power is there, therefore the command is there, and the resource to tap that power in the Spirit of God resident in the life of every Christian. And so we can go into the army and right into the war with a sense of accomplishment and victory at hand. But that doesn't mean the battle is going to be easy, does it? I mean we all struggle, the battle goes on and on and it's just relentless; some of us are winning and some of us are losing, and maybe some of you are sort of in the lull right now and you're not winning or losing. But that's the way it'll be as long as you live in this world, the battle will go on and on and on. And I think as you grow in Christ, as you feed on the Word, and as you mature, what happens is you begin to win more than you lose, and then the percentage of winning gets higher and higher. But everybody experiences the victories, and everybody experiences the defeats in the battle.

I received a letter this week from a radio listener to our program in Boston, and so I received a letter this week from a man in Boston and I'm sure when he wrote it he didn't know it was going to be a perfect illustration for my sermon, but it is. This is what he said, "Dear John MacArthur, your ministry has been of significance to me, and I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you personally as well as express my desire to lend you financial support. May God continue to bless and multiply your spiritual growth and outreach everywhere, including here in the Boston area where we listen on W.E.Z.E. I'm a young man of 23 years and came to Jesus Christ at the age of 19. In that time I have grown in the Word, staggered, fallen down, been crushed, been convinced by a neurotic legalist that I was demon-possessed, been arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol, gotten a woman friend pregnant, and finally begun to regain my spiritual senses." I'd say just off-hand he's been in the battle.

"Everything as you can see has just been fine." Then he goes on to the next paragraph; I like this part. "Please send me some ammunition. The battle lines are drawn, the trenches are being dug, and I'm not going to be one of those caught shame-faced when our commanding officer returns. When the record is being reviewed, I want it written that the soldier in question, namely me, after repeatedly disobeying orders and going A.W.O.L. during wartime alert, finally donned his armor, reported back to his commanding officer, fought courageously and fearlessly without batting an eye, hit the enemy with everything he could get his hands on, and inflicted heavy damage in strategic areas, to the credit of his patient, forgiving commanding officer, Amen." I like that. And then he says at the end, "Remember me in your prayers please; sincerely, (parenthesis with the sin covered) C.T."

Hey, he's been in the battle, hasn't he? He's been in the battle. So have you, and so have I. And being victorious in the battle is a matter of putting on the armor, isn't it? Let's go back to the armor in verse 14 and following, and see what the Spirit of God would say to us today. And as I say, we started out to do an expository study. I remember about eight years ago when I taught Ephesians we did the armor in two weeks, and now it's taking us about eight to ten. But we went back in the last few weeks and looked over these tremendous pieces of armor, and found ourselves opening up such a treasury of truth that we stuck with one at a time, and we'll do that even for the fifth one today and next week.

But remember first of all in verse 14, "Stand, therefore, having your loins girded about with truthfulness." And we discussed that what the apostle Paul is talking about here is not so much content – that comes in the last piece of armor, the Word of God. It's not so much the content as it is the attitude, and he's using *alētheia* in the sense of an attitude of truthfulness, or commitment, or no hypocrisy. In other words, you're girding up your loins, the old Jewish expression meaning readiness, anticipation. A soldier is ready for the battle, he's made his commitment, he's joined the army, he's girded his loins, and he's going to be a winner. And we saw how important it is if we're going to win the victory to make the commitment to victory from the very beginning.

Secondly, we saw in verse 14 the breastplate of righteousness, and we said that another thing that must arm the Christian is his own purity of life, righteousness, holiness, practical righteousness. We all have received imputed righteousness from Christ; that's the basis of our own righteousness. But we must maintain a pure life, or Satan will get us in the vital areas. We protect our vital areas by righteousness, lest Satan should get an advantage of us. And then thirdly, we saw that we are to have our feet shod with the readiness, or the preparation, of the Gospel of peace. And the idea here is that the Gospel of peace is the good news that we're at peace with God. We were enemies, we

fought against God, we were on the other side, but the Gospel is peace with God. Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God, and the shoes that allow us to stand firm against Satan are simply made of the fact that God is on our side. We can resist anything with His resource available, and so we stand with our feet shod, made ready by the fact that God's on our side.

