LSB Ephesians 6:10 - 17 Pt. 7

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all, having taken up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one, 17 also receive the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

This morning we find ourselves in the first Lord's day of the new year, which the world has chosen to forget, is Year of our Lord, 2025. How fitting that we celebrated the little ceremony of remembrance together at our communion service this morning.

Those few of us who know Jesus intimately and personally, who enjoy His fellowship in our hearts, know that every year is His year. We know that history is literally, His Story.

His story is the history revealed and recorded in this book of Satan's usurping the rule of this world through the power of sin, and God's sovereign plan to retake this world, and multitudes of humans who dwelt in it, by cancelling the power of sin, through the death of His Son, in our place, to pay the debt of sin, and the resurrection of His Son from death to life.

And that Story is not yet finished, yet the details of it's completion are available to us in the prophecies. Jesus will return in cataclysmic events and put Satan in prison, and rule on this earth for a 1000 years before a new

heavens and new earth are created.

I think it may be a good year to be on His side, to be in Him, and with Him as the year 2025 unfolds. And of course someone could say that's a nonsense statement because every moment of every year it's imperative to be on His side.

True, but there's a sense in which christians in America could snooze right through their christian life, unperterbed in past centuries. But I think I see history moving to a time where it will be imperative for christians to understand exactly what they believe and be prepared to give to every man an answer for the faith they hold tenaciously to, even if it costs them.

And it was just such a scenario that Paul was addressing when he wrote down these items of spiritual armor that can keep us alive and unharmed in the midst of a serious spiritual warfare.

This morning we find ourselves in the final verse. OK, next to final verse. It will be argued that verse 18 is as weighty in it's necessity as all of the other armor pieces combined. Prayer. And we will get there, I promise. But this morning we have two pieces of spiritual warfare armor to discuss in verse 17.

The helmet is the final piece of defensive protective armor that keeps us alive. And the sword is the single piece of offensive armor that we actually do battle and gain ground for our King with.

So let's look at those, and by reminder, if you missed some of these discussions of the previous articles of defense, those studies are on line in two formats. These manuscripts get put on line for reading, and thanks to my kids, we now have an audio recording alongside the text. 13 years worth. When they round up the christians, I want to be easy to find.

Vs. *17 also receive the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,*

This is obvious. The helmet protects the control center of the human body. One blow to the head and it's game over.

I love car illustrations because I'm a gear head. Sorry 'bout that. It may be nonsense to everyone else. Modern cars have a busy main computer that talks to electronic control modules all over the car. Dozens of them feeding information to the main computer which in turn tells the ecm's what to do next.

I watched a giant chase the other night on one of those stupid time waster reels on facebook. The police were chasing a Ford F150 Raptar at high speed for many minutes. The guy just kept running and running and running, mile after mile, endangering hundreds of other folks he was passing and driving insanely around.

It finally took four cop cars including damage to one and another one totaled, and a helicopter to smash him and spin him in pieces all over the place to get him stopped. But it occurs to me that the technology is already in place for the police to use his license plate number to get the vin number of that truck and be able to kill his computer by wifi. The framework is in place for authorities to take over that trucks computer, shut down the engine, and unlock the doors, remotely.

That chase could have been over in less than a minute. But of course as soon as the cops have that capability, it'll also get into criminal hands on the black market and chaos will ensue.

Our brain is like the main computer in a modern car telling all the electronic control modules everywhere working together, what to do. Our logic for what to do next resides up there in our craniums. Some better than others. But the rest of the machine can be quickly neutralized by injury and damage to the main frame in my head.

Without a helmet, all the other pieces of protection can quickly become

valueless. A simple blow to the information processor leaves all the other stuff moot. Neutralized.

So, what exactly is the helmet of salvation? This is interesting because there are lots of different ideas about this piece of armor. Why is salvation here? It's like it's counterintuitive. If someone isn't saved, he doesn't need any of the rest of the armor. Right?

Salvation is assumed. Armor is necessary because of salvation. I mean, I need the armor precisely because I'm a christian. Salvation is what put me in harms way in the first place. Leaving satan's camp behind and joining forces with God's army is what happened **at** salvation. It's why I need this armor. How is it then a piece of the armor? And arguably the most important piece.

