



Armor
Part 6 – The Helmet of Salvation
Pastor Ted Cunningham

Today, we are in Part 6 of this series called *Armor*. We're going through Ephesians 6: 10-20. We're taking a piece of armor each week and going through it. Today is the *Helmet of Salvation*. The bottom line is this. We want to be crystal clear on what salvation is and what it is not. We don't want fuzzy, confused thinking or wishy-washy thinking when it comes to what salvation is and what it is not. We want to be clear.

I'm going to start us with Ephesians 6: 11. I keep coming back to this verse because there are three parts to this verse that I'm trying to take into my life each day. **11 Put on the full armor of God...** That's why we're going through the entire six pieces because it's not like you can pick a piece or a couple of pieces, this is putting on all of this armor. Why? **...so that you can take your stand...**

What a theme throughout this passage of scripture. Taking a stand in the battle. We said early on in this series that I want to be standing when the battle starts, I want to be standing through the battle, and I want to still be standing at the end of the battle. We may be bloodied, we may be bruised, we may be exhausted, but let us still be standing. And what are we standing against? We're standing **...against the devil's schemes**. We've been unpacking that.

This week was one of my favorite weeks of the year. We do a retreat here in the Ozarks every fall called a replenish retreat. Many of you might not know, but Lance Witt, who was here last week, has been not just a friend to me but a counselor to me over the last 14 years. His passion is to help pastors to keep from burning out and to help churches lead well in this area.

Lance does a replenish retreat here in the Ozarks. We bring people in... And I want to say thank you for your generosity. You have brought pastors in for the last three years to show them some Ozarks hospitality. At the end of the week, they all want to move here. I said we ain't got no more houses for you but come back in a year and see what might be available. How many here are selling a house? There is inventory! Are you from here? Where is your house at? Don't give us your address online; we're not going to do that.

We look for pastors throughout the year who are going through difficult seasons. Actually, from the time the invites went out... We only bring in five couples at a time. From the time the invites went out to the time of the retreat this past week, one of my pastor friends called me and said, "Hey, I just want you to know my deacons just asked me to resign and I want you to give that space to someone who is in ministry.

I told my friend, "You're the exact reason why we do this retreat so please come to the Ozarks. I promise you a trophy fish at Dogwood Canyon," and we delivered! And while we were fishing, do you know who came upon me? John Anderson, country legend John Anderson. I couldn't even speak. I was shaking. I wanted to start humming one of his songs and I couldn't say...

The pastors were like, "What's going on, Ted?"

"Do you guys know who that is? That's John Anderson."

They were like, "Who?"

I'm like, "Go to the parking lot; I'm done with the Ozarks hospitality; you don't deserve to be here." So, guess what I did. There were two pastors, so on the way back to the campground, I played for them "Straight Tequila Night." That was my way to kind of get back at them.

Let me tell you that the best times were the campfires. To just hear the stories. And then Jennifer, wife of one of the pastors who was there, made this statement. She said, "The enemy has one playbook." I got my phone out and I wrote that down and said, "I will be quoting you Sunday." Because this playbook goes all the way back to Genesis 3, and it hasn't changed. His playbook hasn't changed; it's the playbook that comes against you and your battles, it's the playbook that comes against me and my battles and it's really simple. We even looked at this the first week. It's not just simple, it's brilliant. Satan has made it one of his tactics, one of his schemes to make it unloving and uncaring to question him.

Here's what he does in Genesis 3. After God tells them they can eat from any tree in this garden; "don't touch that one or you will surely die," he immediately denies the truth, denies God's Word. He tells them to open their eyes. "Open your eyes, look around, don't take just what God said. No, look around, open your eyes, you'll be *illuminated*, and you will be like God."

Part of the crises in our culture today is everybody wants to be God. I think it's an important thing... If you wonder what you should pray as you get out of bed in the morning, let's start with, "Thank you, Lord, you are God and I am not." I'm not God. You're not God. But he's like, "Deny God's Word, open your eyes, and then do whatever you want because you're God."

