

I. Introduction

- A. I have good news for you today.
- B. This is in stark contrast to the headlines, and the websites in the daily reports on social media about how messed up we are as a society.
- C. We live in an age of anxiety. We live in an age of high stress. Counselors and therapists report rising levels of depression, discouragement, and despair. Mental illness and emotional brokenness are on the rise. Addictions. Dysfunctions. Substance abuse. Anxiety disorders. Struggling marriages. Loneliness.
- D. Studies say that the rates of depression skyrocketed by 25% in the first year of the pandemic. Enforced isolation comes with a higher price tag than those who required it ever contemplated. I have talked to teachers who say that they feel all they're doing right now is cleaning up a mess.
- E. Now, I said I have good news and I haven't given any yet, but hold on. We have to go deeper. We have to really think.
- F. What's going on?
- G. I have to imagine the devil, sitting in his hellish chambers, surrounded by his mightiest principalities, pouring diabolical champagne, laughing, and raising a toast to astounding success of their despicable campaign of human destruction and despair in our society, in our day.
- H. Don't think for a minute, that the hopelessness we see is simply of human, or even biological, origin. No, no, no! Those things play a part, but it's deeper than that. That despicable fallen angel – that dark lord, Satan – His Infernal Majesty, is working his plan of hatred against the human race. He's striking back against God.
 1. *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."* (Ephesians 6:12)
- I. Never forget where the sadness comes from.
- J. Because if these problems were *simply* of human origin, we could look for human solutions. But this sadness, this despair is the devil's acid spit raining down on us. We wrestle – we engage in close quarters, hand-to-hand, close-enough-to-smell-his-nasty-breath combat – against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.
- K. Only spiritual solutions can solve spiritual problems.
- L. Into all this bad news bursts the glorious great good news of the gospel of the grace of God... This gospel tells us that we Christians have been given the invincible armor of God.
- M. I am here to remind you today that sitting immediately at hand, you, Christian, have the supernatural, gleaming, never-failing, always available, iron-clad-guaranteed armor of God.
- N. Welcome to part 12 in our series, called the Christian in Complete Armor. So far we have studied the first four pieces of armor: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the boots of the gospel, and the shield of faith. Today, we study the fifth piece of armor:
 1. *"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."* (Ephesians 6:17)
- O. We're going to focus on that first weapon there, so I invite you to think with me on the topic:

1. The Helmet of Salvation

II. The Helmet of Salvation

- A. First let's talk about about the helmet. Then salvation.
 1. The man who wrote about the armor of God, is a man named Paul. Some people call him Saint Paul. He was one of the key leaders in the earliest generation of Christians. He was so influential that the weight of the Roman government came crashing down on his head. So Paul was arrested, put into custody, and being transported to Rome. There he would go on trial before Caesar and be executed. Why? For the crime of inviting a desperately hurting world to find hope and peace in Jesus Christ.
 - a) Spiritual warfare is real.
 2. Roman soldiers held Paul in custody while they transported him by land and Sea. He knew their armor. He knew how they put it on and how they took it off. And he knew well what each piece was for.
- B. Roman soldiers wore helmet. These were made either of metal or of hardened leather. The purpose was obvious. To protect the head. The enemy armies would shoot their arrows, hurl their rocks, and throw their spears but the head would be protected. Even the blow of a sword, landing on the helmet, would be deflected, giving the soldier time to jab his sword and save his life.
 1. **The head is the seat of thought and emotions, and this is the devil's primary attack.**
- C. The devil is attacking your mind.
- D. He assaults your mental health every way he can.
- E. The stuff you are dealing with that brings you down... it's not just situational. It's not just relational. It's not just random. It's not just biological. It's not just the consequences of your own dumb choices.
 1. We wrestle not against flesh and blood. What part of that do you not understand?
- F. Demons work through philosophies.
 1. They work through deceptions. They work through worldviews. They work through temptations. They work through stuff that looks enticing, but has a very sharp hook in it.
- G. Demons create strongholds of false belief. And the demons don't just target your morality, where they're trying to get you to sin.
- H. They do that but they do more than that.
- I. They target every aspect of your mind. What you think, what you believe, how you feel.
- J. Do you have any clue how much the Bible talks about mental health?
- K. Everything the Bible says about love, joy, and peace. Everything the Bible says about hope. About marriage and dating and relationships. About sexuality. About parenting. Even about finances and physical healing. All of the invitations to pray. All of the

beautiful teachings about the love of the father in heaven. All of these things, and so much more are for your mental and emotional and spiritual health.

