

33. The helmet of salvation

June 2, 2013

I've seen many motorcyclists who zip through traffic like rockets and I see them not wearing helmets on I-19, I-10, Tucson, or even here in this area. They would say, "I like the feel of the wind blowing through my hair." I wonder if they also would like the feel of their head getting smashed against asphalt pavement without helmet at 45-90 miles per hour. I don't think so. Somehow they think that they are invincible. Sure!!

According to a friend of mine who used to ride his motorcycle in Tucson, told me that riding his motorcycle during the Tucson summer is like riding through a hot wind tunnel. I will stick with my truck air-conditioning, thank you very much.

Like the other part of armors, helmet has made many transitions and improvements. The ancient helmet of biblical times was a cap made of leather, embedded with pieces of metal. It was designed to withstand a crushing blow to the head. Many times in battle, the enemy would try to crush the skull, or if possible, to decapitate the person. The Roman soldiers had more fancy helmets than other military units.

Spiritually it seems clear that when apostle Paul speaks of a helmet he is referring to protection of the heart, the mind, and the understanding of Christians. That's because Satan recognizes the value of first getting a foothold in the realm of the thoughts and imaginations of believers. And he knows that this will prepare the way for that thought to translate into action.

I like what 19th Century American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Sow a thought and you reap an action; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny." Ain't that the truth?!

Proverbs 23:7a For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.

A. THE HELMET OF SALVATION

Ephesians 6:17a And take the helmet of salvation,

Some of you may wonder, "Why do I need to wear the helmet of salvation for the spiritual warfare? I am already saved. According to the Bible, Jesus said in John 10:29, 'My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand,' so Satan cannot take my salvation away from me."

There is a couple of flaws with that logic:

1) Salvation is not only in the past, but also for present and future.

- Jesus has saved us from our sins. This is what we call 'Justification.'
- The Holy Spirit saves us from our sins on a daily basis. He is delivering us from potential disaster by keeping us in His care and changing us into His image each and everyday. This is what we call "Sanctification."
- God the Father will save us in the future from the wrath to come and He will welcome us into heaven. This is what we call "Glorification."

2) The proof of true conversion is in how we live our lives to the end of our lives.

Many people in America claim to be Christians and believe that when they die, they will go to heaven by default of being Americans or not -being-a-murderer. But their life is no different than those who claim to be atheists.

Even many of those who claim to be born-again Christians, do not live according to what the Bible tells them to. They do not think that the Bible contains the absolute truth, nor are they willing to obey the authority of the Word of God, so they live according to how they feel. If you are one of those people, you have to ask yourself if you've ever been truly saved.

B. PROTECTION FOR THE HEART

As we studied last week, before the ancient soldiers get into an actual sword-to-sword and hand-to-hand combat with the enemy, the soldiers would often encounter a barrage of flaming arrows coming from all directions. Then, here comes an up-close and personal battle. The enemy soldiers come to a bad-breath distance to crush his head. If the soldier is not wearing his helmet to protect his melon, it would be really a bad day for him.

It is the same spiritually. We are constantly taking the onslaughts of fiery darts and flaming arrows of worldly temptations, discouragement, condemnation, deceptions, and many ungodly influences. Then, ungodly thoughts pop up in our minds. At that moment, we DO HAVE a choice to give in or fight off by protecting our hearts. If we have the helmet of salvation, we can fight it off with the power of the Holy Spirit. But if we don't have the helmet, we would give in to the first attack.

The Pharisees and Sadducees in Jesus' days bragged how pious and noble they were because they'd never physically committed adultery or murdered anyone. Then this confronting young rabbi from Galilee, a former carpenter pulled their mask off by telling them:

Matthew 5:21-22a "You have heard that it was said to those of old, ' You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' 22 But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.

Matthew 5:27-28 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, ' You shall not commit adultery.' 28 But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

We are all guilty on this, wouldn't you agree? I am guilty of murdering many people in my heart who work in Washington D.C. each time I watch the news and see what they are doing to this country. As far as God is concerned, if we are thinking about hatred toward a person or lust toward someone, we are guilty of sinning. I am sure that these are the reasons why many people resent the Bible, because it reveals the truth of the secrets they want to hide.

C. PROTECTION FOR THE MIND

God just doesn't want us to stop ungodly actions only. He wants us to protect our minds and thoughts by no longer desiring and thinking about those ungodly things.