When you take your stand against that, please understand... Ephesians 6 has been walking us through this. Taking a stand for the Lord places you on Satan's radar. My job is not to avoid his radar; my job is to take my stand when I'm on his radar. We need to be clear about this.

So, there are three questions I want to ask. And I just want you to process this. Whatever battle you're going through right now, whatever spiritual warfare is hitting you, I have three very important questions.

Who is standing in battle with you? Can you name them. Can you call them today? Can you text them? Can you thank them for being one that stands in battle with you?

I have a friend that texts me every Sunday morning from Kansas City. His name is Jimmy Dodd. He doesn't know what I'm preaching on; he doesn't follow our series or anything, but it's amazing how the Lord uses him as he stands in battle with me. He runs a ministry called Pastor Serve and he just wants to come alongside people that are taking the stand.

This is what he texted this morning. These are long texts. *"I am praying for you this morning, Ted, louder than the voice of your fears, anxieties, and worries. I am praying that you would hear the voice of your heavenly Father saying to you, 'You are always with me and all that is mine is yours.' -Luke 15:11. Remember, every follower of Jesus three enemies. The world, the flesh, and the devil. The word devil is diablo, which means prosecutor. The primary job of Satan is not to tempt; his primary job is to accuse. He's the accuser. Satan wants people to look at their sins more than they look at the Savior."*

And the scheme of the devil we are looking at today is he wants you to think you're not that bad. Your sins aren't that great. He wants you to believe there are people that sin worse than you. He wants to look around at others and be like, "Well I'm obviously going to heaven because I'm not like that person." You've heard the joke that one day you're going to get to heaven and you're going to see people that surprise you like, "You're here?!" And they are going to look at you and go, "You're here?!" There are going to be people there that are surprised you are there too because it's not based on your works. For by grace, you are saved, through faith, it's not of works. But Satan wants you to believe it is. He wants you to believe that you have everything within you to do enough to be good enough, give enough, serve enough so that heaven is your home.

I'm grateful for men that stand in battle with me. But now I have to ask you, **Who are you standing with in battle?** Are you standing there with others? Because you know what happens. And I'll just ask the next question before I say this. **Do you shy away from standing with others for fear of attacks turning on you?** What happens is we don't join people, we don't stand with people in battle because we don't want to end up on the same radar.

I have a friend right now who is going through a battle and being attacked, and it is unfair, it is unjust, it is lies. He is being misrepresented and misunderstood. He wrote this big, long blog and I'm like, "That is so awesome! You can't post it, but that is so awesome!" I was right there with him. He emailed like 12 of us that are in this email thread.

We had an elder years ago, Bill Rogers, who is now in Springfield. I remember Bill telling me once, "Hey, Ted, when you go into meetings, be the last one to talk." This is a great one for all of us. How many of you have opinions that you think are really good? And what you say is normally right? Yeah, okay. So, wouldn't it make sense at the beginning of the meeting to share what we think so it can be a quicker meeting? How many agree with me on that one? He said, "Just shut up and let other people talk." So, I'd let everybody else speak.

As I read through the emails, they're telling him to back away, and I feel these other people who have been lifelong friends with this guy going, "We're not there with you." And do you know why? They don't want to be on his radar.

And I waited. My email was probably a little passive/aggressive and I should repent, but it was just to 12 people. I came in strong. "Man, I'm with you! And I hope every other person on this email will make a post this week, supporting you publicly." I guess that wasn't passive; that's pretty direct. "Just get on there. Stand up for our friend." Because he's standing on truth. And you know what I've watched? You've heard it said. "The silence of your friend hurts way more than the accusations of your enemies." The friends are going, "Be quiet." It's what I hate about cancel culture more than anything. "I don't want to say anything for fear of what I'll lose."