- L. In other words, your helmet.
- M. And to put one word on all of it... the helmet of... what?
- N. And all of this is wrapped up in the ultimate gift and the unparalleled blessing called SALVATION.
- O. Salvation is your helmet. So, using Paul's analogy, salvation is what protects your head, and that means mental health.
- P. So I would like to spend our time talking about: **Six Ways Salvation Safeguards Your Mental Health** (we'll only get to 4 today)

III. Illustration

- A. But I want to illustrate by mashing in another scripture.
- B. Here we have the pitiful story of an extreme case of mental brokenness brought on by the devil.
 1. *"And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones." (Mark 5:2-5)*
- C. Here is this poor man, matted in his own filth, utterly broken, and completely out of his mind. And this was caused by the devil!
- D. At the end of his story you will see what salvation through Jesus Christ can do for a person's mental health. So now let's look at...

IV. Six Ways Salvation Safeguards Your Mental Health

A. Salvation delivers from guilt and shame.

1. The human soul cannot escape its own conscience. This is part of us being created in the image of God. There's a little machine inside of you that knows right from wrong. And that machine also tells you that somewhere somehow the scales of justice must be balanced.
2. The Bible calls God, "The Judge of all" (Hebrews 12:23). The heart knows this.
3. Guilt is that nagging sense that you've done something wrong in the sight of the Judge of All. Of all of the teachings in the Bible, the one that is most obviously true and beyond all argument is this: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).
4. Guilt and shame make a lot of things go haywire inside your soul.
 - a) They make you avoid closeness. They make you hide.
 - b) They make you wear masks, so that other people can never see —and reject — the real you.
 - c) Guilt and shame break down relationships. They damage your sex life.
 - d) They make people act out in ways that are contrary to their own nature.
 - e) They make you do stuff you don't want to do but can't stop doing.
 - (1) Like the man among the tombs.
5. Here is this poor man dwelling among the tombs. Crying out. Isolated. And all alone. Who will deliver him from the demonic strongholds of guilt and shame? Who will look into the darkness and filth of his damaged heart and wash his sins as white as snow?
6. Answer: only Jesus!
7. The beautiful thing about salvation, is it brings total forgiveness for all your sins past present and future.
 - a) If you have salvation, do you realize that there is not even one speck of the tiniest sin on your record?
 - b) o you realize that everything bad has been wiped from your record?
 - c) Do you realize that every evil thought word and deed has been lifted out of you and transferred to Jesus Christ hanging on the cross?
 - d) *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*
8. **In theology this is called ATONEMENT, and it means that God took away your sins when Jesus died on the cross.**
9. No amount of secular therapy can erase your sins. There is no medication, and no spiritual practice, that can wash your sins away.
10. Only Jesus, and only the salvation he brings, can end the tyranny of guilt in your life.
11. Put on the helmet of salvation, and believe that guilt and shame have no power over you.

B. Salvation removes the drive toward punishment.

1. The man among the tombs is so broken emotionally that the Bible says he spent his days crying out and cutting himself with stones.
2. For some people, this is just so on the nose I hope you can see yourself here. You may not be cutting, but what other forms of self sabotage do you have? What other forms of self punishment are you engaging in?
 - a) Is it relational? Is it financial? Is it in your own health? A string of regrettable choices? Are you punishing others as surrogates for your own guilt?
 - b) The same conscience that convicts you of your sin also convinces you that sin must be punished.
3. The only thing that secular counselors can do is to try to define sin as not sin. They alleviate guilt by basically saying don't feel guilty. And the only way this makes sense and even pretends to work, is if you harden your heart to your conscience.
 - a) Even if you define your most heinous sin as not a sin... Even if you justify it, even if you rationalize it, even if you redefine it as something good, you can't lie to your own soul.
 - b) And you certainly can't lie to God.
4. Evil must be punished, or the cosmos is out of balance in the end. Sin must be paid for, or the universe is at its core unrighteous.

