

Helmet of Salvation & the Shield of Faith

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[0:00] This is a sermon from King's Church West Northean. I'll give you a few seconds to do that in case you want to move some slightly random props into the middle while you do that.

So, I know a guy who was once found racing to the local primary school with one of his children very, very late.

And school was only a few minutes ago from their house, but they drove because that's how late they were. And as they reached the school to rush into a parents' night or similar, their child was found prancing behind them saying, Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow! as they walked across the stony car park. Weirdly, their child had forgotten their shoes for parents' night. Couldn't possibly tell you who it was. And, uh, why didn't you wear shoes on?

I thought we were going to the shops or something. They were going to the shop. They were going to the shop. For goodness sake. Come on, let's go in. I hope no one notices. As they walked through the middle of the school with this teacher parent thinking, Oh my goodness, I can't believe I'm here and my child hasn't even got shoes on.

[1:51] Anyway, you and me know, hopefully, that we need to be dressed in the right clothes for where we're going. We need to be fully dressed in the right thing.

And that's the theme of Ephesians 6 and onwards, is that we're hearing of the armour of God, that we have an amazing array of tools that the Lord has given us and things that he's done to us and for us that we need to be choosing to put on if we're going to stand in the spiritual life for him.

And our question today is, have you got your clothes on? And thank you. You all do in the physical realm. Absolutely excellent job. This boy has never been to school again with no shoes on.

His father has been doubly sure every time he's been in charge of that. But we similarly need to do the same when it comes to our spiritual clothing. And we're reminded in Ephesians 6 that we need to put them on for a number of good reasons and the right clothing on.

And today we're looking at two essential pieces. We're looking at the helmet of salvation and the shield of faith. So let's have a look at Ephesians 6, 10 to 17. I'm going to skip a little bit in the middle.

[3:06] It says, Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

For our struggle isn't against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Therefore, put on the full armour of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground and after you have done everything, to stand.

And then he goes on to talk about the belt, the breastplate and the shoes. And then in verse 16, In addition to this, Take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. God's vision for you and I is big.

[4:10] Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Be strong in the Lord. And put on the full armour of God.

There are two things that we can... In fact, a third one here, so that you can stand. Stand means to endure, to remain firm, to hold your ground. And there is a sort of implicit warning here that it's possible that if we're not clothed correctly, that there is danger that we might not make the distance. We might not endure. We might not hold the ground that God has called us to. If we're unaware that we've been saved or unable to exercise trust of the Lord, or we don't have his truth holding us together, or we don't have the stability that comes from the shoes of peace, of being at peace with

God, and all the other bits and pieces there.

But there is a real danger for us. But equally, there are wonderful, positive reasons that he wants us to stand. And for this, I'm particularly reminded of Ephesians 2.10 that I want us to look back at just now.

And which I just think is such a wonderful, wonderful verse. For we, for you, are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

[5 : 29] Walk in them. It's not just the avoidance of the negative. It's not just the kind of dealing with the attacks, which Scripture is pretty clear will come. But it's also this amazing vision that we've had throughout Ephesians of being in Christ, being his, doing what he wants us to do in the light of that.

And I love this idea that for you and for me, he has prepared in advance good works for you to do. It's not just about avoiding of the bad. It's about living a life of being where he wants us and all the things he's called us to.

The everyday things and the supernatural things. The kind of mundane and the exciting. He's prepared good things for you and I to walk in. It's very hard to walk if you're not standing, though. And we're given the armour of God so that we might be a people who can stand and keep moving into all that he's got for us. In fact, Ephesians 3.20 tells us, Now to him who's able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine.

That he is able, sorry, to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine. He made you. He's prepared good works for you. And you can't even currently imagine all of those things that he will do. And one day I hope for each of us when we look back at a life of faith, of walking with him, of standing for him through difficulties, and seeing that he has been with us and calling us forward into his good things each step of the way.

[6 : 54] Amen. It's very hard to walk if you can't stand. Now, his strength in this is essential.