So, today, we're talking about the helmet of salvation. It's important to see that *stand* because we're talking about *stand*. We take a very strong stand here at Woodland Hills on salvation. We want to be crystal clear. And the helmet of salvation... Why the helmet of salvation? As I read this week about helmets, the first thing that pops up is the NFL. In 2019, Google decided to invest 60 million dollars in innovation on safety in the NFL because once they put in the... And I love when I'm the non-athletic teaching team member that gives all these great, inspiring, athletic deals. But this was fascinating to me. So, no helmet to helmet... I forget what year that was passed, but since no helmet-to-helmet contact was passed, concussions went down 29%. So, they are doing a lot to try to keep people safe because you all still want the bloody hits. You want the hard-hitting stuff, so they are trying to figure out how to do that well.

Then I read an article about climbers. And obviously, when we think about helmets, they protect us from brain injuries. But when I think about helmets, I immediately think about motorcycles. They save your life when you're wearing a helmet. But climbers say, "Yeah it will save your life, but we don't want to be dangling from a rope knocked out." One of the reasons we wear helmets is because if we hit the wall and get knocked out, we have that helmet to protect us because really it protects us from brain injury... I love what most commentaries agree on when we talk about the helmet of salvation, it's keeping us from fuzzy disoriented confused thinking about salvation.

So, we are going to take our stand on it today. We are going to be as clear as can be. It's been a crazy week, a weird week. I feel like with every passing week, it's like what's going to go on this week? Some friends are launching this website in marriage and family ministry. They are dear, I love them. And everybody I'm sharing with, I know you know we've had this spirited conversation. I'm not going to share all of it in case you're watching, but from around this country starting this ministry...

One of my friends asked, "Hey, Ted, are you really dead set on having a doctrinal statement on the website?"

And I said, "Absolutely."

"Are you sure?"

I'm like, "Yes, we have to have a doctrinal statement. If we are a marriage and family ministry, we have to affirm the biblical definition of marriage. We have to be crystal clear on that."

My friend comes from a school of thought... It's a church, it's a ministry in our nation that says, "We'd rather have conversations than stances." I just said, "Again, I hate when people ask me to make decisions that the Bible never asked me to make. I think we can take a stand and have a conversation. I think we can have stances and conversations."

It's interesting to me with leadership talks. The number one thing you hear, if you're being taught about leadership, is clarity is critically important for vision. You have to be crystal clear on vision or else you have chaos and confusion in the organization. But when it comes to certain doctrines, what's happening... I don't know if you see this and maybe you are unaware, but what's happening is pastors and churches are backing away from doctrine. They don't want to take their stand because they don't want to end up on other people's radars.

And Satan is brilliant. He's shutting the voices down... He will never shut the church down; the church will never go down. But he is shutting voices down. I just want you to know that here at our church, there will always be a doctrinal statement on our website. There will always be, "Hey, this is what we believe. We're not mad about it. We love you. We're compassionate. We'll share." But when I go to a church to do a marriage event and somebody starts going all crazy on social media with, "I can't believe you would bring this homophobic guy in. I can't believe you would bring this guy in that stands against same sex relationships..."

I'm going, "Wait just a second. The church I'm going to believes everything I believe. They believe everything I believe, the big issue is they believe, they are just silent about it." And they have people going to their church for years that don't know what the church believes. I'm going, "What are we doing? Why are we here?" Just for a little song and dance? Or is this what we believe, and we are going to stand against the devil's schemes with it." I haven't been here for a few weeks; I'm working some things out. And to my friends, I'm working some things out.

Clarity equals certainty. Do you know why we wear the helmet of salvation? We don't want to have our brains fall out. I want you to leave here today certain about your salvation. Certain! No wishy-washy. Clarity brings confidence.