This seems to be the long range kind of armor. In other words this is what you keep on all the time, and then when the battle gets really hot, you pick up the rest and the verb changes in verse 16 to "taking," and verse 17 "take" the helmet. And a soldier would have his breastplate secured on, he would have his shoes secured on, he would have his belt secured on, and when the battle got hot, he would grab his helmet, pull it on, take his sword, and take up his shield. And so it's as if these add that kind of immediate preparation for when the arrows really begin to fly. And so we moved into verse 16 last time, and discussed, on top of everything else, we take "the shield of faith, with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." We talked about how Satan wants to shoot his arrows of temptation, and the only way we can quench those is with faith.

In other words, whenever you sin, you have believed the devil's lie, right? You've bought his bill; you've let him sucker you. But as long as you believe God's Word, you will not believe Satan. And so the shield is faith. As long as I believe God, God says, "don't do this and you'll be blessed," God says, "Do what I tell you and you'll be blessed, do what I tell you and you'll be happy, do what I tell you and everything will be well with you, do what I tell you and it'll be fulfillment." Satan comes along and says, "Do this and you'll like it. God won't care, He won't chasten you. Aw, go ahead and do it; it's fun." Who do you believe? You believe Satan, you sin. You believe God, you don't. It's that simple, the shield of faith.

Now, for this morning we want to go on to the fifth piece of armor – tremendous, tremendous truth in verse 17: "And take the helmet of salvation." That's all it says about it, and yet I can't even finish talking about it this morning; I'm going to have to keep it off till next week too. You say, "What is there in that? The helmet of salvation, that's easy, being saved." No, not that.

Let's talk about a helmet. A Roman soldier wouldn't go to battle without a helmet; I mean he'd be foolish. A Roman soldier would be very careful to get his helmet on. Now, helmets were made out of basically two things: leather with some patches of metal on it, pieces of metal, or else those molded solid cast helmets you've seen with the plumes, depending on what regiment, what function, what period of time you were involved in. But a helmet was very important to protect the head – from what? Well, from perhaps arrows flying around, for one thing, but primarily from what was known as a broadsword. There was not only the *machaira*, the little dagger that he uses in verse 17, but there was in the midst of a battle those who carried the broadsword, which was from three to four feet long, longer than your yard stick, and it had a huge, massive handle that you held with both hands like a baseball bat.

And you just lifted it over your head and went around trying to create split personalities, basically. That was the idea. You would be riding along on a horse and you'd be flailing away at some footmen down there, and so forth. The broadsword was a tremendous weapon, and you wanted to have a helmet to deflect a blow from a broadsword, believe me, because it would deal a heavy, crushing, splitting blow to the skull. It was interesting recently that I was reading in the newspaper that they have discovered a skeleton somewhere in a dig that had a cleavage right through the skull that they assume had been made by somebody who flattened a broadsword right into its skull. So the helmet was very necessary.

Now, the helmet here is the helmet of salvation. Now, let me say that does not refer to being saved. He's not saying now that you're in the army, and now that you're fighting Satan, and now that you've got the breastplate of righteousness on, and now that you've got your shoes shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, and now that you have the shield of faith, get saved. No, no. That's already happened. I mean you aren't even in the army unless you're a believer, right? If you're fighting Satan at all, you've got to be on God's side; if you're not with Him you're against Him, so if you're in the battle against Satan, you're already saved. He's not talking about that.

The helmet of salvation is not getting saved. He's not saying, "By the way fifth, get saved." Oh no, you got saved in chapter 2, right? "For by grace are you saved through faith; that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God not of works, lest any man should boast." You've already been saved; this is not getting saved. You wouldn't even be in the army if you weren't a believer. Satan wouldn't be attacking you if you weren't a believer, right? He'd leave you alone; he's already got you. You'd be fighting God. So if you're in the army and the war is going on, you are already a believer; that has already taken place. The helmet of salvation is not saying you need to be saved. You say, "Well, what is it saying then?" I'm going to give you a little theology now, so just get comfortable, take your pencil or pen and take a few notes, and let's see what we can see about this.