Because what this isn't saying is, right, you've got your armour, now you're on your own. Christians, you've got these good things. Make sure you pick them up and make sure you work really hard. I mean, we are cool to work really hard. But the good news is this whole section of scripture is sandwiched in a couple of really important verses.

Right at the start, be strong in yourself. No, be strong in the Lord. And right after the armour of God, there is this other verse. I think it's verse 18, which I've suddenly not opened my Bible.

It's a bit annoying. I've forgotten to write it down. Oh, no, sorry. Yes, 618. Here it is. Pray in the spirit on all occasions. This is kind of a sandwich of dependence. He says, be strong in him.

And talk to him and pray all the time because you can't do it on your own. And then it's his armour anyway. He has provided it so that we as the weak people might be able to stand and be strong in him.

[7 : 57] His vision for you is big. He has things for you to walk in. And I know we are. And he continues to want to lead you in that. But his strength is essential.

Ephesians is repeatedly about being in Christ and just how vital that is. Do you have a role? Put on the armour is an active thing.

Taking up your shield is an active thing. Remaining alert. Praying in the spirit is an active thing. Our role is accessing and depending on his strength.

Clothing ourselves in what he's achieved for us. And not thinking we're the strong ones in this partnership with him. The armour belongs to him.

And he gives it to us. So we're going to spend a few minutes looking at the two different tools that I'm talking on today. Slightly wonky order. But we're going to talk about the helmet of salvation.

[8 : 53] And we're going to talk about the shield of faith. Take up the helmet of salvation. Okay. Put on the helmet means making ourselves consciously aware that we have been saved.

And making ourselves consciously aware that he has done this amazing thing in us. And we're called to put on the helmet.

I mean here's an example of what it might have looked like. I'm not really, like we're not totally sure. But unfortunately I couldn't find anything particularly helpful as a modern illustration. But the best I had was my wonderful cycle helmet.

Okay. I put this on for when I'm going biking. I put this on because I know I'm a bit clumsy and I may well go head over heels. And because I know I have a purpose. I'm going to get somewhere on my bike. And we are given this helmet of salvation as something that is freely given to us through Jesus.

And it's had a massive, massive effect on our lives. When we put our trust in him, various movements happened. Various things changed for us. And we know this if we've trusted in Jesus that we've moved from death to life spiritually.

[10:06] From lost to found. From rejected to accepted. From an alien of God who he almost didn't know. To someone who is a child of God who he intimately cares about.

From unknown and unloved to loved and known fully. Warts and all. From guilty to forgiven. From slave to son or daughter of the king.

Salvation is a thing that is achieved for you and given to you. And it brings great security. If you were to die tomorrow, you're secure. You're okay.

You will meet him. If you live tomorrow, you're secure. You get to be with him. This gift has been given to you when you trusted in Jesus.

And it has a few functions. A bit like my cycle helmet. I don't mean to make light of it. I wish I had a big chunky helmet I could bring in to say, like, look at the impact of this. But this is the best I had.

[11:07] And the first one is, a helmet for a soldier is protective. It does that thing of making you secure in battle. As I say, if you were to die tomorrow, you'd be secure.

If you were to live tomorrow and be moving forward for him, you can be secure. His protection is with you day after day. And often that looks like intervening where you don't even know it. And other times that looks like eternal security of facing death and not winning that battle right there, but going to be with him for eternal life.

We have to put on our helmet and remember, I am saved. I belong to him. I am secure in his hands. He gives you salvation to protect you, to wrap himself around you, and to make sure you are good from this point on, from that point on, when you trusted in him.

Mike McLeister shared with us some months ago at the weekend away the idea of being saved, being this kind of ongoing process. There's a moment where you are saved and you still are being saved from the penalty, the power and the presence of sin.

It was a beautiful picture of this ongoing thing that he's doing. But we can be secure if we've trusted in him. We're secure. We are protected eternally. Guess I wonder, how do you remember, like you personally, how do you remember that amazing reality?

