

What do the following sports have in common? Horse racing, football, ice hockey, cricket, snow boarding, and rock climbing? Here is a hint - coal miners and riot police wear them too. Those who participate in these activities all wear helmets. I left out skydiving because I have never understood why skydivers wear helmets. If your parachute doesn't open your helmet will be wearing you.

More and more people are wearing helmets today. Growing up I never wore a helmet when I rode my bike. I do now. I have a scar on the back of my head that wouldn't be there if I would have been wearing a helmet when I was skiing as a young man. It matches the scar on the back of my head I received from a baseball bat back in the days when catchers did not wear helmets. I don't know how effective helmets are in preventing head injury but it stands to reason that you are better off wearing one than not. This morning I want to talk about a helmet that offers protection not for your skull but for what's inside your skull - your mind.

When it comes to spiritual warfare, the helmet of salvation is not optional. It protects your mind and guards your thoughts. After all, that's where the action is when it come to spiritual warfare. The battleground of this invisible war is not a geographical location but is fought on the battleground of our minds. Satan's blows are directed at our confidence in Christ. The two dangerous edges of the enemy's spiritual broadsword are discouragement and doubt. He discourages us by reminding us of our failures and our flaws. He also plants seeds of doubt about the love of our heavenly Father. The helmet of salvation keeps our thinking straight and rescues us from mental confusion.

When it comes to my thought life there are only three subjects that make me anxious; thoughts from the past, in the present, and about the future. The assurance of my salvation gives me a proper perspective about my past, present and future.

We tend to think of salvation as a past event. When someone asks, "Are you saved?" they are usually referring to a past decision to follow Christ. They are actually asking, "Have you been saved?" But a more theologically accurate question would be, "Are you BEING saved?" Salvation is not limited to a past experience. It's like marriage. If I ask, "Are you married?" I'm not asking, "Did you have a wedding in the past?" My question implies that you had a wedding that began a process that continues in the present and, by God's grace, will continue into the future. The wonderful reality of salvation is that our relationship with Jesus, that began sometime in the past, continues today and will continue on into the future.

The security of our salvation rests on three other theological terms like a three-legged stool. These transformative events enable us to overcome our doubts and gain an eternal perspective. The first leg of the stool is justification.

I. Justification: I have been saved from the penalty of my past. “By grace you HAVE BEEN saved through faith.” Ephesians 2:8. Ro. 5:1 says, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Justification is a legal term that means "to be declared not guilty."

We are all guilty of past sin. Sin is valuing something more than God. It's a belittling of his glory, a dishonoring of his name. But God, in His righteousness, upholds the honor of his name and the worth of his glory. The opposite of sin is righteousness. If sin belittles the worth of God by choosing against him; righteousness magnifies the worth of God by choosing for him. Therefore, if God just passed over sin and let sinners go without just punishment, he would not be righteous. It would be like saying: the devaluing of my worth is no big deal; the belittling of my glory is unimportant; the dishonoring of my name doesn't matter. If that were true, God would be unrighteous. And we would be without hope.

So God did not let it be true. He put forth His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for sin. The death of Jesus is a demonstration of God's righteousness and a declaration of the value that God places upon his glory, the hatred He has for sin, and the love He has for sinners.

So, Paul reminds Titus, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Titus 3:5-7

Because Jesus has paid the penalty for my past sins, I have been declared "not guilty" by the Judge of the Universe. I have been made right with God.

II. Sanctification: I am being saved from the power of sin in the present. We have been saved but we are currently working out our salvation. “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” 1 Cor 1:18.

Salvation not only sets me free from the penalty of sin in the past, it also frees me from the **power of sin** in the present. Salvation didn't end when I walked an aisle, prayed a prayer and asked Jesus into my heart. The grace that saves also sanctifies.

Sanctification is the ongoing work of salvation transforming me daily into the person God created me to be. In order to be conformed into the image of Christ I must say "no" to sin just as Jesus did. Sin deforms us. God's grace transforms us. "For the grace of God has appeared (in the **past**), bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the **present** age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, (in the **future**) who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." Titus 2:11-14

Too many people receive the gift of life and then just wait it out until they get their mansion in the sky. This version of Christianity has no power. God's grace saved me in the past but His grace still shapes my life presently as I grow in my understanding of God and appropriate the grace to say "no" to sin.

Did you know you can kill sin? "If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Ro. 8:13. If I do not have the power of the Holy Spirit on board then all I am left with is my own will power. Some people have more will power than others but will power is no match for the power of sin. Some of the most disciplined people I know are powerless over sin. Later this summer I will preach a series on killing sin.

In the past I have been **justified**, in the present I am being **sanctified**. But it gets even better. I can look forward to glorification.

III. Glorification: I will be saved from the presence of sin in the future. I have been justified. I am being sanctified and I will be glorified. In the future, when I am **glorified**, I will be free from the **presence of sin**. Oh glorious day!

Do you ever get weary over the present state of things? Do you groan? You're not alone. **"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery**

to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” Ro. 8:18-21

When I wear the helmet of salvation my whole perspective changes. I can live purposefully and confidently in this life because I know what awaits me in the future. Without the knowledge of this glorious future I will live without confidence and die without hope. Writer and philosopher George Bernard Shaw was an atheist and very cynical toward Christianity. He once said, “Christianity might be a good thing if anyone ever tried it.” In his last book before his death at age 94 he wrote: “The science to which I pinned my faith is bankrupt. Its counsels, which should have established the millennium, led instead directly to the suicide of Europe. I believed them once. In their name I helped to destroy the faith of millions of worshipers in the temples of a thousand creeds. And now they look at me and witness the great tragedy of an atheist who has lost his faith.” George Bernard Shaw went to his grave with a Nobel Prize and no hope.

Are you being saved? You may think, "Well I don't know how anyone can know that." If you put on the helmet of salvation you can KNOW you have eternal life. The testimony of His word is this: "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so **that you may know** that you have eternal life." 1 Jn. 5:11-13.

"How can you be so sure?" I KNOW I have eternal life because salvation is a gift. It is not dependent upon my performance. "The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life." Ro. 6:23. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." Ro. 3:23-24. A gift is "something voluntarily transferred by one person to another without compensation." It is freely given. If I offer you a gift and at some point decide to take it back because I am not pleased with you, then, by definition, it wasn't a gift. If there is anything you could do that would cause God to withdraw salvation from you then it wasn't a gift.

Put on the helmet of salvation. When the devil brings up your past just say, "Paid in full." When he points out your flaws just say, "God isn't finished with me yet." And when he suggests your future is bleak, feel free to remind him of his.