First of all, now, you have to understand this or you're not going to understand a lot of things. People are confused about eternal security, and they ask me all the time, "Do you believe once saved, always saved? What about my Aunt Martha, she went along so long and then *whizz*, she was gone, and is she or isn't she," and all of this. And people are concerned about it, and even in their own lives they commit some sins, they feel guilty, "Well, I don't know if I'm saved anymore." And the other thing is young people; you ask them, "Have you ever given your life to Christ?" And they'll say, "Yeah, 24 times, repeatedly over and over again, and just to be sure, I did it again today," and that kind of thing. How do we really get a grasp on the security of the believer? Well, first of all by understanding the meaning of salvation. And for this morning and next time, I want you to clearly understand this.

Now, let me begin by saying what's a very simple beginning. There are three aspects to salvation; three aspects, past, present and future, and these have been simply defined in this way: the past aspect frees us from the penalty of sin – the past aspect frees us from the penalty of sin. In other words, if you say to me, "Are you a Christian, have you been saved?" I would say, "Yes." When did it happen? Well, so many years ago, and at that point when I confessed Jesus Christ, invited Him into my life, then my sins were placed on Him on the cross, as it were, and He paid the penalty for my sin – that's in the past. The penalty is paid. I died. "I was crucified with Christ nevertheless I live" – right? I died.

Paul in Romans 6 is saying that in essence; he is saying you died once – you don't need to die again. When did you die? You died when you put your faith in Christ, you were crucified with Him, the penalty was paid, sin was dealt with, there's never any more penalty to pay. Romans 8:1 says, "There is, therefore, now no" – what – "condemnation to them who are in Christ." That's taken care of. So the past aspect of salvation is freedom from the penalty of sin. There's a present aspect: freedom from the power of sin, sin no longer has what – dominion over you. Sin no longer has dominion over you. As one book title puts it, *It Ain't Going To Reign No More*. Sin has no reigning power; sin has no dominance – why? Because "He is faithful and just to keep on cleansing us from all sin."

Do you know you can never even get one sin laid against your account? Romans 8 says, "Who is he that lays anything to the charge of God's elect?" Nobody; no condemnation; He's forgiven you all your trespasses for His name's sake. He keeps on purifying, keeps on purging. It's like Jesus said to Peter, you have a bath one time and then the rest of your life you just wash your feet. The Lord bathes you, as it were, at salvation, and dusts your feet off with His cleansing day by day by day. So there's a present aspect. I have been saved, I am being saved. If I have been saved, Romans 5 rather, it says, "I was saved by His death; I am being saved by His life."

In other words, He ever, ever lives to make what –intercession for me; and so there's this constant salvation going on. I have been saved from the penalty. I am being saved from sin's power. Romans 5:10 and 11: "If we were enemies, and were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, how much more shall we be saved now by his life." We are being saved now continually as He constantly cleanses us. And so there is that element.

Then there's a future part. In the past we've been saved from the penalty of sin, in the present from the power of sin, in the future the presence of sin. Do you know there's coming a day when there'll be no more sin? That's right. You know how I know? Because the Book of Revelation says there'll be no more death, and the wages of sin is what? Death – no death, no sin. And we'll be like Him. First John 3 says, "We'll be like him; for we shall see him as he is." And He is sinless, spotless, and without flaw, and without blemish. There's coming a day when we'll be saved from the presence of sin.

Now listen, people, salvation has happened, is happening, and will happen. Has, that's justification, is, that's sanctification, will, that's glorification. And Romans 8 says, "Whom He justifies He sanctifies and glorifies." Do you see? So when you think of salvation, you do not think of salvation in terms of something in the past, and you do not think of salvation like some cults think of it, or even some in the Roman Church, as something that has to be waited for in the future. It is past, present, and future. Now, if it is past, it is done. If it is also present, then you can't lose it, right, because it's continually going on. And if it is guaranteed in the future, then you're absolutely secure.