The way the Lord does that is by providing us with the Helmet of Salvation. When I wear my Helmet of Salvation and be on guard against what is coming to crush my heart and mind, I will not entertain thoughts that are sinful or spiritually harmful. Yes, I cannot stop impure or sinful thoughts from coming at my mind in full force or in a sporadically and subtle way, but I sure can stop it from moving in and making a home in my mind. I cannot stop temptations, I sure can refuse to play with them.

Some of you are thinking, "You know, preacher, I get it. But it still sounds vague in how-to-fight-against-temptation." Well, why didn't you say so? Let me explain.

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.

Please note that apostle John breaks down basically the three categories of temptation – the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life.

1) The lust of the eyes is mental temptation

It is what we see, contemplate, think about, fantasize over. Most sin begins here. Because we make choices to allow temptations to move from our sight to our mind.

April 6, this year, FCC, the Federal Communications Commission announced it is considering relaxing the decency standards that govern nudity and profanity on broadcast television. In other words, “F-bombs” and some female frontal nudity could soon become kosher for prime time TV. Currently FCC has five commissioners who are appointed by President Obama, so their decision does not surprise me.

While we cannot control all the things in this world that we are exposed to, we can control a few things. We can control what we watch at home on television. We can control what movies we decide to go see. We can control what we choose to read in magazines and what kind of music we listen to. Be careful what you allow into your mind. We need to put on and keep on the Helmet of Salvation.

2) The lust of the flesh usually follows the lust of the eyes.

At this stage, thoughts are translated into actions. A person who has fallen into the lust or desires of the flesh is basically a person who gives in to his impulses.

I have a neighbor who has one big dog and one over-grown rat which many of you call it ‘chihuahua.’ Don’t write me a letter because you like your chihuahua. I like it, too. Too bad, it is only a snack-size, not enough to be a meal. Relax, it’s a joke.

These dogs pretty much do whatever they want to do. When they feel like taking a nap, they collapse and take a nap. When they get hungry, they drag their noses around the yard or into the house and rustle up something. If they feel the urge to do something else, they do it, especially barking at me whenever they see me. You are thinking, “No wonder they bark at you.”

They just give in to whatever their impulses are. Unfortunately there are Christians like that. They just live to gratify their cravings and their desires instead of obeying what the Bible teaches them. They serve the lust of the flesh.

3) The pride of life is more subtle.

You might be a person who doesn’t indulge in other sinful activities. You live a moral life. You have a fine family. You work hard, with honesty, and enjoy a good career. You’re pursuing excellence and knowledge. You might even be a religious person. You might be patting yourself on the back saying, “I’m so wonderful. I’m so moral. I’m so good. I’m so intelligent. Best of all, I’m so humble.” You can be deceived by the pride of life. Egotism and pride are as much a deception as the lust of the flesh or the lust of the eyes.

Or you give into the lust of the eyes first, allow it to go down to the lust of the flesh, then, in your pride of life, you think that you deserve this carnal temptation and you proudly think, “I approve this temptation” like a campaign message. The pride of life would justify and rationalize one’s sin with a bunch of lame garbage excuses.

Behind every sin, pride of life resides – thinking that you can get away with it and it is OK with God because you are special. Guess what, bubba? God has a surprise for you. No, He is no respecter of men.

With these three ideas in mind, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, let's see if we can find them in Eve's temptation in the Garden:

Genesis 3:6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

"The woman saw the tree was pleasant to the eyes." There it is, the lust of the eyes.

"The woman saw that the tree was good for food... she took of its fruit and ate."

There's the lust of the flesh. Just a side note: It was not that Adam and Eve didn't have foods to eat in the Garden. They WANTED the forbidden fruit.

"The woman saw that the tree desirable to make one wise." Finally, the pride of life. There you have it. The enemy will hit you in these three areas over and over again.

D. WE NEED A GODLY REPLACEMENT

It is not good enough for us to not having ungodly thoughts in our minds and hearts.

Matthew 12:43-45 "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. 44 Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. 45 Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation."

We must replace ungodly thoughts with what the Lord approves:

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things.

Let me say this one more time. Please be careful what you allow to come into your heart and mind. Wear the Helmet of Salvation and keep it on, otherwise satan is trying to destroy your spiritual head that is your heart and mind.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) We cannot control the length of our life, but we can control its depth.

2) Wear the Helmet of Salvation and keep it on, otherwise satan is trying to destroy your spiritual head that is your heart and mind.