

HOPE FOR YOU

Ephesians 6:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:8

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Ephesians 6:10-17 and 1 Thessalonians 5:8. In his ministry that spanned 66 years, it is said that Billy Graham preached to a total of around 210 million people. If anyone should know about the deepest needs of mankind it would be Billy Graham. And Billy Graham said over 20 years ago, "Perhaps the greatest psychological, spiritual, and medical need that all people have is the need for hope". Hope is the heartbeat of the soul, and when the heartbeat stops the soul dies. Without hope there is nothing left to live for.

Today we are going to talk about hope. Hope for you. I don't know what you are going through this morning, but I do know this. Christians are not immune to troubles and trials. And there is enough pain and heartache in this building today to float a battleship, in the lives of you senior adults, you Boomers, you Generation Xers, and all the way down to Generation Z, which are our children. And I know something else. There is only one solution to cure the pain, to heal the hurts, and to give you hope, in whatever generation you're in, and that is Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior of the world, and soon coming King. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 1:1 that Jesus Christ *is* our hope. And so today we are going to talk about this hope in Christ that is available to every one of us.

Now, we read of this hope in both of the verses of our text. In Ephesians 6:17 Paul calls it the helmet of salvation and in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 he calls it the helmet of the hope of salvation. And in both verses he exhorts believers to take or put on this helmet. And it is no surprise that a helmet be in the panoply of the soldiers of the cross. For no sensible soldier would ever go out to battle without first putting on his helmet.

But not only do soldiers wear helmets, but so do those in numerous other occupations. Professional baseball players and professional football players wear helmets. NASCAR drivers wear helmets, and some bull riders wear helmets. Construction workers and miners wear helmets. And then some wear helmets in recreational activities. Bikers wear helmets. White water rafters and skate boarders and speed skaters wear helmets. And why do all of these people wear helmets? Because they have chosen by their own free will to do something dangerous, and in the case of the bull riders I'd say something stupid! But let me tell you, beloved, nothing is as dangerous as living without your helmet of salvation.

So just what is our helmet of salvation? Well, let me say first of all that Paul is not talking about salvation from sin. He is writing to believers here, and they are already saved. Nor is he talking primarily about the assurance of salvation. Now, to be sure the assurance of your salvation is critical to winning your battles with the devil. You can't win too many souls to Jesus if you are worried about your own soul. But we saw a few weeks ago that the assurance of our salvation was having our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. We stand firm against Satan's attacks because we have the peace of God in our hearts, because we know that we've obeyed the gospel, that we've been washed in the blood of Jesus and belong to Him, and nothing can harm us. And if you do not have this peace you can have it today by simply repenting of your sins. That is, turning from your sin, and trusting Jesus Christ alone to forgive you and save you. For God has promised in His Word, (Romans 10:9,10,13).

But **what Paul is talking about** when he speaks of the helmet of salvation is the **assurance of the final salvation** that we will have at the end of the age. You see, beloved, in the Bible we read of salvation in three different aspects, past tense, present tense, and future tense. Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace you have been saved through faith..." That's past tense. I was saved in July of 1973. Jesus came into my life, forgave my sins, and I became a child of God.

But I was not only saved in the past, but I am still being saved in the present. Romans 5:10, "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life". Here's what God is saying to every true child of God through Paul. "If I've reached down in My love and saved you by the death of My Son when you were my enemy, how much more will I keep you saved by Jesus' life in you, now that you are My precious, beloved child?"

Over and over we read of this present salvation in the New Testament. Paul wrote to the Philippian church in Philippians 1:6: "being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." In 1 Peter 1:5 Peter writes of believers, "who are kept by the power of God through faith..." Jude 24, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy..." Beloved, if you were truly saved in the past, you can be sure that you are still being saved right now. Micah 7:19 says that God has cast all of your sins into the depths of the sea. Hebrews 10:17 says that God will remember your sins and lawless deeds no more. John writes in 1 John 2 that when we sin we have an advocate with the Father, a lawyer defending us, and His name is Jesus Christ the righteous. And you can be sure that Jesus has never lost a case! Who

would dare say that the advocacy of Jesus Christ the righteous was not enough to keep them saved? Not me! And I pray not you. Oh, friends, if you've ever been saved, rejoice in the fact that you are still saved.