Now, that is the heart and the soul of the meaning of salvation: the past aspect, the present, and the future. Let me illustrate this by having you look at Romans 8:23, and I'm going to show you several Scriptures that I think will really help you to understand it. In Romans 8:23 we read this – well, let's back up to verse 22. Now Paul is talking here about the curse, he's talking about how sin has affected creation and made it subject to vanity, but that still there's hope for something different. You know the world is going to get better, did you know that? It is going to get better; in fact, the world's going to get perfect. It's going to get perfect but that's only when Jesus comes. It isn't going to get perfect by man's efforts. And so hope is a very important part of Christian experience. In verse 22 he says, "We know the whole creation groans and travails in pain together till now."

In other words, the whole world knows it's out of whack. The whole world knows that something is desperately wrong. Even the created order is chaotic. "And not only they" – verse 23 – "but ourselves also." We know things aren't right, we know this isn't the way God intended it, we know this isn't the way God made life to be. "We who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body."

Listen, our souls have been saved, and are being saved, and someday our bodies, together with those souls, will be saved, so that there will be absolute holiness. And that's what verse 24 means.

“We are saved in hope.” “In” is a better translation than “by.” “We are saved in hope.” So yes, we’ve been saved, but this isn’t all there is. Listen, you know if somebody said to me, “Oh, the salvation you’ve received, that’s it forever. You’ve got it now, and there’s nothing more to be added to it.” I’d say, “You mean I’ve got to fight the flesh the rest of my life and throughout eternity? You mean I’ve got to fight the devil like this, and I’ve got to live with the human weakness? You mean I’m going to stay in Romans 7, to some degree crying out, ‘Oh, oh wretched man that is in me. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ When do I unload this mess? You mean forever, this is it?” Then I would say to you, “Salvation is incomplete.” If all the Lord does is aid me in the struggle then it never reaches fruition. But that isn’t all there is; there is a future element of salvation that means that we will reach a point where there will be no sin at all. And without that, there’s no hope for now.

I mean it would be like running a race without a finish line – somebody saying, “Start running, and run the rest of your life.” “What? Where? There’s no finish.” “That’s right. And give everything you’ve got all the way.” Are you kidding? Can you imagine God saying, “That’s all there is, so fight forever.” Oh, come on. Why, even Revelation says that when they died they rested from their labors, right? I pace myself as it is now. If I had to pace myself for eternity, I’d be doing nothing most of the time. But there is a future element. Look at Galatians 5, Galatians 5: “For we through the Spirit” – again, we must be talking about believers, because it is the Spirit of God that creates the enablement – “we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.”

Now, he’s not talking about past element of salvation or the present feature, but he is talking about the fullness of it. We are waiting in hope, we are holding onto hope that someday the battle will be over, and someday we won’t have to struggle with sin, and the flesh, and the devil, and the world, and demons. Someday we’ll know the hope of a full righteousness. Look at 1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 3 and here is a great benediction. Peter says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” In other words, he says, “We have been saved to a hope” – saved to a hope, to hope for something. And what is it – “to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” Our hope is heaven. “We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” What salvation – a salvation “ready to be revealed in the last time.”

There is another element of salvation, a last time element that is the consummation of living hope, when we go to heaven and receive the reward and the inheritance that He has planned for us. And because of that, we don’t mind, verse 6: “a season of heaviness and manifold trials.” Do you see? We don’t mind a little pain – there is a finish line. We don’t mind a little effort – there is a goal to reach. I’ve run enough races in my life in track meets in high school and college to know what it’s like when you go down the backstretch and everything’s great, and you make that final turn and head for home, and all of a sudden you do what they call hit the wall, and something goes wrong. Your brain says “go,” and your legs say “no,” and there’s this tremendous change in what happens.

And you’re fighting that last little while, and what drives you is the sense of victory, and honor, and self-respect, and that which you know awaits at the finish. And so God has not just given us a past salvation, not even just a maintaining of a present salvation, but has given to us a tremendous hope. And that’s why when Jesus left in Acts chapter 1, and the disciples would have been confused enough up to this point, and now with Him gone they needed a little impetus. And so what He says to them is, sending two angels, speaking through them, “This same Jesus, who is taken up from you, shall so come in like manner as you’ve seen him go.”