5. From the very first sacrifice in the garden of Eden, when God made coats of skin for Adam and Eve, right on down through today the truth will never go away that **"Without the shedding of blood there is no remission" of sins (Hebrews 9:22)**.
6. The devil loves it when you punish yourself. He loves self-atonement. The demons will point you to anyone and anything but Jesus Christ crucified for you.
7. So here this poor man was shedding his own blood. There are tribes and religions all around the world that call for the shedding of blood. And even if they don't shed blood, they still call for some form of self sacrifice, self payment, or self punishment.
8. This happens not only religiously, but psychologically too. Even without knowing why, so many people hurt themselves over and over and over again, and they don't know why. What's happening is they are acting out the inescapable truth that sin must be punished, and they're turning that in on themselves.
9. Others turn that outward. They lash out at others. They act out in violence, whether that's physical or verbal or emotional. They make other people pay the price in a broken attempt to atone for sins.
10. Who can deliver us from this drive toward punishment? Who can make us mentally whole?
11. Only Jesus and the salvation he brings. Soon, our man among the tombs will encounter the Savior. And what an utter transformation we will see!
12. Jesus was punished for our iniquities. He was punished for our sins. All the penalty fell on him.
13. Your forgiveness is not a fiction, it is an absolute reality founded upon the bedrock of the sacrifice and the finished work of Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross.
 - a) Do you want punishment? Look there.
 - b) Do you want a penalty to be paid? Look to the cross.
 - c) Do you want the scales of justice balanced on your behalf? Look to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
 - d) Do you want freedom from the inner drive to hurt yourself, sacrifice yourself, or punish yourself and others?
 - e) Then look long and hard at your bloodied savior nailed to that cross and listen to him say it is finished!
14. **In theology this is called EXPIATION. It means that God punished Christ for your sins instead of punishing you.**
15. We are talking about the helmet of salvation... meaning God's foundation for mental wholeness and health.
16. And I am saying that the deeper you embrace the salvation you already possess as a child of God, the more your soul will be healed of the scars and dysfunctions of the devil's fallen world.

C. Salvation ends the need to prove your worth.

1. On the day that you were saved, assuming you are saved – and you might not be, in which case you should get saved today – anyway on the day that you were saved Something Happens so remarkable that the angels are still amazed and the demons just don't know what to do.
2. On the day that you were saved not only did God take away your sins through atonement, and not only did he punish all your sins through expiation, he also did something else.
3. God lavished upon you the most remarkable treasure in all the cosmos. God actually gave you the pure and perfect righteousness of Christ.
4. Righteousness means goodness. Specifically righteousness means goodness that is good enough for God.
5. But there is another factor of righteousness that you really need to understand.
 - a) **Righteousness is the landing pad for the blessing of God.**
6. And this is a problem for us. God doesn't bless unrighteousness. He can't, or he would contradict his own character. So this is our big problem.
7. Even if you're another mother Theresa on steroids, you do not and cannot and never can meet the righteous standards of God.
 - a) Romans 3:10 says there is none righteous no not one.
 - b) Romans 3:12 says there is no one who does good no not one
 - c) Ecclesiastes 7:20 says there is not a just person upon the earth who does good and sins not.
8. In comes the great gift of righteousness from God to you. This happens when you are saved. In that split second, God adds his own righteousness to you. He robes you in the shimmering robes of the righteousness of Christ...
 - a) *"[That I may] be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith."* (Philippians 3:9)
9. And as soon as God gives his righteousness to you, he convenes the Supreme Court of heaven.
10. The judge of the universe looks upon you and sees nothing but divine righteousness. And so God in heaven declares that you are righteous, and he tells the angels and the demons and the devil and the world that you are officially good enough for God for all the ages of eternity!
 - a) So much sadness is caused by broken self-esteem.
 - b) So much discouragement comes from feeling that you have no worth.
 - c) So much depression comes from trying to answer the criticisms of your past, even from people who are long dead, who said that she would never amount to anything.
11. And incomes God to say that you are righteous. To say that you are good enough for him. To say that you are perfect in his sight, and are beautiful, and that you are the righteousness of God in Christ.
12. If God is for you, who can be against you?
 - a) **In theology, this is called JUSTIFICATION and it means that God declares you perfectly, eternally RIGHTEOUS when you believe in Jesus.**
 - b) And that means that you can live the rest of your days with nothing left to prove. And if that doesn't give you psychological wholeness, nothing will.