[12:28] Because if you're anything like me, you live in the goodness of it. Freely, we have to approach God with every need and the life of faith, live with him. But also, it kind of becomes weirdly familiar.

Remember that day where you first trusted in him and it was like, oh my goodness, this is absolutely amazing. And then, I don't know how many years it is for you, but it's 20-something. No, lots more than that for me now that I've been saved.

And somehow, salvation becomes kind of familiar. You get used to wearing the helmet and you sort of almost, you could almost forget that you've got it on. And I would encourage you, be mindful. Choose to put on the helmet of salvation by remembering what he saved you from. You're not guilty anymore. He looks at you and he loves you.

And he has forgiven you. You're not rejected. You're not alien. You're not lost and wandering. In him, you're saved to life and to acceptance and to being a beloved child of God.

[13:25] And my challenge for you is to not become too familiar with the feeling of that thing that you could almost forget that you're wearing. How will you be consciously aware that he has saved you, that he has rescued you?

Because it changes everything, right? If you're a soldier walking out to battle and you know that you are secure because you've got this protection, your life is very different from someone kind of cowering from every arrow or every enemy that comes along.

Another thing is the helmet is identifying. And if you see me in the street and if I, say, arrive at a meeting and I've got this with me, people say, oh, you biked today, probably because they're shocked because I biked so little, but also because they know what I'm about.

I've got this helmet with me so they can tell I've been... Remember, as a kid, it was a big deal, people walking to banks with motorcycle helmets on. And you had all these... I don't know if that's just...

Was that the gear of choice, I guess, people robbing banks? I remember as a kid, if you saw someone, I always thought they were a bank robber if I saw someone with a motorcycle helmet on. Because I realised, actually, there are a lot of people who ride motorbikes that are very lovely

humans, but it just happened to be the thing that was talked about a lot when I was about six, you know?

[14 : 37] But the helmet does identify you as well. Well, when you are saved, you have a new identity, you belong to the king, you have a new mission, you have work to do, and there are threats.

It's... The helmet of salvation is not... I had the wrong word written down. I was going to call them a fancifier. It turns out they're called fascinators. What? Do you know what I mean? I'm talking about fascinators. Yeah. Okay, those frilly little hats that people wear to the races.

I remember it was a big deal. I lived in a new market growing up, and it was a big deal that races were on or whatever. And it's not a fascinator. It's a chunky helmet.

He has rescued you from death to life and brought you into his business, which is of saving people and of eternal life. The helmet, when you're saved, you're identified as belonging to him and identified as also being in a battle.

Ephesians 2 makes it clear there are plenty of enemies out there. The world will tell you that it's pointless. The flesh that will tell you that you're more important than God.

[15 : 40] Or the devil who will do all kinds of nonsense things to try and distract you. But once you are saved, you have this helmet that you can put on and that is on you, which identifies you as being his.

Saved from and saved to life with him. Gently, I guess, I would challenge you to think, have you got this helmet of salvation because you've trusted in him?

You've got the gear. Are you still living the life of being on mission with him, of saying, I am yours, what do you want for me next? And other particular areas, because there are pretty much all of us, I'd say at one point or another, areas where you kind of almost forget that first priority, which is, I am his, he is mine, I belong to him.

Maybe you're living life like there's no battle, wondering why things are hard. Once you remember, I'm wearing the gear because I'm his and I'm in his battle, a lot of the other stuff starts to make sense.

And you maybe are more willing to let people pray for you. If you think, this is not just a flesh and blood issue, this is a spiritual thing I'm facing. And we remember what the mission is and that we are in a battle.

[16 : 56] He has saved us and he's continuing to save us. We will seek prayer from other people readily because we know we can't do it all on our own. We know that I'm in a fight, I've got the helmet, I've got the gear.

The final one on this is the helmet is directive. Like, it protects and equips you, but it kind of sets you up for a purpose. Like I said already, if you see me with this, if I'm putting it on coming out of my house, you know I'm going on a bike ride.

