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**Briefing 71: Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2021.**

Dear Friends,

**The weapons and armour of the Christian – the Helmet of Salvation.**

A Roman soldier's helmet was usually made of tough metal like bronze or iron so that it would withstand almost anything thrown at it. One commentator writes that "nothing short of an axe or hammer could pierce a heavy helmet!" This was a serious piece of kit for a serious purpose, for even a minor blow to the head could be fatal if it was left unprotected.

So what does Paul mean that the Christian should put on the helmet of salvation? The answer lies in Isaiah chapter 59 where the helmet of salvation is on God's head. The chapter describes a world of injustice and wickedness, where God's people are persecuted and where there was no one to put things right. So God himself intervened. "*His own arm achieved salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. He put on righteousness as his breastplate, **and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak.***" Here we see God coming to the rescue, dealing with sin and bringing about justice, righteousness and salvation, so that in the following chapters the saved can rejoice in what the Lord has done and what he has prepared for his people.

I'm sure Paul had this scripture in mind as he wrote this passage. The helmet protects the head and brain, the place where our thinking is done. And Paul's point is that if Christians are to '*stand firm against the devil's schemes*' (Ephesians 6:11) then we must have the fact of our salvation (what God has done in the past through Jesus) and the hope to which we move (the promise of eternal life in God's perfectly renewed kingdom) at the forefront of our thinking at all times. Lose sight of these 2 truths and we will easily get overcome by the world, the flesh and the devil.

Knowing that, as Isaiah 59 puts it, that God has won the victory for us, that he has dealt with our sin, and clothed us in robes of righteousness is absolutely vital for us. Only when we know for certain that our sin has been dealt with once and for all, that through the death and resurrection of Jesus and his righteousness being given to us, we have been permanently adopted into God's family as his beloved children, can we stand firm in those times when we give into sin or temptation or hear Satan reminding us of things we have done in the past. The devil likes nothing better than to remind us of our past failings or our present temptations. But the blood of Jesus washes away every sin, and now nothing can separate us from the love of God, and no one can take us out of Jesus' nail-pierced hands.

So how certain are you of your salvation? Do you think that it depends on your daily performance, and that God may take his love from you if you fail to live as you should? If so, then hear Jesus' words: "*my sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.*" Keep these words at the forefront of your mind. They are part of the helmet of salvation!

But there's more. As well as looking back to what God has accomplished for us through the cross, we need to look forward to what God has prepared for those who love him. "*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the 1<sup>st</sup> heaven and 1<sup>st</sup> earth had passed away.... I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God... And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."* These words, taken from the opening verses of Revelation 21, describe our future. It is eternal life with God, in a perfectly renewed creation. Then we shall see him face-to-face, and because God is there in all his glory, all the things that spoil this world are absent. No more death. No more suffering. No more division. No more tears.

Why is this thought so important? Because if our eyes are fixed on the world to come, then the things of this world become strangely dim. And as they do, so we are less likely to be led astray or give up on Jesus when things get tough. For the Christian, the thought of eternity changes everything. Some people have said that those who are heavenly minded are no earthly good. In fact, the opposite is true. Those Christians who are most rooted in the hope of heaven, who think about it often, are far more likely to live lives of courage and grace, of generosity and service, because they know that whatever they give will pale into comparison with what God has prepared for them. May God fan that hope within us!

Grace and peace...

*Dave*

## IMPORTANT STUFF – DON'T JUST GLANCE- TAKE IT ALL IN!

**Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> July: The End of Restrictions.** As you'll have heard, the Prime Minister has intimated that all current Covid restrictions will probably be lifted on July 19<sup>th</sup>, meaning that we could, in theory, have a 'normal' church service on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup>. However, the Prime Minister also suggested that we act responsibly, something that the wardens of both churches and I are keen to do. We also have a Christian responsibility to love and care for one another.

We WILL be singing together; that's a non-negotiable. But we will also keep hand sanitiser by the door, keep the church clean and well-ventilated, and of course, individuals will be able to continue wearing face coverings if they so choose. However, we'd like your thoughts on what, if any, of the current precautions you would like to see us keeping, at least for the time being. We'd particularly like to hear from those who have a low level of auto-immunity and feel concerned by the restrictions easing. How can we keep the church gathering a place where you feel safe and comfortable?

We have thought that we might keep some areas of the church for those who are nervous or who have a compromised immunity. Face masks would be required in these areas and the seats would be set further apart as now. Perhaps you can let us know your thoughts on this and share any other suggestions.

It may be that the Church of England brings forward its own guidelines, and we will be keeping an eye out for those. But in the meantime, do let us know your thoughts, and keep me and our PCCs in your prayers.

**Come + pray!**

### Friday night at St Nicks from 8pm-10pm.

Come + join us and pray for God's Holy Spirit to move in us and across this town that we might know more of God's love and power in our lives and see many brought to Jesus.

### Private Prayer in St Nicholas church THIS WEEK and NEXT WEEK.

Tuesday from 2pm-4pm, Wednesday 12noon-2pm and Thursday 10am – 12 noon.

**WEDNESDAY NIGHT from 7:45pm-9pm Zoom.** Contact Dave for a link.



**MORNING COFFEE OR AFTERNOON TEA IN THE VICARAGE:** The Vicarage Garden Café is taking bookings for **Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> July (10:30am-noon)**. We can take up to 30 people sat at tables of 6 around the garden. If you like to join us, please contact Judy on 01438 213587 or email [revdmbrown@gmail.com](mailto:revdmbrown@gmail.com) (If you'd like to bring a cake- talk to Judy)

**CHURCH FAMILY BBQS – We are now FULLY BOOKED for this Sunday, but we have lots of space for Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> July from 4pm.** Booking forms are in both churches but you can also book by email. We're asking every family group to bring either some soft drink, a salad of some description, or a pudding to serve 6-8.

**BRIDGE BUILDERS CHRISTIAN TRUST:** Building on the success of the online Christmas and Easter Journeys for year 2 and year 6 students across Stevenage and the surrounding villages, **The REach Project** aims to produce an online interactive bible-based Journey for each and every year group throughout primary school, reaching upwards of 10,000 children EACH year. More details and ways to give are found here: [The REach Project | Bridge Builders Christian Trust \(bridgebuilderstrust.org.uk\)](#)

**WALKING GROUP:** After my appeal over the last 2 weeks, David Cattell (husband of Karen) has kindly offered to lead a group. He's suggested a walk once or twice a month, either from the church or from places nearby. If you'd be interested in being part of this - do email me (Dave). Please also suggest rough distances the walks should cover, and if you'd be willing (and able) to travel a little way out of town to places like Walkern and Ardley.

**READINGS FOR THE NEXT FEW WEEKS:** This week we continue our series in Genesis, and for those who'd like to read the passages before coming to church on Sundays, the readings for the next 3 weeks are as follows:

11<sup>th</sup> July: Genesis 4:25-5:32      18<sup>th</sup> July: Genesis 6:1-7:24      25<sup>th</sup> July: Genesis 8:1-9:17