In other words, in case you get weary, and you think maybe there's never going to be an end to it, He'll be back, He'll be back. There will be an end, there will be a goal, there is a finish line. And that's exactly what the helmet of salvation is; it's the hope of ultimate salvation. Let me show you 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 8: "But let us" – 1 Thessalonians 5:8 – "who are of the day" – that is, we're not of the night; that's Satan's dominion. We're of the day; that's sons of light in God's Kingdom – "let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love" – now watch – "and, for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not appointed us to wrath" – we're not just going to be in this thing fighting all the way, we're not going to wind up in judgment – "but to obtain salvation." There is still an element of salvation to obtain; God has appointed us to obtain that finally, and it is the helmet of salvation. The writer of Hebrews says this hope is the anchor of the soul. What is the helmet, then?

Now listen, summing it up, the helmet of salvation is confidence in a full, final, total salvation to come; it's confidence that someday the battle will be over. I couldn't fight if I didn't think there was a finish somewhere, could you? There's got to be an end. You say, "Well, how is this part of our armor?" Listen: you know that big broadsword that the Roman soldier would have to face? Do you know what Satan's big broadsword is? It's got two sides to it. One side is discouragement, and the other side's doubt. We're going to talk about doubt next time, but for this time discouragement. You know what Satan wants to do? He wants to belt you right in the head with discouragement and doubt, get you discouraged, "oh boy, you're sure giving a lot and not getting much in return. You're living this Christian life, setting yourself apart from the world – boy, you're living it, and what happens? You just lost your job; great blessing, huh? You've been reading your Bible every day, and your wife is as cranky as she was before you even bought a Bible; hasn't had a major effect on her whatever."

What's God doing in your life? You've been going to church for so many years, look at your kids, they don't respect you now any more than they ever did. And you begin to get discouraged. "I've been teaching a class so long and I wonder whether anybody gets anything out of it," you say. And you get real discouraged, that's one of the things. The other thing Satan wants to hit you in the head with is doubt. How do you know you're really a Christian? Are you sure you're really saved? You don't deserve it – look what you just did. Do you think that's a manifestation of being a Christian? And people get to suffer from doubt and discouragement, and that's what he uses. And the helmet of salvation is a protection.

Let's talk about the area of discouragement. Let me illustrate it by having you look in 1 Kings chapter 19, 1 Kings chapter 19, great story of Elijah. Elijah is kind of the Peter of the Old Testament; he's up and down a lot. But Elijah at this point has just had a great victory – I mean a victory like no other prophet of God ever had. He just took out a sword and slaughtered four hundred and fifty priests of Baal. Now, I'd say that he was really a winner that day. And you remember God sent fire down from heaven, burned up the sacrifice, burned up the altar, even licked up the water that they had poured around it? And Elijah was ruling, boy; I mean he was on top. "The Lord is God, the Lord is God." Baal is not. Baal lost. And man, he's got victory.

Well, chapter 19 – he doesn't allow much time to go on. "Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. And Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow at this time." She says, "Elijah, for doing that" – and by the way she was a Baal worshiper – "for you doing that, I will kill you by tomorrow or die trying." Now, you know if it were me I would say,

“Look Lord, I mean I just did You a big favor, four hundred and fifty priests of Baal eliminated, give me a day off, will Ya? I mean You send Jezebel after me the next day, how about a little rest?” No time for sitting around to be honored by the Jewish Honor Society, no time to sit around and getting laurels and medals. He’s on the road again.

Now, if he can handle four hundred and fifty priests of Baal, you really shouldn’t be too shook by one woman, but then history doesn’t really hold up that argument, because there have been a lot of people shook by one woman who could handle a lot of men. But anyway, Elijah decided there was only one thing to do, and that was run. And Elijah’s got to be pushing 80, and God never meant 80 year old prophets to be running to Beersheba. But he took off, and I mean he lickety-split down the road, churning up a cloud of dust, ran for his life, verse 3 says – came to Beersheba, left his servant there. From there, he went a day’s journey into the wilderness. Now, he actually ran – Beersheba’s a town, and from there he just took off one more day out in the desert. One day from Beersheba into the desert, he sits under a juniper tree, and requests for himself that he might die. He says, “It is enough. Now, oh Lord, take my life; I’ve had it.”

