

The Meaning of Helmet Salvation in Ephesians 6:17

Hendra Nike Carter Bangun S.Th, MA

Bethsaida Evangelical School of Theology (BEST) – Medan

Email: wakendra@gmail.com

Abstract

There are many weapons that Paul's mentioned in regard to spiritual warfare in the book of Ephesian 6:10-20. It seems to be unfamiliar to those who are living in the modern world. In Ephesian 6:17, it mentions that a weapon which is named "the helmet of salvation". Although helmet is still being used until today for the protection purpose, however, it cannot be addressed or translated as simple as helmet of salvation in this verse. It is very important to know the original meaning of "helmet of salvation" as a justification by God which means to remind the people that God has completely assured acceptance, protections, and even a great power in Salvation. Many people today and even Christian are filled rejection or even by anxieties, worries or even fear of death. It will help them to take care, carry, sustain believers to fight and win the battle of life circumstances if they live knowing, believing and walking with the "helmet of Salvation". Therefore, the Helmet of Salvation in this passage only can be understood properly by exploring the original text, the background problem of the Ephesian and the theology of Paul in Spiritual Weapons and the original Greek the word "δέξασθε" here as receive rather "take".

Keywords: *Helmet, Salvation, Justification, Grace, Receive.*

INTRODUCTION

Christ is the Helmet of Salvation

Putting Christ as the meaning of helmet salvation came out from the book of Isaiah 59:17 which mentioned *He puts on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet salvation on his head*. This is the messianic revelation that described by Isaiah. They argue it refer to Jesus as the king. Some scholars who believe that helmet is Christ argue that the salvation of the Messianic kingdom is represented as a helmet, covering the head with a reference to the name of Jesus, in which the battle is fought and won.¹ “Moreover who agree with this arguing that “putting on” salvation means realizing one’s “new identity in Christ.”² The point here is that Christ is the Messiah who uses the helmet to save his people. It seems they translate directly the word of helmet in Isaiah 59:17 as a metaphor and refers it to a person or noun. It can be understood that Christ is the ideal person which portrayed wearing such weapons in this particular the helmet of salvation. However, since the context and the genre book Ephesians

and Isaiah are not similar, it could not answer in detail why did Paul’s mention take the helmet salvation to the audience in Ephesians. It must be something theological reason and problem on it.

Hope is the Helmet of Salvation

Some believe in this view because Paul mentioned in 1 Theses 5:8 “the *hope* of salvation” is said to be a *helmet*. They argue that it is the explanation from Paul about helmet itself and considered to be the same sense as in Ephesian 6:17. It is believed that helmet is a hope in the day of spiritual conflict. It is a protection. The helmet defended the head, a vital part; and so the hope of salvation will defend the soul, and keep it from the blows of the enemy and a soldier would not fight well without a hope of victory.³ It is not uncertain hope, but one that brings with it no shame of disappointment (Ro 5:5).⁴ The hope which elevated by hope to look up towards heaven to that salvation is promised.⁵ It is a hope salvation by Christ is a defense of the

¹ Lange, J. P., Schaff, P., Braune, K., & Riddle, M. B. A commentary on the Holy Scriptures (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 224–225.

² Brown, D. R., Custis, M., & Whitehead, M. M. Lexham Bible Guide: Ephesians. (D. Mangum, Ed.) (Eph 6:17). (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013), Logos Bible Software

³ Barnes, A. Notes on the New Testament: Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians. (R. Frew, Ed.) (London:

Blackie & Son, 1884–1885), 131–132

⁴ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible Vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc, 1997), 358.

⁵ Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 340.

head against false doctrines.⁶This hope defines clearly by Clarke:

The *hope* of conquering every adversary and surmounting every difficulty, through the blood of the Lamb, is as a helmet that protects the head; an impenetrable one, that the blow of the battle-axe cannot cleave. The *hope* of continual safety and protection, built on the promises of God, to which the upright follower of Christ feels he has a Divine right, protects the *understanding* from being darkened, and the judgment from being confused by any temptations of Satan, or subtle arguments of the sophistical ungodly. He who carries Christ in his heart cannot be cheated out of the hope of his heaven.⁷

Helmet in this point is considered as the future expectation in a very positive meaning. In other words, it is assurance of victory and salvation in the future to those who put hope in Jesus. It is interesting and seems right because in the book of 1 Thessalonians many times mentioned about future situations such as rapture and the resurrection of believer in the future which describes how great the result to those who put hope in Christ after having a lot of struggles. It can be understood that helmet is the hope of salvation by looking that helmet

is a hope which take care, protect and bring of believers to have victorious. However, the background problem in the book of Thessalonians was different to the book in Ephesus. The believer in Thessalonians was hoping and preparing in Christ second coming is not about salvation issue. On the other hand, Ephesians was having problem in a salvation issue (Ephesian 2:1-8). Therefore, it is not an equal issue.

Justifications is The Helmet of Salvation

The last argument believes that helmet of salvation means justification. It simply came out from understanding the texts and context of Ephesus itself. Salvation is God's justification to deliver sinners from the penalty of sins.⁸ It is God's works not humans. It is fact of salvation that God's provided already and to be confidence in that gift. To take helmet is to receive the helmet that is salvation.⁹Helmet is provided to save the brain which means the same meaning that God put the knowledge into the brain that He has died and saved believers from sins and gives them salvation.¹⁰However, It is often Satan attacks it and doubting such truths into believers' brain.

⁶ Gill, J. *Exposition of the New Testament* Vol. 3 (London: Mathews and Leigh, 1809), 111.

