



# PROTECTED AND PROACTIVE

WEEK 10  
05.08.16

## FOCUS VERSE

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### **Ephesians 6:17**

And take the helmet of salvation.

## LESSON TEXT

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### **Romans 8:35–37**

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

### **II Corinthians 10:3–5**

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

### **Philippians 4:6–8**

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

### **I Thessalonians 5:23**

23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **I Peter 1:13**

13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.



## FOCUS THOUGHT

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God provides a covering for the mind that gives the believer opportunity to be proactive with clarity of thought and discipline of the mind, soul, and body.



# CULTURE CONNECTION

## Know Your Protective Gear

**T**here is lots of talk today about concussions. The damage done to professionals in contact sports has called attention to repeated head trauma as a serious threat. The National Football League predicted that nearly one-third of its players will develop long-term cognitive problems and that these problems will occur at a notably younger age than the general population (*New York Times*, September 12, 2014). The NFL made protective headgear mandatory in 1943, shortly after the invention of the plastic helmet, but helmets are not the answer one might expect. Helmets designed to take a hard blow do not protect well from concussions, while those designed for softer blows cannot protect from catastrophic brain injury.

The Centers for Disease Control estimates that bike helmets reduce the risk of brain injury in an accident by as much as 88 percent, but do little to prevent concussion. The large increase in bike helmet use between 1997 and 2011 was accompanied by a 67 percent increase in concussions from accidents.

It is essential to know what our protective gear is designed to do and that we are using it properly within its design parameters. If this is true in the natural world, it is even truer in the spiritual realm.

In describing the various pieces of spiritual armor that we need “to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11), Paul said we should “take the helmet of salvation” (Ephesians 6:17). This helmet has been specially designed to give us the protection we need without injury.

## OUTLINE

- I THE HEAD NEEDS PROTECTION
- II. PUT ON THE HELMET OF SALVATION
- III. THE WAR IS INTENSIFYING IN THE LAST DAYS
  - A. The Devil’s Time Is Limited
  - B. Lawlessness Abounds
  - C. Endurance Is Imperative
  - D. Victory Is Certain

## CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

Proverbs 22:3 describes a wonderful gift among human traits: “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.” This gift of being able to anticipate consequences of choices, to analyze one’s direction, and to adjust his or her course based on that analysis is a cherished possession.

In the absence of that ability, an individual would be constrained to blindly stumble onward, even when the path led to a hurtful conclusion. He would be bound by immutable

forces to an unalterable conclusion. Instead, God created human beings with the gift of reason, the endowment of foresight, and the power of choice. By utilizing these gifts, those of us who desire to follow Christ can be proactive in our quest to do so. We can anticipate attacks of the enemy or pitfalls he has laid, and then take appropriate steps to prepare for or to avoid them.

This level of higher consciousness is one of those attributes that further separates us from the rest of creation. Human beings, made in the image of God, are not limited like other living things to awareness only in the immediate moment. While we do not live outside of time as God does, we do have a consciousness of time beyond this present moment. This allows us to plan and to project today’s decisions into tomorrow’s results.

This proactive capability arose when God breathed into Adam the breath of life and he became something higher than the rest of creation God had made—a living soul. (See Genesis 2:7.) This intersection between an eternal spirit and a temporal body produces the mind, the will, and the emotions of human

beings. These clearly are products of the spirit of man, but physiologically they reside in the brain of the human body. While few of us would be able to explain the neurological pathways enabling us to exercise discretion and to establish direction, we intuitively understand what a wonderful gift the brain possesses.

To protect this capability along with all the higher reasoning skills, people go to great lengths to protect their heads. Helmets are worn during dangerous sporting activities. Hard hats are required on many job sites. Airbags are standard on nearly all cars to cushion the head during accidents. In like fashion, our spiritual ability to be proactive is protected by another vital piece of God's armor. Because the mind has such significant influence on our future, we should take all possible steps to ensure it remains spiritually focused.

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

### I. THE HEAD NEEDS PROTECTION

In terms of protection, our heads demand careful attention. The functions of thought, speech, and most of our primary senses are located within the head. The neurological center of the body is housed there. When an accident is imminent, we intuitively cover our heads with our arms.