And in a similar way, I think salvation is noted as a helmet because it shows we are going somewhere. We are going somewhere with him. As I said before, we can boldly approach him with our needs.

We can move forward into the work that he's prepared for us. But that does mean that we're going into his way and not the other stuff that might distract us. YouTube shows me it's perfectly possible to bake a cake while riding a unicycle.

It also shows me it's perfectly possible to play a guitar while skydiving. But the truth is, those are not normal behaviours, right? Like, these guys should probably pick a thing to do.

[17 : 58] And similarly, when we have the helmet of salvation, we remind ourselves, I am his, I am saved. That comes with a purpose. Ephesians 2.10.

You've been created in him for good works to achieve. He saved you. He gave you this. And he's saying, come on, let's keep moving forward into my stuff, not just any stuff.

When I'm going his way, there are ways, other ways that come out of reach. Sacrifice becomes a norm rather than comfort at any cost.

Patently waiting for a partner rather than sleeping around. Generosity rather than selfishness.

Livingston, I'm sorry, guys, rather than the Seychelles. If he's called you here, it's where he's called you.

And other, I mean, he may call you there too. Plenty of missionaries are needed all over the world. But for many of us, he's called us to be in a church family here and a workplace here to serve him

and to glorify him.

[18:59] We've got the gear on. It directs us as to what he's got for us. And that is to walk in his good works where he puts us. And there's no better option than that.

To be where he wants you, to be in the battles he's put you in. There is no better option. You are his. But you are in a battle.

And yet there's no better place to be. So let's quickly look at the shield of faith together and have a look at this. Now, the Greek word for faith is this word *pistis*, which is faith or trust or confidence. I love the way Dorothy described that thing of, like, I trust him. I go to him when things are hard. I look to him because he's the one who's trustworthy. And *pistis* has got that to it.

It's this, I will pick up the weapon of trust knowing that he is trustworthy. It's not a little supply of belief that we manufacture within ourselves.

[20:04] It's not something that if I am trusting, the shield of faith gets bigger and stronger. And if I am less trusting, it gets smaller. Imagine being in battle if your shield kept changing size or depended on your confidence.

The joy of *pistis* is that it's faith that we have and we place in him, however small our ability to do it. But he is the big trustworthy one. I mean, this shield apparently is, like, full body size.

It's called a, oh, what's it called? A tacky or something like that. I've got to note it down here. Oh, a *therios*, sorry. It's a large door-shaped shield. God's faithfulness is not a piddly little thing. We pick up the shield of faith, which is saying, I trust you and I'm going to hold on to that.

But actually, he is the one that's trustworthy. He is the one that's strong. He is the one that looks after you, protects you. It's not something we manufacture. Occasionally, I have friends who will say to me, non-Christian friends often, who will say to me, probably happened three or four times in my life, I just wish I could have the faith that you have.

And I always think a bit like, they make it sound like, if I believe fairies are true, one will arrive. No, like, my faith somehow changes it. I trust him because he's trustworthy, right?

[21:13] He showed that in creation, in salvation, sending his spirit, rescuing me, all the stuff he does in our lives. But it's not something that I don't create the trustworthiness. I access it.

I pick up with his little handle, probably, this big, big, big shield. Faith says, I have seen his faithfulness and I choose to entrust myself to him.

Pick up this huge shield with whatever power I've got and actively trust in his trustworthiness. So it is a weapon that we can access, saying, I trust you.

And it is much bigger than the individual act of trust because his trustworthiness is massive. And why do we need it? Well, scripture's pretty clear there.

There are these fiery darts of the enemy that come at believers. Now, I would say they are things like lies that we start to think about, or accusations, or fears, or resentments, or temptations, or discouragements.

[22:16] Like, we wake up and we just think, what's the point of me? I know Dorothy won't be the only person who's woken up thinking that probably this week. You know, shame, hopelessness. Oh, there's no point here.

