

# How to Be Spiritually Strong Series

## The Weapon of Salvation (Eph. 6:17)

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By  
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### At A Glance:

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*These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.*

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# The Weapon of Salvation

## I. Introduction

### A. Illustration: My First Theology Class

1. I still remember the excitement I felt when taking my first theology class. Before I went to college, I remember thinking how wonderful it would be to be able to study the Bible and God for school. To me, this would be far more interesting than taking classes on English, math, government, etc., which I was taking in high school.
2. Even though I grew up in the church, I was completely unfamiliar with theology—the study of God. When I started to think about God and the content of Scripture intentionally, a whole new world opened up to me. I eagerly read the textbook for my theology class and I tried to absorb every bit of information in it. I genuinely enjoyed all the assignments in my class. I couldn't believe I had never heard any of this before, even though I grew up in the church. It was as if, for the first time, God was satisfying my soul's desire to know Him.
3. I can vividly recall looking in my theology class textbook and finding a chart that visualized and described salvation according to the Bible. Almost everything about that chart was new to me. My church experience taught me that salvation—being rescued by God—only referred to my moral failure being forgiven through Jesus. In my theology class I learned this was called justification. I thought this is all salvation referred to. I was greatly mistaken.
4. By learning about and examining the chart in my theology book, I started to realize salvation was a much broader and more complex topic than I realized. Salvation didn't just refer to a person expressing trust in Jesus, but was also a process a person goes through their whole lives until God provides the full number of benefits given to those who receive His kingdom in eternity. My salvation would not be fully complete until I exist in the presence of God in the new world He is going to make with my new resurrection body.
5. Salvation includes God drawing people to Himself through the activity of the Holy Spirit, becoming a new person in all areas of life with the help of God, progressively having your life transformed to be like Jesus, learning to obey God instead of our own desires, having our physical bodies completely remade into a new body that can coexist with God, adopting a different way of thinking, and the list goes on. There was a lot more to salvation than I ever thought. Coming to a deeper understanding of all that was involved in salvation changed how I saw myself and the direction of my life, which led to my life being transformed. Jesus was no longer irrelevant until a future time when I died. Jesus mattered right now in the present moment.

- B. For Christians, it is easy to think we already know everything there is to know about the word "salvation". We have heard how Jesus provides the opportunity to have our rebelliousness toward God repaired hundreds of times. Yet, like me, many Christians don't have a good

understanding of all that the Bible teaches about salvation. As a result, we don't always live in the fullness of life God provides with the spiritual strength we need.

- C. Those who fail to adequately understand the Bible's teaching on salvation, in general, disconnect their manner of living from their spiritual beliefs. What they think about God will be largely irrelevant to what happens in the "real world". This way of thinking is the result of a failure to understand the depth and impact that salvation has on a person. Those who think they can believe in Jesus and receive salvation without their lives being radically transformed as a result greatly misunderstand the nature of salvation. Every individual who genuinely is saved by Jesus will have every area of their life greatly impacted by His influence.
- D. In Ephesians 6:17, salvation is another resource provided by God to His spiritually adopted children that helps them live the way God desires them to live in a way that is good for us. Disciples who understand the work of God in salvation and live in its truths will soon discover the spiritual strength that is available to those who trust Jesus for daily living.

## II. Understanding Salvation

- A. The fifth piece of spiritual armor that provides disciples with strength for the purpose of standing strong in their spiritual battles is, "<sup>17</sup> And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Eph. 6:17). The "helmet of salvation" is a resource provided by God to aid and assist the follower of Jesus in their ability to live the way God instructs them to live.
- B. As mentioned earlier, salvation is a much broader term than many people realize. A simple definition of salvation is the application of the work of Jesus to human life.<sup>1</sup> As we begin to examine this piece of spiritual armor, it will be helpful for us to look at the broader understanding of salvation in the thinking of Paul. One verse that makes this broader understanding clear explains salvation this way:
 

<sup>29</sup> For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; <sup>30</sup> and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Rm. 8:29-30)
- C. In this passage, a number of important elements connected to salvation are listed and observed, such as foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, sanctification, and glorification. I learned about each of these terms and their meanings in my theology class. These were the types of items listed in the salvation chart in my textbook. The different activities involved in salvation are even listed in a general order. Clearly, according to this passage, salvation is a multifaceted process that involves several actions accomplished by both God and the person being saved—although in this text, the main focus is on God's activities regarding salvation.
- D. While we won't work our way through an explanation of each term, we will do so for one important aspect of salvation to understand this piece of spiritual armor—glorification. According to the apostle Paul, salvation culminates in God glorifying the individuals in whom He

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<sup>1</sup> Millard J. Erickson, [\*Introducing Christian Doctrine\*](#), ed. Arnold L. Hustad, Third Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 332.