This week, around the campfire, there were coffee pots set up, one decaf, one regular. I get up to get some coffee and I asked, "Hey, do you want any coffee." One lady was emphatic. She had to have decaf. This other person said regular, so I went over and got the coffee. As I was walking back, I was like *oh no, I can't remember which was which*. I handed it to her and she goes, "Is this decaf?" I said yeah. She goes are you sure? I'm pretty sure.

Is there any confidence in pretty sure? No. Your daughter is on the side of the pool ready to jump into your arms. "I'll catch you." "Daddy, are you sure?" "Pretty sure." You see a snake. "Is this snake venomous?" "No, it's not venomous." "Are you sure?" "Pretty sure." Are you going to get on an airplane with a pilot in lightning? You ask the pilot, "Hey, are we going to be okay taking off in this?" "Yeah, pretty sure."

This happened just this week. Amy has this big passion and vision to keep me alive for along period of time. She wants me to live well into my 90s. I have no such ambitions. I'm like Paul. I want to be with the Lord. Anyway, she hands me pills every morning. I'm like, "What am I taking now?" And it's growing. There were three new pills added; I mean big pills. So, I go, "What are these three new things." She goes, "It's collagen." I go, "What is collagen?" No lie, she goes, "It's going to help with your skin and your nails." I said, "Are you sure this isn't estrogen?" She says, "Pretty sure."

Anyway, you're not going to take medicine, get on an airplane, pick up a snake... by the way, I still laugh at people still trying to figure out whether or not they should pick up a snake based on whether it's venomous. Just don't touch them; leave them alone. But there's no confidence in pretty sure.

When asked about your relationship with the Lord, I want not one person at Woodland Hills Family Church to say, "Pretty sure." We want you to say, "I am sure!" Because what does clarity also bring? It brings courage. What do you need in battle? Certainty, Confidence, and Courage. We get that from clarity. I saw one Christian author post this week. I don't want to throw things, but there are times I just want to throw..." I'm like, "You said what?!" He said, "Curiosity is better than certainty." Let me tell you, I believe that is the devil's scheme. He doesn't want you certain. He doesn't want you standing in battle wearing the helmet of salvation. He wants you confused and fuzzy on this.

So there are three things. And we are going to start with this one. First of all, **you need to know that you are saved.** You need to be certain. You need to have confidence in this. In 1 John 5, we read, **11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son (Jesus). 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know...** Not maybe. We don't want you vague on this. We want it clear **...that you have eternal life.** That you are a child of God.

So, let's be as clear as we can be with knowing. Let's talk about what it is not and then look clearly at what salvation is so we can stand in battle against the devil's scheme with the helmet of salvation, knowing, not with fuzzy, confused thinking, but with clear thought and understanding.

So, the next nine statements or some variation thereof is what we will often hear when we ask people, "Tell me about your walk with Jesus. Tell me about your relationship with the Lord." This first one is the most common one.

I am a good person. Kindness is not your salvation. Being nice to your neighbors is not your salvation. Doing good things is not your salvation. Avoiding bad things is not your salvation. So, the person that says, "I don't have any addictions; I've given up all of that," I believe these are all part of Satan's lies and his schemes for us. He wants you to believe that since you've been sober now for three years, that's your ticket in. Sobriety is not your salvation.

I was baptized as a baby. Whether you were baptized as a baby or as an adult, remember what baptism is. We don't baptize children because baptism comes after the decision to be a follower of Jesus, because baptism is stepping into the water, pointing people to Jesus, and saying, "I have made the decision to follow Him. This is an outward expression of an inward decision that I have made."

Baptism is an expression of your salvation. Growing up in the church, you heard it all the time. It's the first step of obedience. It's the overflow of our salvation, not the source of.

My parents took me to church growing up. You'll hear this when you ask someone about their salvation. They're uncertain, they're unclear, they're vague, they're fuzzy, they're wishy-washy, they want to lean on their family of origin.