I'm never going to achieve anything. That kind of stuff. The enemy loves to fire these darts at people. The closest I had to this was my son's archery set. These are certainly not fiery darts, are they?

I mean, they hurt if they hit you, I'm told. But can you imagine an actual sort of spear ending which was on fire coming hurtling at you?

It's not a great thought at all. And yet the shield of faith, this massive shield, with the little strength we need to lift it, can hold those back and can help us fight them.

The trouble with flaming arrows is they don't only hit and hurt once. The flame is designed to catch someone and for it to spread.

[23:15] It hits and then the fire spreads. And more and more of our life, if we get hit by these arrows of lies or accusations or fears or resentments, temptations, can end up being caught in it if we're not aware and we don't use a shield.

Where fear of being alone becomes suspicion that God will never do the thing we hope for. Or criticism in church becomes defensiveness or shame or disappointment becomes cynicism. Satan's lies are capable of spreading. And there is a real enemy. But God has prepared good works for us to do. So he provides a shield that can extinguish the arrows before the flame and fire

spreads.

I love the way Jesus does this, by the way. I love if you look back in Mark and you see Jesus meeting with the devil who tempt him. I just love the way he just appeals totally to God's faithfulness.

Satan niggles away, and I preached on this maybe a number of months ago, but Satan niggles away saying, but really, what about this? Don't you need to provide for yourself, Jesus? And each time he just says, yeah, but the word says this.

[24 : 28] Like, I know he's really trustworthy. And I just love the way Jesus puts out these little darts that for you or me, I think could hit and could smolder away and burn away.

And Jesus is really practiced and really, really good at just being like, no, no, no, no, no. You say this. Faith says this. God's faithfulness has done this.

And he uses, I would say, the shield of faith beautifully. I haven't got time to go into it in detail today, but it's a really, really lovely bit of scripture. The joy for you and me, because you're not Jesus, is Matthew 17, 20, which says, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, nothing will be impossible for you.

You only need enough trust to pick up the shield and to say, I trust you. I haven't got it all. I can't sort it all. I don't really get what you're doing here, but I trust you.

A simple movement of the heart can deflect massive burning arrows that could have really bad consequences. In The Return of the King, and now I'm not a massive Lord of the Rings buff, but I love the films, but I always get my characters mixed up, so forgive me if I read this.

[25 : 38] But in The Return of the King, Galadriel gives Frodo a tiny vial. It's a really lovely little moment in film. And in the darkness, the hobbits face this miserable giant spider.

And looking like they're going to die, although we kind of know they weren't going to, because it would have been miserable the next two hours of the movie, right, if they died quite early on. But you think they could die, the spider could get them.

And they take out this tiny vial. And I'm not sure by this point in the film we know what it does. And they just pop this little lid. And the screen, I remember seeing it on a massive cinema screen, the screen is filled with this bright white light.

All the right sounds come out in the background. And it's like, bah, you're kind of amazing. This miserable dark cave has become this full of light and hope scene, with the spider scarpering and running away.

It wasn't really the power of taking the lid off that defeated this spider. It was what was contained within. And similarly, the shield of faith, those moments where we say, I will trust you, and we use the little strength we have to access the massive resource of God's faithfulness.

[26 : 48] And he joins us in that battle. Without him, flames burn. With him, we can fight dejection, rejection, temptation, by saying, I trust you, I trust you, Lord.

Meet with me here. And he is the great power. Now, I'm sorry to, this might be annoying for some of you. If you've been on British Rail recently, or not British Rail, what's it called?

Oh, my goodness. I've been living 10 years, 20 years ago today. If you've been on Scott Rail or any of the other national train services recently, you'll have heard this really annoying, say it, say it, sorted, sort of national anti-terrorism campaign.

I mean, I'm going to hijack it slightly for today, slightly, I will massively change it. But I do think the shield of faith takes us, we need to access it. Same as that, put on the whole armour of God.

Actually use it. And we need to notice when the fiery arrows are coming at us. And actually, I think that's sometimes the hardest thing. You might wake up one day and just think, what am I even doing?