The reason for this is simple. A man can live without one of his kidneys, and if by chance both are damaged, dialysis can provide the needed blood-purifying function. He can function without his appendix, his gall bladder, and even without a portion of his colon. However, certain organs in the body are imperative for life. A man cannot live without lungs or a heart, though for a temporary time, such as during heart bypass surgery, a machine can provide those needed functions to the body. If the heart or lungs are irreparably damaged, transplant surgeons can successfully replace even these most vital organs.

But the brain is the single most important element of human physiology. It cannot be replaced, and a person cannot live without it. When a traumatic brain injury such as a severe concussion occurs, the entire future of an individual's life can be altered. Strokes, aneurysms, and brain tumors are among the most serious human maladies. The brain, with

its irreplaceable functions, is of immeasurable worth to a healthy man or woman.

So we protect the head. The human anatomy does so with the extremely strong bony covering known as the skull. The brain itself is contained in a fluid environment to guard against shock and impact. Our eyes and ears are present in the head to assist in avoiding hazards and hurts. There is no part of the human anatomy more equipped for protection than the head.

Paul includes protection of the head in his description of the armor a Christian wears. The spiritual man needs to have his head protected. Paul understood the truth of Solomon's instruction that a man's true spiritual identity can be found in the balance of his thought life. (See Proverbs 23:7.) Success in living for God is largely determined by how effectively an individual protects the mind. To that end, appropriate armor is allocated to the head.

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### II. PUT ON THE HELMET OF SALVATION

The piece of protection prescribed for a man's spiritual head is a helmet. "And take the helmet of salvation" (Ephesians 6:17). In today's culture, a helmet is generally thought of in terms of a bicycle helmet, a motorcycle helmet, a football helmet, or the like. But in the culture in which this passage was written, a helmet was first thought of as an element of a soldier's armor. In a day when most combat was hand to hand, a helmet was meant to protect a man's head from a direct assault from his enemy.

And so is ours. When our minds are covered by salvation, they are protected from plans

and attacks from our enemy. If he can pervert our thinking, we are largely fallen. If he can destroy our emotions, we are vulnerable to further spiritual attack. If he can corrupt our wills, we are prone to make destructive decisions. However, each of these areas is protected by a genuine, vibrant salvation experience.

This does not mean one who is born again will never struggle with incorrect thinking, untrustworthy emotions, or unwise decisions. To the contrary, each of us will do so from time to time. However, the Word of God has decreed we will greatly minimize our vulnerability in these areas by ensuring our salvation is intact and protecting our minds.

*Those who are wise will seek to align themselves with the Word of God, which clearly details the appropriate specifications for this helmet called salvation.*

This is why it is imperative that we never settle for a lesser helmet. Some people want to slip on an “easy believism” helmet and trust in it for protection. Others feel they are adequately sheltered simply by being associated with a church family. Some have gone so far as to trust their minds to nothing more than religious literature or programming. But those who are wise will seek to align themselves with the Word of God, which clearly details the appropriate specifications for this helmet called salvation.

Jesus explained the necessity of salvation to Nicodemus. “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he

enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:3–5).

Simon Peter, possessing the keys to the Kingdom, further clarified on the Day of Pentecost the application of Jesus’ words. “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:38–39).

This, and no other, is the helmet that can protect a person’s mind in a world of violent spiritual attacks. When we are thus protected, it is needful to utilize that helmet to guard ourselves. We should filter all that reaches our minds through this salvation helmet. Every item we see or hear or ponder should be carefully scrutinized, not through societal values but through salvation’s values. Does my salvation experience affirm this entertainment choice? Does this activity honor my salvation? Do these words or these thoughts harmonize with my salvation? These are the types of questions that protect an individual’s mind and enable him or her to foresee any evil the enemy may attempt to interject into a redeemed life.

*“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).*

Through the Spirit baptism, we have the power to govern our minds and thought processes. Doing so requires discipline and focus, but it is well worth the effort and allows us to look beyond today and to prepare ourselves proactively for the coming of Jesus Christ. “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13).