Now, that’s what I call discouragement. He wants to die. “Lord, just get me out of here, will Ya? Just take me out. That’s enough. “And he lay and slept under a juniper tree, and an angel touched him, and said, Get up and eat.” The angel wouldn’t even let him sleep. He woke him up and fed him. “And he looked, and there was a cake on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head.” And he’d eat and drink, and lay down again. “And the angel came and touched him a second time,” woke him up again, “and said, Arise and eat, your journey is too great for you.” You’ve got to eat.

Now, I don’t know what angel food is, but whatever it is, it works. In verse 8, “He arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights” – so as I say, it works – “unto Horeb, the mount of God.” Do you know why? God said, “Elijah, you have no business being discouraged. Now, you get yourself up here in Mount Horeb. I have a little conversation for you.” And so he went up there, and the Lord spoke to him in a still, small voice, and Elijah gave Him some song and dance about “I’m the only one left, Lord. Ohh, it’s so distressing and so discouraging. I’m the only one left; I’m the only faithful person You have.” And the Lord says in chapter 19, verse 18, “Yes, I have seven thousand others beside you. It’s not just one, it’s seven thousand and one, Elijah. Now get back there and get busy.” It’s so easy to become discouraged, and you know I can vouch for that. Even at the moment of some of your greatest triumphs, you go back to reality, and it’s stark and sort of - it’s shocking, you know? I can relate to that. It’s easy to be discouraged.

Over in Ephesians chapter 3, verse 3, or verse 13 rather, Paul says, “Wherefore, I desire that you faint not at my tribulation.” You know some of those people could even get discouraged about somebody else’s trouble, not necessarily their own. Galatians 6:9 says, “Let us not be weary in well doing; for we reap, if we faint not.” You know it’s so easy to get tired and weary, and “oh Lord, I have to preach another Sunday, I have to preach another sermon, study another day. Oh Lord, I have to go call on another person, have to meet with that same person for discipleship. Lord, can’t I have a few days off from reading my Bible? Lord, I just can’t hack that Sunday School Class another Sunday. Lord, do you really think I ought to go back and talk to that neighbor another time? Lord, You know I’ve been fighting this same old temptation for so long, I’m getting tired.” And you know we get discouraged so easy.

Arthur Cluff expressed it in these words: “Say not the struggle not availeth, the labor and the words are vain, the enemy faints not nor faileth and as things have been they remain.” In other words, “I just

keep fighting and nothing ever happens. I get tired, the enemy doesn't," have you noticed? You get real weary, and Satan never stops. Matthew Arnold wrote, "For now in blood and battle was my youth, and full of blood and battle is my age, and I shall end this life in battle." Does it ever stop? Well, we fight the foe all our lives. The apostle Paul came to the end of his life, 2 Timothy 4:7, and said, "I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished the course." In Acts chapter 20, they said to him, "Paul, if you go to Jerusalem, you're going to be imprisoned and put in chains." He said, "That's all right. None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, that I might finish the ministry Christ has given me." He never would faint, he never would quit.

In Revelation chapter 2, the Lord extolled the Ephesian Church by saying, "You have borne, and you have been patient, and you have endured, and you have not fainted." That's a commendation. In Leviticus chapter 26, God – and He did it again in Deuteronomy 11 – God laid out Israel, and He said, "All right, Israel, if you hang in there, and keep My statutes, and obey My ordinances, and do what I say, I will bless your lives, I will bless your land, I will prosper the seed of your loins, I will give you every blessing," and He goes on through the 26th chapter of Leviticus listing one after another. Finally, in verse 14 He says, "But if you turn from My statutes, and turn from My commandments, then I will bring corruption on you, and I will bring pain on you, and I will bring sorrow on you," see?

So the ultimate end of it is this: hang in there, be obedient, be responsive. Maybe you get discouraged because you have an unsaved husband, and it never seems to change; nothing ever happens, and you just get so discouraged. Or maybe you have a child that seems so resistant to all of your efforts, or maybe you have a friend you've tried to witness to, or maybe you seem to be doing a ministry and you don't get the thanks you ought to get. Or maybe you even have a physical infirmity, a physical ailment, a handicap of some kind physically, and you get so tired of struggling with that thing, and it seems to bind you, and you lose sight of the fact that salvation has a third dimension, that it's coming. And I love what it says in Romans 13:11: "Remember that our salvation is nearer than when we believed." We're getting close to the finish line; don't quit now.