But in addition to salvation past tense and salvation present tense, we also see in Scripture a future aspect of salvation. I have been saved, I am being saved, and praise God, one day **I will be saved**. One day I will be saved from the very presence of sin when I die and go to Heaven. Paul said that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). And how all of us who are saved praise God for this glorious truth! Oh, but this is just half of the future salvation that awaits God's children. The other half is the salvation of this sin-cursed earth that we will live and reign upon for 1000 years, when our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. Listen to how Paul describes it. Romans 13:11: "...for now is our **salvation** nearer than when we believed". 1 Thessalonians 5:9, "For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain **salvation** by our Lord Jesus Christ". Peter says it this way in 1 Peter 1:5: "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto **salvation** ready to be revealed in the last time". In all of these verses the salvation Paul & Peter speak of is not individual, personal salvation. It is the future deliverance of this world from the principalities and powers of darkness that are currently ruling this world, the spiritual wickedness in heavenly places that we've been talking about for weeks now. It is total, final deliverance from the devil and all of his angels.

Beloved, I want to say it again. We are involved in a struggle much, much bigger than ourselves! Yes, we want to stand strong against temptations in order that we not fall into sin and cause much heartache. Jabez prayed, "Oh, that you would bless me indeed....and that you would keep me from evil, that I might not cause pain" (1 Chronicles 4:10). And none of us want to cause pain to others. But this struggle, this holy war, has a purpose much more widespread than my little circle of influence and your little circle of influence. This war is to right all of the wrongs that have plagued this whole world since the Fall of man. Friends, along with saving sinners that is what God is all about – restoring righteousness in world of wickedness.

Listen to Psalm 45:6: "...A scepter of **righteousness** is the scepter of Your kingdom". Jeremiah 22:3: "Thus says the Lord, 'Execute judgment and **righteousness**, and deliver the plundered out of the hand of the oppressor". Amos 5:24 says, "But let justice run down like water, and **righteousness** like a mighty stream". Romans 14:17, "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but **righteousness** and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit". And get this, beloved, you and I are the administrators, we are the agents that must provide this

righteousness. Listen to Daniel 12:3: “And they that be wise will shine as the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever”.

So what’s the point, preacher? Just this. If you are a conscientious Christian you are in a fierce battle with the fiends of hell every day. And beloved, from time to time you get weary. You get weary when you turn on the news and hear the statistics on the number of unwed mothers. You get weary when you hear how our military must now accept openly practicing homosexuals, and how our president has publically stated that he supports gay marriage. You get weary when you hear how Christians are being muzzled as if our speech about the power of Jesus to forgive sins and restore broken lives was worse than a threat from the Taliban to blow up the White House. You get weary when you walk though a mall and see and hear such vulgarity that you want to put blindfolds on the eyes of your children and ear plugs in their ears. You get weary when you’re grocery shopping and you see children running around undisciplined like a cage full of little baby chicks let loose, and you hear their mothers screaming at them and yanking them around like rag dolls. You get weary and you think, “Is the fight worth it? Is it ever going to get any better? Or should I just quit the battle, hole up with my family and protect them as best as I can and let sin and wickedness run its relentless course?”

May I say to you that this is what many believers have done already. They’ve quit standing up for what they know is right. They’ve let themselves become the world’s doormat because they’ve lost their will to fight or they are afraid to fight or they just plain don’t care.

But what is God saying to us amidst this onslaught of evil and persecution? God is saying, “Put on your helmet of salvation and get back in the fight!” When the going gets tuff, that’s when we need to read the last chapter of the Book and see that we are going to win in the end. But not only the last chapter, but all the way through the Book. That’s when we read in Psalm 2 the words of the Father to His Son: “Ask of Me, and I will give you the nations for Your inheritance. And the ends of the ends of the earth for your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.” David says here, “Salvation’s coming in the end”. That’s when we read the words of Isaiah in Isaiah 11:8-9: “The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea”. Has this ever happened, beloved? Have little children ever played over the den of poisonous snakes and never been bitten? Has the

knowledge of Jesus covered the whole earth as waters fill the ocean basins? No, but Isaiah says one day they will, when our final salvation comes in the end. When we get discouraged in the fight of faith, that's when we read the words of Peter, where he looks ahead to the Second Coming with the eyes of faith and writes, "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).