Here's why, and once you see it, you can't unsee it. The christian life, in this world where Satan is the current ruler, is a battlefield. Look around, there's dead christians all over the place. Or is there?

I've been a christian well over 50 years now. Only a handful of the christians I began with are still in the battle. So many people have dropped out along the way. Casualties on the battlefield. How do I explain that?

I will argue that if you have the helmet of salvation, you'll finish the battle. I'll argue further, that the casualties lieing dead all over the battlefield, wouldn't be missing, if they had the helmet.

Let me put it very simply. Saved people finish. They don't get shot down and neutralized on the battle field. It makes it pretty simple. **IF** you have this helmet on, you **WILL** finish alive.

I was tickled at one of the pastor's conferences, to hear one of my hero's in the faith speak. It was a lunch time optional talk. A "break out" session. It was Dr. Piper. John Piper. And upon his entering the room, he looked around, and there were a lot of people with hair the same color as mine, and

I might add, his also. And he laughed and said, Oh! A room full of "finishers".

My vocabulary gained a word that day, and it's a word that I love. A "finisher" is an old christian that's still standing. Been in the war a long time, and every evidence is that, considering the white hair, it's good odds that he will finish. The race. Been in the war a long time. Satan couldn't take him out.

That's the helmet of salvation. Lots of people started the race. Lots of people ran into the battle. There's dead people laying all over the place. The ones who finish, won't finish because of anything remarkable about them. They'll finish because they have the helmet of salvation.

It's what the apostle John meant when he looked around after christianity was becoming a mature religion, he outlasted all the other apostles who had been martyred which is a noble way to finish, but John lasted long enough to look around the battlefield at dead people who claimed to be christians, but they weren't. John says; 1 Jn. 2:

19 They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they were of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be manifested that they all are not of us. 20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.

It gets very confusing. People who claimed to be with us, leave orthodoxy and become anti christians. We thought they were in the battle with us, and best case scenario, they disappear, they just depart, but worst case scenario, they actually join in Satan's battle against christianity.

John says, they were never really christians. The fact that they left is the proof. What looked like a wheat, was actually a tare. They never had the helmet of salvation because they were never really regenerated true christians.

We could boldly put it another way. True, regenerated, quickened from the dead, Holy Spirit indwelt christians, are indestructable. This helmet makes me indestructable in this battle. I might get knocked down and winded, but if I have the helmet of genuine salvation, one way or another, I'll be getting back up and still be in this battle on God's side.

This doctrine has a name. It's called the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. And it's all over the Bible. Once you see it and understand it, you begin to see it everywhere. Perhaps Peter states it best for us. 1 Peter 1:

*3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy **has caused us** to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, **having been kept** in heaven for you, 5 who are **protected** by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*.

having been kept . . . in heaven . . . for you. You who are the protected ones.

The key word idea here is the word translated *kept*. *Thereo* in the greek. And it means guarded. Watched over.

Our salvation is an inheritance that we get fully, later, in heaven. But meanwhile, our inheritance is guarded. Kept.

If salvation was up to me, I'd have lost it long long ago. But real salvation, the kind described here by the apostle Peter, doesn't originate with me, and it doesn't depend on me to keep it. It is protected, guarded, kept . . . where? in heaven. By who? The Father and the Son guard my salvation, in heaven.

This helmet of genuine salvation, makes me indestructible. Satan can throw anything and everything he's got at me, but with my helmet of genuine God generated salvation, he can't kill me. Spiritually. All those

dead people laying around; They never had the helmet in the first place.

A couple of years back, when Covid had sort of cleared out, my pastor and mentor John MacArthur was rejoicing over something that was a strange phenomenon unseen before Covid.

The reason for his rejoicing was how clarifying covid had made everything. His point was before covid it was much harder to know who the real christians were. As soon as it cost anything at all to be a christian, the numbers dropped by between 25 and 40%.

Things get black and white when a little pressure drives out a whole bunch of pretend christians. Real christians stay. Phony ones depart and never come back. For John at least, that clarity was something he rejoiced over.

If you think about it, all of the other articles of armor have an effort / effect element dependent on what we do. They all require some diligence on my part.