You know there were those in the Book of Hebrews to whom the writer addresses himself, who had come all the way up to believing in Christ, they'd come all the way up to acknowledging that it was true, and now they were going to go back. And the writer says, "No, don't do that. Don't be of those who turn around and fall back into perdition." He says, "Let us go on to perfection." Don't quit.

I think about Jeremiah, the Lord says to Jeremiah, "You're My prophet Jeremiah. I want you to spend your life preaching for Me and here's your message, Jeremiah. Preach it with all you've got, and preach it till you have no breath, and P.S. no one will ever listen. No one will hear a word you say." And old Jeremiah preached it all alone, listened to it all alone all alone he said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and they were the joy and rejoicing of my heart." And then there was Job, and the Lord stripped Job as naked as any man has ever been stripped; He took away everything he possessed, everything he owned, everything he loved, and yet he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." And he hung in there, and when it was all said and done he said, "Oh God," he said, "I had heard of thee with the hearing of mine ear, but I now see thee with mine eye. And I abhor myself, in dust and ashes." In other words, "I heard what You were like, but in adversity as I was faithful, I saw You." Hang in there; don't let Satan hit you with discouragement. Jesus our Lord said in Luke 18:1, "Men ought always to pray, and not to" – what – faint." When you see yourself fainting, start praying.

Boy, Satan wants to discourage me all the time. He works like mad at it. I read this week about a little man in England; his name was Doctor Reverend William Davie. He decided in the years of his life

toward the end of his life, though he didn't know it at the time, he wanted to write a systematic theology encompassing the whole Bible. He spent 12 solid years doing it. When he was done it was 26 volumes. He was an obscure little man. There are no copies that I know of, of his theology. When he got all done, he couldn't find anybody to set the type, so he set it himself – this is two hundred years ago – and then he printed 40 copies of the first three hundred pages, and 14 copies of the remaining 26 volumes; 14 copies of his 12 years' work. He died in poverty and obscurity. But you know what – I'll bet you he died with the knowledge of God. One little man wrote a 26 volume theology that probably nobody ever heard of or ever read, but he pursued the knowledge of God and the knowledge of God's Word. He stuck with it.

There was a little girl in London. She was standing on a sidewalk when the coal truck came by, and the coal truck dumped a ton of coal in front of the little girl's house. And she picked up a little shovel in the cellar, opened the cellar door – she was only 5. She walked out and she stuck her little shovel in the coal, and walked across the sidewalk, and down the cellar stairs, and turned it over in the basement, and the man next door stood and watched her. After the third little shovel full, he said to her, "My dear, you'll never get it all in," to which she brightly replied, "Oh, I will sir, if I work long enough." If I work long enough – I guess the test of anybody's character is what it takes to stop them, right? Lots of people hit the first line of defense and bail out. Lots of people go A.W.O.L. the first time they hear a shot. But then there are those who make a difference in the world, because they go right through line after line after line after line of opposition. Hey, you can do it if you work long enough. Don't be discouraged.

Listen, remember the Lord Jesus? "You have not yet suffered unto blood." Nobody crucified you yet. Hang in there, hang in there. The problem is not to faint, but to stay at it; Satan will discourage you every way he can. Tell you how you're not getting any results for all your labors, "Aw, nobody listens to you. Look, you've been doing this faithfully, nobody give you any laurels, nobody says anything. It's so behind the scenes, who will know if you fall to sin? Oh, don't worry about the battle give in a little bit, relax." The helmet of salvation protects me from fainting, from giving up, from growing weary – why? Because I have a hope, and my hope is that there's a light at the end of that tunnel, and someday I'm going to burst into that glorious light in the presence of Jesus Christ. And like that guy who wrote me a letter, I don't want to stand in front of my commanding officer with shame on my face because I quit in the middle of the battle, right? I want to be there and say, "Hey Lord, I mean I may be bruised and bleeding, but I'm here, and I fought it all the way to the end."