has been at work throughout their lives. What does Paul mean by disciples being “glorified”? Generally, to be glorified is to be treated in a similar way as Jesus was treated by God the Father. Paul says disciples who suffer as Jesus suffered will “also be glorified with *Him*” (Rm. 8:17). Jesus was glorified by being raised from the dead, being honored by the Father, and being given authority by the Father (Eph. 1:20, Phil. 2:9-11, Jn. 17:1-5). In a similar, yet lesser way, the disciples will be rewarded for their faithfulness following their death. In the broadest sense, the glorification of disciples is a future event in which they will be treated well by God according to how they lived their lives on earth (Rm. 8:16-25). At this time, the process of salvation will be fully completed by the power of God. The destination toward which the disciples move their entire lives will finally be granted to them. Glorification is the point at which the doctrine of salvation and the doctrine of the last things (called eschatology) overlap.<sup>2</sup>

- E. Further, the disciple being glorified by God will include the disciple fully becoming the type of person they want to be and the person God is shaping them to be (Eph. 1:4, Col. 1:22). When the church is glorified, each person will have no moral defect in them anymore, being fully holy and blameless (Eph. 5:27). The disciple will actually become the type of person they’ve been trying to be their whole lives.
- F. Another aspect of being glorified is that disciples will be given access to Jesus and be able to see Him as He is (1 Jn. 3:2). The person disciples have been reading about their entire lives will stand right in front of them and they will be able to interact with Him! A growth in knowledge about God will be part of the glorification process for those who follow Jesus (1 Cor. 13:12). This doesn’t mean disciples will have the capacity to be like God and know everything there is to know but, at a minimum, the limitations and barriers to an accurate knowledge of God in this world will be removed.
- G. Glorification will also include an entirely new environment in which to live that is not corrupted by human rebellion against God’s ways (Rev. 21:1-22:5). The utopian world we can only image today will be a reality for disciples tomorrow. No matter how hard we try, we can’t make this world function as we know it could. We dream of a world without pain, heartache, and sorrow. We yearn for an existence where each person treats others with love and respect. While this will never be fully experienced in this world, it will be the common experience of those who are privileged to inherit the next world that God creates after the present universe serves its intended purpose.
- H. Until we understand salvation as a future event that is fully completed after this life, we will not understand this piece of spiritual armor and how it positively impacts our lives. We will discuss how our salvation functions as a spiritual weapon in the next section. Those who come to accept Jesus for who He claimed to be and trust what He said He accomplished for us in His death on the cross do not experience the full benefits of their commitment to Jesus in this life. There are future benefits that await the disciple connected to their salvation that must be waited for patiently. Our experience of complete healing and joy are yet future. God doesn’t

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<sup>2</sup> Millard J. Erickson, [\*Introducing Christian Doctrine\*](#), ed. Arnold L. Hustad, Third Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 384.

withhold any good thing from those who live His way (Ps. 84:11), but that doesn't mean we receive all the good things God wants us to have right away.

- I. Failing to understand all the benefits and resources provided to us by God after He rescues us is like a grandchild who inherits millions of dollars from a wealthy grandparent but doesn't know about it. Imagine a very wealthy grandparent who is dying. In their will, they leave millions of dollars available to their yet unborn first grandchild. For their own dishonorable purposes, the parents of the grandchild never tell the grandchild of the inheritance that is theirs even after they are born, are old enough to understand what that inheritance means, and meet all the requirements of the will to inherit the money. This grandchild ends up working their way through college and gets a job where they receive only a slightly adequate income. This grandchild goes through their entire life oblivious to the fact that their life could have been very different due to the riches that belong to them. The available wealth remains unused due to the ignorance of the grandchild. What a tragedy that would be. Disciples who receive the salvation of God through Jesus, yet fail to understand all its rich benefits due to a lack of understanding, are in a very similar situation. Their lives could be positively transformed due to the resources available to them but, through ignorance, those resources lay dormant as they are never used. This is an even greater tragedy.
- J. What difference will an understanding that salvation is more than merely having your moral failures wiped clean make in your life? When a person actually receives the salvation offered by Jesus, a number of important truths will apply to them. These realities will impact the saved person's life in significant ways which are guaranteed by God. When I realized my salvation meant that I would progressively be changed to be like Jesus, I started to take my pursuit of God much more seriously. No longer could I passively sit back and wait for Jesus to save me when this life was over. I realized, if I was truly saved by God, that I would eventually live differently out of necessity of being a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). A newness of life was available to me. I didn't have to live like everyone else. God had given me the power I needed to be different from those who didn't know God. I couldn't just stay where I was currently at spiritually. I had to progress. If I didn't grow and develop to be more like Jesus over time, it meant I wasn't really saved and I only thought I was saved.
- K. When the weight of the truths of salvation pressed on my soul, my life was significantly transformed. Doing what God told me to do was no longer optional. I had to get to work and become obedient to God with the help of the Holy Spirit in me. There was no other option. It was at this time when I more fully committed my life to Jesus sacrificing my time, comfort, and self-centered pursuits for the sake of directing my life toward the kingdom of God. Instead of going out and having fun with friends, I volunteered to help two different youth groups around the college I went to. Instead of directly going to bed, I would make sure I spent time reading Scripture every night before falling asleep. Instead of thinking the three or four chapel services I attended for school was sufficient while I slept in on Sunday morning, I got up and participated in the life of a local church. Instead of continuing to live in defeat regarding my sin, I knew it was my destiny to one day live a sin free life and that sin, even now, was contrary to my true nature. Over time, I learned to live victoriously over habitual sin (for the most part) that had