I am generous. "I'm the guy that pulls up at the stop light and rolls down the window and hands money out to the guy or the gal who needs it. That's me. I've always been a generous person." Listen, there is no check, there is no denomination of currency that will bring you into the kingdom of God. None.

I attend church. You're like, "I've been faithful here." A lot of these statements that we hear come from people that have been here for years.

I serve my community. "I'm involved in the schools. I'm active. I vote. I'm interested in what's going on." Active service in the community is not your salvation.

And if I can say and I know this goes where angels dare to trod, but I want to make sure we're clear. **"I fought for my country."** And we say thank you, but this is not your salvation.

Dying in battle for your country. We say thank you to those and we remember those. We say thank you to those of you who lost loved ones in battle but losing someone in battle is not salvation.

In the end, I hope the good Lord lets me in. This one we hear often. Sometimes it's in gest, but other times it's someone who is really wrestling. There is no certainty in this. There is no confidence in this.

But we want to be clear. I love how one pastor and professor put it, *"In the Bible, hope is never a vague optimism that everything is going to work out in the end... That's not hope, that's not our salvation. ...rather it's a settled conviction about where you will spend eternity."* – Lain Duguid

So, can we be crystal clear on what salvation is. There are many of you in here, there are some outside, and some over at the Gathering Place, and watching on line, that you've rested on one of those nine statements or something similar to them for your salvation and we declare we want to be clear as possible today that is not your salvation.

This is salvation: (I would encourage you, if you are trying to figure out what your salvation is, take your phone out and take pictures of the next four screens, take it back with your tonight, study it, read it, dig into the scripture yourself)

1. You are a sinner. Does Satan want you to believe that? No. Part of his scheme is to say, "Okay, you might sin, but you are not that bad. Again, there are people that sin worse than you." Scripture says for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. That's true of every single person in here right now, outside, the Gathering Place, and watching at home. Admitting that you are a sinner, not listening to

the scheme and the lie of Satan to say you're not that bad. "I do good things." "I give money." "I attend church." "I don't cuss." "I don't drink." "I don't chew. And I don't date girls that do."

2. God's penalty for sin is death. This comes right out of Genesis 3. Satan's playbook. For the wages of sin is death. Satan wants you to believe it's not. What did he say? "You will not surely die." But clarity, putting on the helmet of salvation... Though I am a sinner. **23 For the wages of sin is death...** but God doesn't leave it there. **...but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

3. Jesus died for my salvation. There is no other name whereby man can be saved. It's not on your works, on your attendance, your giving, your giving up addictions. It's coming to Jesus and calling on his name. **8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

So, how do I receive this free gift of salvation and have forgiveness for my sins.

4. I must place faith alone in Christ alone. Romans 10 says, **9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified...** Adam talked about that and being declared righteous from the breastplate of righteousness. **...and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.**

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. You could underline that, remove those words, and put all those other nine statements in because that's what people believe. Everyone who attends church will be saved. No, not true. Everyone who gives will be saved. Everyone who had parents that took them to church will be saved. Everyone who was baptized as an infant will be saved. No, the scripture is clear, and we must be clear. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. That is salvation. And there is no tother way, no other truth, no other plan. It's confessing that you are a sinner, confessing that Jesus is Lord, believing in your heart that he has been raised from the dead, placing faith alone in Christ alone, calling upon the name of Jesus and you will be saved.

There are two more things I want to say, but we are going to pray right now. I'm just going to ask everybody to bow their heads. This isn't time to gather keys and purses and phones and stuff. Give me just a few more minutes.

If you've never placed faith in Jesus, I pray that today is the day that you abandon the generosity, attendance, serving community, the fuzzy, confused thinking about salvation, and today you put on the helmet of salvation and stand in battle firmly, settled and clear and confident and courageous because of salvation.

Right where you are, just pray, Lord, I am a sinner and I know the penalty for that sin is death. But thank you that Jesus died for me. I confess my sins. I no longer lean on all these other ways I was thinking were going to bring me to heaven and I call out, I cry out, I declare with my mouth Jesus is Lord. I place faith alone in that name alone. In the name of Jesus, everyone agreed and said... Amen.