My grandfather, bless his heart, died, on his deathbed with cancer. It had eaten his body, and he looked up at my father and he said, "I just have one request Jack – ohh, if I could just preach one more sermon" – see? Right down to the wire. So my dad took the sermon that he prepared but never preached, printed it, passed it out to the church, so he preached the one more sermon. Right down to the wire. Hang in there. Revelation 2 and 3 says, "To him that overcomes, to him that overcomes, to him that overcomes, to him that overcomes, will I give, will I give, will I give." In other words God reserves special things for the overcomer, great things.

Remember Timothy? Timothy hit the skids in his life, got discouraged. What discouraged Timothy? Well, a lot of things. One, he was young, and he was tempted by youthful lusts, and he got tired of it. Another thing, he was young and people were saying, "Aw, you're too young to know anything, Timothy." They were despising his youth. Another thing, he was getting upset in his stomach, and Paul said, "You got to take a little wine for your stomach's sake." He was shook. And then he was embarrassed about Paul, because Paul was forever in jail and he was upset about the fact that

people say, "Yeah, yeah, you're one of the disciples of that jailbird." "He was ashamed of me," says Paul.

And not only that, there were some false teachers who came into Ephesus there, teaching error that was really sophisticated, and Timothy didn't know if he could handle it. And then there was philosophy, and janglings, and vain deceit, and genealogies, and Timothy was drowning in a sea of stuff to discourage him. And the Apostle Paul writes to him in 2 Timothy and he says, "Timothy, stir up the gift of God that is in you. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and a sound mind. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Come on Timothy, get with it again, crank it up. Timothy was discouraged.

Peter says the same thing to those saints to whom he wrote who were in persecution. He says, "Oh listen, hang in there with that well-doing, and if you suffer for well-doing, blessed and happy are you. Oh, if you suffer for well-doing, commit your souls to a faithful Creator. Be faithful." You say, "But sometimes you get weary." That's right, sometimes your legs get rubber like the last lap. When that happens to me, I very often will think of a Scripture that you've thought of a lot of times, I'm sure. It's Isaiah chapter 40, and I'll draw our thoughts to a conclusion with it. Listen to this, Isaiah 40:29: "He giveth power to the faint; and to those who have no might he increaseth strength." Oh isn't that great?

Just when you get to the place where you're about to faint, He gives you power; just when you say, "Lord, I don't have any strength left," that's when He infuses you with His strength. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." What a great statement. The eagle that soars so high above most other birds is an illustration of what happens to a believer in his weakness when he's infused with the strength of God; he soars above the rest.

Listen, there's no reason to be discouraged, beloved. The helmet of salvation says there's coming a great day, a great victory day. If you're faithful all the way through, there'll be a marvelous reward there. There's coming a glory day. Salvation is past, yes, it's present, yes, but oh, it's future. And don't let Satan discourage you, and don't let him rob you of the anticipation of that thrill; don't let him take away the hope that makes you committed. Listen, John says in 1 John 3, "He that hath this hope purifieth himself." When you know Jesus is coming, when you know that great day is ahead, salvation will be ultimately fulfilled, it has a way of purging and purifying your life, because you know you're going to see Him face to face. Well, let's pray.

Father, we're well aware that Satan and his demons are relentless. They never give up; they push us all the time. But we know, too, that our salvation is nearer than when we believed, and oh God, we thank You for the hope of victory that we have. We hear the echo of the words of Hebrews 6:11 and 12, and we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, that you be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Oh God, help us, like those who were faithful, those who were patient, those who were inheritors of the promise, to show the same diligence to the end, to hang onto hope to its very end, to so live to Your glory. Father, may we be in the catalog of the faithful of Hebrews 11, because we persevere to the end. Help us not to be discouraged. What is there to be discouraged about when we know that awaiting us is an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, an inheritance that couldn't be described in human terms, a wondrous Kingdom that's beyond even the revelation to express? A

relationship to You throughout eternity that can only be described as to be like Jesus Christ. Oh God, with that in the future, we cannot be discouraged with the moment, no matter what it brings. Help us to be faithful to wear the helmet, for Your glory in Jesus' name. Amen.

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