defeated me in the past when I adopted the mindset that victory was inevitable and not something out of reach. These are some of the differences that were seen in my life after I understood more deeply the nature of my salvation.

### III. The Weapon of Salvation

- A. Salvation is a spiritual weapon that provides strength to stand firm against the spiritual enemies that will need to be faced. But how does this work? We get an added insight into the way salvation functions as armor from another verse in which Paul uses the same imagery. In this other verse, Paul more clearly articulates what He means by “the helmet of salvation. In 1 Thessalonians 5:8 Paul adds, “<sup>8</sup> But since we are of *the* day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.” In this context, salvation is further limited to the aspect of hope resulting from salvation. It is reasonable to think Paul is teaching the same principle on multiple occasions and to understand the “helmet of salvation” (Eph. 6:17) in terms of the “helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8).
- B. According to Paul, and Jesus, those who receive the gift of salvation from God are intended by God to live their lives with a firm and secure hope that God will fully save them when this life is over (Rm. 8:23-25).<sup>3</sup> The certainty of salvation protects the soul from the temptations and trials of the Devil.<sup>4</sup> This hope of salvation is a grace of God in which the believer, through Jesus, expects and waits for all those good things promised by God in connection with his salvation.<sup>5</sup> It is being convinced of this future fulfillment is the hope of salvation.<sup>6</sup> The confidence that comes from this conviction makes an immediate and ongoing difference in the lives of disciples which becomes a source of spiritual strength. As disciples’ lives show signs that they have truly and genuinely received salvation from God, they can be assured that God will provide all the benefits of their salvation in the future. This secure hope of salvation has a profound impact on the disciple.
- C. What does this hope of a guaranteed fulfillment of salvation do for the disciple? Space will only permit mentioning a few items. First, the hope of salvation is the expectation of future glory that encourages the Christian soldier and helps overcome despair (Ps. 42:5, Tit. 2:11-14, 1 Jn. 3:3).<sup>7</sup> Living in such a broken world, it is easy to think things will never get better or it is only a matter of time before something else goes wrong. A disciple who understands how secure his salvation is will not give in to such despair, no matter how bleak or difficult his situation becomes. A salvation that is guaranteed provides a permanent source of encouragement that can’t be taken away. Even if nothing else is going well, the disciple can receive joy knowing that which is most important can never be taken away from him. When this is remembered, complete despair is impossible.

<sup>3</sup> John 14:1-3, 17:24, Mt. 25:34, Rev. 3:21

<sup>4</sup> Glenn Graham, [An Exegetical Summary of Ephesians](#), 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008), 566.

<sup>5</sup> William Gurnall and John Campbell, [The Christian in Complete Armour](#) (London: Thomas Tegg, 1845), 515.

<sup>6</sup> Rm. 13:11, Eph. 1:13-14, 1 Thess. 5:9-11, 2 Thess. 2:13, 2 Tim. 2:10, 1 Pet. 1:3-5, 2 Tim. 2:11-13, 1 Jn. 5:11-13

<sup>7</sup> Logos 10 Bible Study Software “Spiritual Armor” Thematic Outline, Matthew Poole, [Annotations upon the Holy Bible](#), vol. 3 (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1853), 679, Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2319.