Now, beloved, I don't know about you, but I can't wait for that glorious day! For much too long Satan has had his way in this world. John writes in his first epistle that the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one (1 John 5: 19). But when Jesus comes back again to reign on the earth, Satan's dominion will be crushed once and for all. John writes about the beginning of the end of Satan in Rev. 12: 7,8,10. "And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer....Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.'" Satan will be cast out of heaven one day, and then eight chapters later we read that he will be cast into the lake of fire.

So beloved, no matter what you are going through today, no matter how hard your circumstances, no matter how lonely you feel sometimes, no matter how tired you are, God has given you a blessed hope of salvation in the end. But I have two words for you for right now. DON'T QUIT! Put on the helmet of salvation and keep up the fight. You say, "But preacher, you don't understand my situation. If you were in my shoes you'd be ready to throw in the towel, too". Well, I'm not minimizing your troubles at all today, but I want to share with you a simple, three step plan for you to lay hold of God's grace and not give up the fight.

Turn to Hebrews 12:1-2. Now, the context of these verses are familiar to most of us. They follow the great roll call of faith in chapter 11, where the victories of many of the great old patriarchs are recalled. But the writer uses a different metaphor in chapter 12 to encourage his readers to keep on keeping on in their Christian commitment; instead of a fight he talks about a race. And as we run our Christian race he says that a great number of witnesses surround us, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Daniel, and others. And the writer says, "**Look back to those who preceded you**". Friend, you may be in the heat of a battle, but it is no worse than having 2 million rebellious Israelites wanting to stone you. It is no worse than being thrown in a fiery furnace or a den of lions. It couldn't be as bad as looking into the angry eyes of a nine foot giant who was

thirsting for your blood. And God tells us to look back at those old warriors of the faith, look at what they endured, and look how they didn't quit their race and how they conquered, and be challenged to follow in their footsteps of faith.

So beloved, I challenge you to do what God says. Look back at these old heroes, and look back to more recent ones, like a grandmother or a grandfather or mom or dad or a teacher or a coach or some other saint who's had great influence in your life. Look to them and follow in their footsteps.

But the writer also says, "**Look up to the One who saved you**". Look at verse 2 again. "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith". Think about that. It was Jesus Who gave you the faith to believe to be saved. And it is Jesus Who will finish your faith, and that word means to perfect your faith. To make it a strong faith. Now I ask you, as a child of God, do you believe that Jesus Christ would not make your faith strong enough for you to stand fast against any and every fiery dart that Satan could ever shoot at you? You know the answer! Beloved, look to Jesus, the One Who saved you!! Cry out to Him for faith to keep running!

But God not only says to **look back to those who preceded you**, and **look up to the One Who saved you**, but also to **look ahead to the One Who awaits you**. That's how Jesus ran His race and won. Look at verse 2 again. When Jesus was running His race, which was to the cross, the writer says that He looked beyond the suffering and the pain which He would endure. He looked beyond it to the joy that was set before Him, the joy of being reunited with His Father in Heaven, and sitting down beside Him on His throne. And as Jesus looked to the One Who awaited Him He found strength to keep running!

Friend, when you get to Heaven there will be One there to greet you Who has loved you from the foundation of the world, and Who chose to save you from the foundation of the world. He loved you so much that He sent His only Son to die on the cross for you. Just like the children of Israel in the wilderness, He has met every need that you've ever had your entire life, and He has blessed you with every spiritual blessing in Christ. And when you cross Jordan and step inside the pearly gates, the Father Himself is going to take you up in His arms and He is going to wipe every tear from your eye. He will gently rub His healing balm into every wound. He will give you His own glory as your inheritance forever and ever (2 Thessalonians 2:14; 1 Peter 5:10). And beloved, if you've been faithful to run your race, you will cast the crowns that you've won back at His feet as a gift of your gratitude to Him. And at that moment you will say to yourself, "I'm so glad I didn't quit!"