I would encourage you that if you prayed that prayer to please come down and meet with someone from our prayer team in just a moment.

But more than this, there are a couple of things. We also need to be *reminded* of salvation. We need to know, but we need to be reminded. This is a very comforting passage for me out of 2 Peter that I can be repetitious with this subject, and we need to be repetitious. Not just clear, but this is a message that needs to be on the repeat in our church and in our lives.

2 Peter 1: 12-15 **12 So I will always remind you of these things...** I'm not going to stop talking about it. **...even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.** So, you know this, you're saved, you're a believer in Christ Jesus. This is what we need to be reminded of.

You know what I told my friend going through the battle this week. "I don't want to be trite with this, I don't want to dismiss the pain that you're going through in life, but there was this moment of I know this feeling of you could lose it all. I could lose it all." I know it's easier to say to someone else than to walk out in my own life. But if I decide to stand with my friend and lose everything that I feel I've built and I lose it all, what we're talking about today is something I'll never lose. That's why the helmet of salvation is such a comfort to stand in battle not alone, but with someone else.

I told my friend, "Yeah, I know you've got a lot to lose. You've got a lot to lose. But this you'll never lose. You are a child of God; stand in that." We need to be reminded of that when we're in the thick of the battle. **13 I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, 14 because I know that I will soon put it aside...** You read this in John 21. **...as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.** Because Jesus told him, "Hey, you will stretch out your hands and die a similar death." So, he knew his time was not long upon this earth. But until that day comes, and my life is taken... **15 And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.**

We need to be reminded of our salvation in battle because when you take your stand for the Lord and end up on Satan's radar, yeah, it's going to cost you, and it's going to cost me. But this is one thing it's not going to cost me. That's why the helmet of salvation is so important to have on and to understand.

If I can just speak to my leader friends that are in the room. Our organizations, our platforms, our brands can all be lost. Salvation cannot. Put your priority in the right place. I have to be reminded of this all the time in ministry.

5. We need to encourage each other with the good news of our salvation. My friend Skip was in the first service. I was pretty emotional. I believe it was the worship, not the collagen. I am going to do some trace studies of those. I have a doctor friend that will run it through the lab. But I was pretty emotional because Skip was over there and I was over here. Skip lost Linda this year to COVID, and I don't know, when you sing about your salvation and when you sing about heaven and you sing about how He is alive, and the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the same power that saves my lifeless soul, and it is the same power that will raise Linda's body. I start putting faces and names in

songs of worship. As we are thanking our Father in Heaven, I can name a person and go that person is living that reality right now. Their faith has been made sight.

That's why we read in 1 Thessalonians that we need to encourage. So, I called Skip out and he came down and we had a great time of fellowship.

Paul says, speaking here in 1 Thessalonians 5 - ***10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.***

Jesus died and rose again, and we need to encourage one another with that. I just want to say, would you help your family and friends mourn your death one day? Know the Lord. It's one of the hardest conversations to have when we're preparing for a funeral, and I ask if the loved one knew the Lord. That is not the time that I want to hear pretty sure. You'll hear it from me. If you were to ask Amy, "Did Ted know the Lord?" She'll say, "I'm sure." I just want people to be able to say I'm sure, I'm certain. I look out at friends right now. They talk about it non-stop. I'm certain, I'm sure. We want you to be sure.

Father, in the name of Jesus, we thank you for this time and for all that you continue to do at this church. Not only will we not be silent, but I pray we get louder with speaking the truth and shining light of the Gospel of Jesus and the truth that he is the way the truth and the life. And no ones come to the Father... and we will stand and bow together as a church against the devil's schemes on this one for sure. May we stand together.

It is in the name of Jesus that everyone agreed and said... Amen.