[27 : 53] What, like, yeah, God maybe gave me that job, but why am I in it? Or, yeah, I know he put me in our church, but I just can't be bothered. Or, yeah, I know the Bible's great, but actually, right now I've got other things on my mind.

And one of the hardest points of these fiery darts that will lead us away from the Lord is just seeing them and going, man, sometimes I will switch in a moment from being really down and thinking, I mean, like, oh, my goodness, what is going on?

I'll be like, hold on, where has that come from? Like, oh, hold on a second, I'm in a battle here. Like, what is going on? And you'll know that feeling where you suddenly realise this is not just flesh and blood stuff.

This is not just I didn't sleep very well last night. This is kind of weird accusation. And seeing them is a really, really important first step. Where has that random temptation come from?

Or that weird annoyance I have against someone? Or that separation that's starting to happen between me and close Christian friends? Why am I beginning to believe? Why is that hurting more than it should?

[28:55] Part of our role is to see these arrows and to pick up the shield. And I would encourage you to see them coming at you and then to name them, to say it. Lord, I see that temptation.

Like, I see that fear or hurt. I feel this thing really get into me or that fear of going to something that I think you've called me to. Name that arrow.

And then sort it. I trust you, Lord. Now, those three words can take a lot of wrestling with him. They really can.

When hurt has started to spread, but they are powerful. Like the vile in the Lord of the Rings. I trust you, Lord. And giving him our trust picks up his trustworthiness, which is much greater than our ability to fight any of that in our own strength.

I trust you, Lord. Sometimes that prayer will also be, I can't yet trust you, Lord. Would you help me?

We, in the pastor church, have been big on kind of practicing the way stuff and thinking about the different practices that really help form us as people who trust him.

[30:12] And I'm not going to go into those just now, but there is something about this that the life of faith we all know comes easier with practice. As we're worshipping together as we have, as we're getting into scripture, as we're praying for one another, as we're getting stillness and solitude, as we're maybe fasting or sharing faith with other people.

Not because those make us kind of strong in themselves, but they help join us to the one who has all the strength. Remember, be strong in the Lord is the beginning of this scripture and his mighty power.

And then later, in verse 18, praying in the spirit. It all has to be dependent on him. But we have a job of picking up the shield, putting on the helmet, making sure we're in the game.

See it, say it, sort it. I'm going to come into land in about a minute, and then we've got a four-minute video we're going to watch together. That's a cue for anyone who's on tea or coffee or needs to warn the kids' workers. So I know we're trying to get good at giving.

We've got about five minutes until we finish. But including our video. In terms of see it, say it, sort it, I wonder if one of the big areas of this is actually accessing stuff that helps us see how trustworthy God is.

[31:26] I don't know about you, but I know loads of people find it really easy in the morning to get up and be in the good habit of reading their Bible and drawing near to him. And then finding themselves distracted by something else or a notification on their phone or suddenly their kids need something and never returning to the word.

And I would encourage you. The see it, say it, sort of thing is a really practical thing of, like, what is this stuff that's drawing me away from him? What is that new interest I've got or friendship I've got or kind of thing that I want that is taking me away from all that he has for me?

He loves it when we turn to him and we cry out in trust of him. And we do it time and time and time again and lift up that shield of faith. Going back to Ephesians 2.10, you are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do the good works which God has prepared in advance for you, for us. Walk in them. He has given you everything needed to stand and to walk for him, to access his strength. He loves it when we choose to lean on him and not on ourselves.

To trust him in his trustworthiness. I've got a video for us to watch, which is just a simple song about trusting him.

[32:55] And I thought we would just sit and enjoy for, it's three or four minutes long, of just a chance to choose to again say, actually, Lord, in whatever area I'm finding it hard, I trust you today.

I choose to entrust myself to you. So enjoy that and when it finishes, what we'll do is we'll wrap up and we'll go and get our kids and enjoy tea and coffee and all those good things.