D. Salvation bestows God's love and grace.

1. Why did that demon possessed man live among the tomb stones. Why was he there, all alone, matted his own filth? When people came to help him, and to tend him, and to feed him, he lashed out of them. He attacked those who would love him. He had to be restrained, for his own benefit. But the demonic power in him broke those shackles over and over again.
2. I read a research study about men in prison. The researchers wanted to know why these men did what they did. Why they did these crimes. What drove them and what motivated them.
3. When they dug deep enough they came to an answer that probably doesn't surprise you.
4. Love... The ultimate dysfunction is feeling unloved.
5. The ultimate salvation is the love of God poured out in your heart.
 - a) *"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness [grace] I have drawn you."* (Jeremiah 31:3)
6. If you're a Christian, God loves you to the maximum right now. He's not waiting for you to be a better Christian. He's not waiting for you to be a better human. He's not waiting for you to pay a price, prove yourself, or anything else.
7. God can't love you anymore than he loves you right now. His love is infinite. His love is perfect. His love is permanent. His love is tender and kind and compassionate. When you die and go to heaven, and stand before him face-to-face, even then his love will be no more than it already is today.
 - a) **In theology, this is called PROPITIATION, and it means that God's justice is so satisfied with you, so God's love must be lavished on you.**
 - (1) *"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."* (1 John 4:10)
8. No one else might be satisfied with you. You might not be satisfied with yourself.
9. But God is. And, having put your faith in Jesus, you are saved, and in that salvation, God loves you with a perfect love.
10. Nothing can separate you from his love. Nothing can diminish his love. Not even your worst sin on your worst day.
 - a) Jesus loved him among the tombs. Jesus loved him with his smell. Jesus loved him with his violence. Jesus loved him with his demons. Jesus loved him with his cursings. Jesus loved him in his isolation. Jesus loved him in his madness. Jesus loves him in his self loathing. Jesus loved him when he was cutting himself. Jesus loved him when he was in shackles. Jesus loved him when he was in bondage to the darkest forces imaginable.
11. Why? Because all those things, Jesus paid for. Jesus absorbed. Jesus took the hit for them.
12. All so that he could make it possible for a holy God to love an ungodly sinner like this poor man... who is just an unpolished version of us today.
 - a) *"In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the Angel of His Presence saved them; In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; And He bore them and carried them All the days of old."* (Isaiah 63:9)
13. Salvation is the boundless streams of the love of God flowing into the heart and mind of anyone who believes.
14. Salvation is abundance, and healing, and wholeness, and every good gift that a loving father could ever conceive of giving to a beloved daughter or son.
15. Salvation is the forgiveness of sins and the gift of righteousness.
16. God's Love is a helmet so strong the devil can't penetrate.
17. If you have Christ, you have the love of God.
18. If you have Christ, you are Beloved of the Father.
 - a) This love is comfort in every trial. This love is provision in every need. This love is peace in every worry. This love is protection in every danger. This love is tenderness when you're fragile, Quietness when you're overwhelmed, Rest when you can't take anymore. This love gives light in the darkness. This love gives hope in the bleakest situation. This love gives a friend in time of need.
 - (1) An embrace in times of sorrow. Strength when you're weary, and peace when the storms are too much.
 - b) There is nothing like the love of God.
 - (1) It is salvation... It is eternal life... It is a relationship... It is a fellowship... It is a friendship... It is sobriety... It is sanity... It is heavenly... It is earthly... It is tough... It is tender... It is unmerited, unearned, unrecompensed mercy... It is the one thing your heart is crying for.
 - c) No one can measure the love of God. No one can contain it. No one can limit it. No one can stop it. And no one can put a price on it other than the finished work of Christ.
 - d) Once you are under its healing streams, your blessing is assured.
19. And Jesus seeing this afflicted man, and knowing that soon on an old rugged Cross he would bear in his own body that man's demonic addictions and mental afflictions... Jesus braved a storm at sea to come and love this man that nobody could love.
20. And he set him free.
 - a) *"Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion [of demons], sitting and clothed and in his right mind..."* (Mark 5:15)
 - (1) He had been running and hiding day and night in the mountains and in the tombs. And now he was sitting.
 - (2) He had been naked and filthy. And now he was clothed.
 - (3) He had been out of his mind, and now he was in his right mind. Healthy, whole, and sane.
 - b) This is the helmet of salvation. This is mental health leading to spiritual and physical and relational and every kind of wholeness and blessing.
 - c) This is the salvation you already have, Christian, ever since you first believed.
 - d) So wear it as a helmet... but how to do that, we'll have to save that for next time.