14 ***Stand firm*** *therefore, having* ***girded*** *your loins with truth, and having* ***put on*** *the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having* ***shod*** *your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all, having* ***taken up*** *the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one,*

I stand, I gird, I put on, I shod, I take up. All of those are collaborative. I do something to get something. But please notice; Salvation is received. I either have it or I don't. No amount of effort on my part can put that helmet on me.

And once God quickens me from death to life and regenerates me, there's nothing I can do to change what He did. The helmet of salvation is received. And those who have it, survive.

I never get too worked up when people come and listen to the teaching a

couple of times and then disappear. It's really sort of out of my hands. If they've got the helmet, they rejoice and stay. If they don't have the helmet, they quickly say, this guy's very opinionated and kind of hard to listen to.

I don't get discouraged because I'm in good company. That's what they said to Jesus in John 6 before they all walked away. The word of God either causes rejoicing or departure. Either way, it's out of my control. I only need to be faithful to keep teaching it.

The helmet of salvation explains why there's dead people laying all over the battlefield. No helmet. Otherwise it all gets hopelessly confusing. We aren't confused. Saddened, yes, because we genuinely loved many of those folks. But the helmet ends the confusion. If they went out from us, they were not of us. It's a hard truth.

There is one final aspect to consider regarding salvation. The biblical authors used the word differently than most christians think of it today.

For the authors of the new testament, salvation was threefold. The initial calling out of this world by God's quickening you from death to life. We are born again. Our spirits are made alive together with Christ who has taken up residence in my heart. I'm a new baby christian on that day.

And like a new baby I am hungry and want to be fed. Salvation is an ongoing life long hunger for more and more of Jesus. We find Him in this book. And as we gaze continuously into this book for a lifetime, our salvation doesn't stay static, we are transformed little by little into His image.

2 Cor. 3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit*.

The second phase of our salvation takes place for a lifetime. That's why I'm concerned about all the so-called christians in this town who have no

hunger or desire for more of God or for being fed in His word.

For me it's very black and white. If you are truely born again to life in Christ, quickened from the dead to life together with Jesus, who lives inside your heart, you will be hungry for more of His fellowship and for growth together with Him, daily, and that ongoing salvation is a lifelong hunger and thirst for more depth in Him, which is more depth in this book.

He IS the Logos. He IS the book. True salvation transforms us into His image every day for a lifetime.

Then the third and final use of the word salvation by the apostles is on the day that we see Him, face to face, and the transformation is complete.

Three parts. Initial quickening from death to life. My sins are removed and I have a new life, apart from this world, indwelt by Jesus who lives in my made alive heart. Then I am transformed day by day as I spend time with Him, in His book. And finally my salvation is complete, on that day that I see Him with my eyes, face to face.

Those who have received the helmet of salvation, grow stronger and stronger, day by day, just like a baby grows into a mature adult. We don't send babies into wars. We don't send small children into wars. Wars require mature adults.

Satan's having an easy war these days, isn't he. Mature robust transformed christians who are strong in Him, strong in His word, are thin on the ground in my experience.

OK, let's move on to our final piece of armor. And this is a fun one, because finally, we move from defense to offense. It turns out that God's soldiers can actually go in and retake enemy territory back for God!

All of the other pieces were for protection from the enemy. This one is for doing damage to the enemy!

17 also receive the helmet of salvation, ***and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God****,*

I'm not very impressive. I'm shy and reserved. I have a serious inferiority complex. The last place anyone ever expected to find me was in a pulpit speaking to any audience, however small or loving. It just wasn't in the cards I got dealt.

Except for one thing. I am completely and unreservedly and unapologetically convinced that this book has it's own power outside of me.

With all of my limitations, I actually only have to do one thing, and no one is more surprised than me that I can actually accomplish that single thing. My job is to unleash the word of God. Get it out there. What God does with it is His business.

The word of God is like a lion. All I do is let the lion out of the cage and see who He eats. Kind of fun. Kind of freeing, in a way. If I wasn't thoroughly convinced of that power apart from me, separate from my powers, you couldn't get me into this pulpit with a crane.

But I am convinced. The very words of the book have convinced me that the book has it's own power. Built in. It's a living thing once released.