⁷ Clarke, A. (Trans.). *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes New Edition*, Vol. 6, (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife Corporation, 2014), 471.

⁸ Jeremy Myers Redeeming God

https://redeeminggod.com/sermons/ephesians/ephesian_s_6_17a/ (accessed 4 April 2016).

⁹ Carter, C. W. *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*. In *Romans-Philemon* Vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), 439.

¹⁰ Myers

On the other hand, God gives the assurance of salvation as Myers says “*So when Paul says, take up the helmet of salvation, he is kind of saying, “remember... know...understand in your mind...that you are saved, that you are justified, that you are secure in the arms of Jesus.” Taking up the helmet of salvation is the knowledge and understanding of the assurance of our salvation*”.¹¹ Therefore, helmet here is understood as God’s justification to give the assurance for salvation. It seems to be clearer by looking at this point. Helmet of salvation simply related to idea of justification that Paul’s mentioned many times by saying salvation by grace. In other words, salvation is God’s deeds to make sinner right (Ephesians 2:8). This argumentation came out from the context, text and theological issues in the book of Ephesian itself where probably many of them doubted about the assurance Salvation from God.

Translation problem the word “take”

There are many translations translate the word of δέξασθε here as “take”. However, “take” in Greek must be ἀναλαμβάνω from the word λαμβάνω. It should translate δέξασθε as “receive, accept or welcome” as translated by Lexham English Bible in very

precise meaning to the original word.¹² Since it is an imperative mood and give strong command, exhortation or intension, it could emphasize distinction many theological and practical meaning if translate word of δέξασθε as “take” or “receive” as well. It is better to translate it according to the original meaning as “receive, accept or welcome”. It probably many translators made as “take” in order to engage to the sense as a warrior where wearing and taking many weapons and consider that situation in the warfare atmosphere. However, it leads to grammatical and theological problem to the book of Ephesians. Translating such words as “receive, accept or welcome” will be having a strong theological and grammatical emphasize where that word very fit to the following sentence is the helmet of salvation. In other words, God wants human to receive, accept or welcome the salvation that God has done through Christ (Ephesian 2:8).

Evaluation Section

After looking and analysing such views and arguments, I would agree with the point that saying the helmet of salvation is Justification. The reason to agree with this point because it addresses the problem from the context and text from the book Ephesians

¹¹ Myers

¹² Harris, W. H., III, Ritzema, E., Brannan, R., Mangum, D., Dunham, J., Reimer, J. A., & Wierenga,

M. (Eds.). The Lexham English Bible Eph 6:17. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012). Logos Bible Software

itself where emphasize about salvation by God's work where salvation defined as God justified sinner from the penalty of sin and the way to have it is by receiving or welcoming the salvation from God with faith. Helmet of salvation in this way described in very normal and contextual understanding where taken from the nearest arguments in this book as well. It gives the reason what does helmet do to them in relates to the theological issue in Ephesus as well. Moreover, the idea of Justification is written and explained (Eph 1:11-22) after Paul mentioned salvation only by grace (Eph 2:8).

Thus, this is a continually explanation of what is salvation.

God strongly commanded all people to receive it (as the mood of *δέξασθε* was imperative mood). It makes sense to me as consider the text and context and the theology issue in Ephesians as well much more talking about Salvation by Grace. It can be also translated as welcoming the thoughts that God has justified them. Why this necessary to them? Because all the power, gifts, victorious living from God is started by welcoming or receiving the salvation first. God wants them to accept, know and be reminded the key first (Salvation) so that they might see the precious things that God had planned for them (Ephesian 1:1-14). Having known such

precious things would encourage and inspire to be able standing and winning the warfare because God has prepared the victory for them. It came out from the problem in that congregation where some believers had doubting the salvation from God and Satan attached their mind not to believe on God's grace salvation. As I mentioned the problem Paul mentioned this as because many of them doubted about the assurance of salvation from God. In this way, they probably were filled by anxiety or fear of death because they were worshipper of many gods. In this psychological atmosphere matters, Paul again restated in Eph 6:17 to receive the salvation! It means to remember them again that God has completely assured the salvation and gave the victory for them as it mentioned in (Eph 2:8). Moreover, it reminded them again to be aware that they are having spiritual warfare in which they don't need to be worried about the life after death because God had justified and redeemed them. Therefore, I agree 100 percent to the view that helmet of salvation is talking about justification as I think, there is no theological and biblical problem coming on translate it as a justification.

Bibliography

Brown, D. R., Custis, M., & Whitehead, M. M. *Lexham Bible Guide: Ephesians*. D. Mangum, Ed. Eph 6:17 Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013 Logos Bible Software

Barnes, A. *Notes on the New Testament: Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians*. R. Frew, Ed. London: Blackie & Son, 1884–1885.

Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* Vol. 2. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc, 1997.

Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians*

Jeremy Myers *Redeeming God*
https://redeeminggod.com/sermons/ephesians/ephesians_6_17a/ (accessed 4 April 2016).

Lange, J. P., Schaff, P., Braune, K., & Riddle, M. B. *A commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008

and Ephesians. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010.

Clarke, A. Trans. *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes* New Edition, Vol. 6. Bellingham, WA: Faithlife Corporation, 2014.

Carter, C. W. The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians. In *Romans-Philemon* Vol. 5. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966.

Gill, J. *Exposition of the New Testament* Vol. 3. London: Mathews and Leigh, 1809.

Harris, W. H., III, Ritzema, E., Brannan, R., Mangum, D., Dunham, J., Reimer, J.