- D. Second, salvation hope changes the way disciples think about their suffering. When a disciple suffers, there is a recognition that the suffering for Jesus's sake serves a greater purpose (Rm. 8:18). When disciples suffer, they know God will give them far more in return that far outweighs the suffering experienced. Not only do disciples who suffer for faithfulness get this reassurance, they also know their suffering is actively contributing to something greater that will stick with them for eternity: a worthwhile everlasting reward from God (2 Cor. 4:17). Those who belong to Jesus suffer very differently than those who don't know Jesus. Those who don't know Jesus think suffering and pain is pointless. Disciples know better. They know God uses their discomfort and pain for His good purposes and the positive results that will be brought about by their suffering are far more valuable than the negative pain that is caused. Like childbirth, the pain is worth the end result.
- E. Third, remembering our identity and destiny in Jesus motivates disciples to live lives dedicated to obeying what God says is good (1 Cor. 6:9-11, Tit. 2:11-12, 1 Thess. 5:8). Those who live with the hope of salvation will tell themselves that they have been washed and empowered to live morally pure lives because they will inherit the kingdom of God. Immoral living is contrary to the nature of the kingdom of God. Disciples can no longer live comfortably in open rebellion against God's way of life. Disciples are taught to deny ungodliness (bad desires). Instead, they live righteously and godly during their lifetime. Their identity as individuals who are connected to Jesus impacts how they conduct themselves day in and day out.
- F. Knowing who we are in Jesus and the fate that awaits us as His spiritually adopted children transforms our self-understanding and source of self-worth. Disciples learn to value the benefits of their secure identity in Jesus (Heb. 10:35-36). Our identity in Jesus then becomes the core of who we are. I've taken on different identities over the years from son, brother, athlete, captain, husband, father, and pastor. Yet, none of these roles define who I am. None of them get to the core of my identity. Above all, I am a disciple of Jesus who will inherit His present yet future kingdom as a child of His. This reality changes everything about me.
- G. When the time comes when both of my parents are gone, I will still be a child of God even though I might not be a son. I'm retired from sports, yet I'm okay with it and I don't have to find a new identity because my identity hasn't changed. My sense of self-worth is not found in how "successful" this church is. I don't have to work myself to death to try to be the best most respected or knowledgeable pastor because I'm the same person whether I work as a pastor or I don't. The reason? My identity is found in who I am in connection to Jesus and nothing else. I don't have to prove anything to anybody—not in an arrogant way. When people truly find their source of identity in Jesus, they can weather any change of circumstances, no matter how big, in a much better way because that which is most important to them and who they are can never be taken from them. Those who are secure in their salvation will have restful souls.

#### IV. How to Take Salvation

- A. While all this talk of the hope of salvation sounds nice, it won't be experienced unless a person is able to actually take hold of this assurance and hope. There are some specific action steps that can be taken by disciples in order to lay hold of this salvation hope in their soul. While more could be said about this, only a few options will be mentioned.

- B. First, a person must become fully convinced Jesus’s promise of salvation is really true as a personal conviction. Unless a person is persuaded that Christianity is really true, they will not experience salvation. Individuals should start by investigating to see if Jesus died and rose from the dead as a matter of fact in history. Jesus offered His resurrection as the primary justification for His claims and teachings. If Jesus’s resurrection happened, then the message of salvation He communicated is true. One way to do this would be to attend our next Sunday school class: *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. It will be starting the first Sunday in April at 9:30 am. This class will cover whether the gospels can be trusted as recording accurate history and providing support for the resurrection of Jesus. This class can be a good starting point for becoming convinced Jesus rose from the dead as a fact.
- C. Learning about the resurrection of Jesus and making a firm decision about it may be a process that could take years. Grow in your knowledge of the resurrection of Jesus. Learn the various positions people take on it. Listen to debates about it. Determine which view has the most support in its favor. This is the single most important topic we can ever know. The fate of our soul depends on it. If Jesus died and rose again, Christianity is true and His promise to give salvation to those who follow Him is reliable. If Jesus didn’t rise from the dead, then Christianity is not true, and Jesus can’t be trusted. Christianity is that simple.
- D. Second, it is helpful for a person to gain a broader perspective on salvation beyond having our immoral actions forgiven by Jesus. One way to do this is to read chapters 1-2 of Ephesians in which Paul explains the disciple’s salvation in greater detail. In these chapters, Paul briefly explains some of the other elements of salvation that are often neglected and how salvation impacts a person’s life. In this section, Paul also describes the tremendous power available to those who receive salvation and the authority of God as it pertains to His manner of saving people.

#### V. Conclusion

- A. Resting securely in our own personal salvation and living in the hope that salvation provides is a source of spiritual strength that will help disciples stand firm in their spiritual battles. The mindset of the disciple holds tightly to the rhetorical questions found in Romans 8:31 and 32, “If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?” and again, “He who did not spare His own Son...how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”.
- B. Since God is on our side and sacrificed so much in Jesus to bring us to His side, disciples can live with full confidence that nothing can stand between them and God. Why? Because God is more powerful than any enemy, and no one has more authority than Him. Also, God is good and sacrificially gives everything that is good to us.



**VI. Questions for Further Thought**

- A. Do you believe a person can know for sure they are saved? Why or why not?
- B. Jesus was convinced His position with the Father was secure, as well as the position of the disciples. How is this reality revealed (Jn. 15:9, 16:27, 17:23-26)?
- C. Do you have any doubts or questions about the permanence of salvation or the assurance of your own personal salvation?
- D. What nonintellectual challenges cause people to doubt their salvation?
- E. What other possibilities and action steps might help a person take salvation in order to live in the hope of salvation?