Isa. 55:10,11
10 For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth
And making it bear and sprout,
And giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
It will not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what pleases Me,
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

I believe every word of that. It's why you hear very little else from this pulpit. I'm convinced I'm powerless. Useless. I'm perfect for this job. Because I'm convinced I've really got nothing to offer. Therefore, if I'm up here, you're getting heavy doses of the book.

Paul was apparently beyond unimpressive. History tells us he was short and bald and hard to look at. And reading between the lines we think he had an eye disease that would have made him painful to look at. But he turned the world upside down. The whole world was different after Paul. That isn't hyperbole.

Paul said; *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for **it is** the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* Rom. 1:16

What was his power source? The gospel. This book. Every word of it. It's a living thing. The words of this book have a life of their own, replete with the power of God to cause His desired effect.

Hebrews 4:12 says; *12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

We don't know who predated who or for that matter who the author of the letter to the Hebrews even was. But the idea is identical. The sword of the Spirit of God is the Word of God. It is a living active thing. It pierces hearts that we thought were hopelessly unpiercable. Nothing is impenetrable to God's sword.

We have no control over when or how it works. God takes His word and does His pleasure according to His purpose. But we do have control. If our mouths are shut; no word, no power, no result, no glory for our king.

I love the idea that Jesus told to the crowds in Mark chapter 4.

26 And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; 27 and he sleeps and rises, night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. 28 The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. 29 But when the grain is ripe, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

The seed is the word of God. The farmers job is to sow it. Broadcast the seed. Then go to bed. What happens after that is out of the farmers control. That farmer can't force the seed to grow. It grows on it's own. Apart from anything else the farmer can do, it grows. Or it doesn't. Either way, it's not up to the farmer. His only cause in the effect is to throw out seed.

So then, we've learned in this passage that if true salvation is our helmet, we're indestructible, and upon that truth we add a working knowledge of the truths of this book, which protects our loins, and a practicle life style of righteous living based in that truth which is our breastplate, and then we add to those two, gospel shoes, which is the preparation in our minds of the mechanics of the gospel so that we can tell others how and why it is that we are saved, and how salvation is possible for them too. We have the gospel prepared for delivery on short notice. Ready to go. And we have a great shield of faith in things we cannot yet see to shield us from all the projectiles that will be hurled at anyone who proclaims release to Satan's captives.

And finally, based on all of those things necessarily in place, we wield our sword, which is the living active powerful Words of this book, and we actually charge and do damage to the enemy who we are protected from. The sword is powerful enough, that with all of the other protections in place, we can with it regain lost territory, and return gained ground to our King.

Listen to what Paul shares about taking up the sword and marching

fearlessly right into the heat of battle.

2 Cor 10:*3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the tearing down of strongholds, 5 as we tear down speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,*

That isn't a guy cowering in a corner doing his best to hide behind his shield. Those are the words of a warrior doing spiritual battle and gaining ground and glory for his King.

If you analyze the spiritual battle in our current world, and indeed throughout history, the focus of the enemy, and Satan has a powerful intellect, he isn't stupid, he understands perfectly where to focus his anti christian effort, and if you study his method, his focus, he goes after the book.

If the power to regain stolen ground is in the words of this book, that's your focus, if you're Satan. Disable the Book. Discredit the Book. Dis-arm the book. Send in phony fake christians to tell the real christians the book is full of errors. The book is not plenary inspired. Only parts of it are inspired. The rest is junk. Blah blah blah.... There's no end to it. Satan is relentless.

Well, go on line, and you'll see christian after christian, and learning institution after learning institution apologizing for what this book says. It's like the christians are embarrassed to own their book.

Good job Satan. Get the christians to stand off at arms length from the only power source they really have.

I want to finish this morning with an illustrative text written by the apostle John. And we won't get into depth of meaning, I only want you to see that he addresses the church in the various stages of a salvation that is ongoing.

Three categories of believers are seen here. 1 John 2:12 - 14

12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. 13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you have known Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you have known the Father. 14 I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

2025 is the year when the church needs spiritual young men, strong in the Word, on the front lines, doing battle, gaining territory for the King of kings.

There should be hundreds of old guys like me who can teach the book. But there should be thousands of young guys, hungry for the book, bulking up, well muscled in this book, and going to the front lines of battle.