### III. THE WAR IS INTENSIFYING IN THE LAST DAYS

That the war is intensifying is such a self-evident statement it would hardly be possible for anyone with even a modicum of spiritual discernment to deny its truth. The culture of the world in which we live is becoming more corrupt with each passing year, and thus more contrary to the principles by which we seek to live our lives. This should not surprise us, for the Word of God has forewarned about this downward spiral our world will undergo at the end of time.

“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (II Timothy 3:13). Short of the effects of a sweeping revival, we can expect no break from the increasingly hostile and anti-Christian climate of our age. In the previous verse Paul warned his young protégé that the advancement of evil men would equate to greater opposition of the righteous. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (II Timothy 3:12).

The church has always been and will always be countercultural. As we seek to live in accordance with God’s Word and ways, we will, as a natural result of that quest, discover ourselves more and more at odds with the carnal and corrupt thinking of this world. And as the world around us progressively degenerates ethically and morally, we will logically become more and more hostilely received.

In reality such a disconnection is appropriate because we actually are citizens of another world. The writer of Hebrews, after chronicling many of the heroes of the faith, makes this declaration of them: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13). In his first epistle, Peter not only called us strangers and pilgrims but described the consequence of the combative nature of that condition. “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (I Peter 2:11). Our status as citizens of another world introduces us to conflict in this one. With every passing

day drawing nearer to His coming, the assault against our hearts and minds grows increasingly fierce.

#### A. The Devil’s Time Is Limited

In each of our lives, a deadline is a compelling motivation. When the due date for an assignment approaches in school or on the job, we are driven to commit the needed time to complete such tasks. When a bill is coming due, most of us become intentional about setting aside the appropriate funds to meet that expense. When April 15 comes around in the United States, people somehow find the time to tackle the sizable task of tax preparation. (Or at least they find the time to turn over their documents to someone who prepares the tax forms for them.)

What brings an end to the procrastination that was prevalent only days before? The limited time remaining for a task to be completed drives us to greater efforts and more intense focus. We are compelled by an approaching “end.” So it is with the end of days.

The escalation of the battle in which we fight is undoubtedly due to a myriad of factors, but one of those is described in the Book of Revelation. “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (Revelation 12:12).

Prophetic fulfillments and the morphing of this world into one like that of Noah are obvious to anyone with a discerning eye, but Satan most definitely notices. He understands that God’s judgment is sure and certain and will soon fall on this world. Because he understands the brevity of days remaining, he has increased his attacks and assaults on God’s children in recent years. Some are subtle. Some are more overt. But all are hellish and purposeful.

In such a season, Jesus said we could expect “men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth” (Luke 21:26). Given that warning from our Lord, it is more essential than ever that our hearts and minds be protected by the helmet of salvation guarding our thinking and our emotions. And the good news is that true salvation is more than great

enough to withstand even an elevated level of spiritual attack. It will keep us no matter how wicked the world becomes.

## **B. Lawlessness Abounds**

The world is becoming increasingly wicked. Conduct that in bygone years was considered shameful by all corners of our culture is now heralded and embraced. Activities previously found only in shadowy corners of society are now projected by mainstream media. Philosophies and perspectives heretofore considered wicked by nearly every societal voice are now accepted in the name of “tolerance.” Our world defines the word *lawless*.

Lawless speaks of self-rule, of a setting with no outside constraints placed on anyone. It describes a culture in which individuals chafe and resist any arbitrary standard of right and wrong. It describes our present world.

Without proper protection shielding our minds, we too could become enticed by such a perspective. Even God’s children can delight in being a law unto themselves unless their thinking is protected by a salvation experience that leaves them wholly dependent on Him and wholly submitted to His lordship in their lives. It takes strength of spirit and a ready mind to stand steadfastly for truth in the face of a worldview that decries such a position. We are blessed that the new birth proactively protects our minds against ungodly philosophies.

## **C. Endurance Is Imperative**

The last days are clearly upon us, and this means several things. Certainly it means wickedness and spiritual attack will increase, for we are consistently surrounded by individuals violently opposed to a godly lifestyle. “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts” (II Peter 3:3).

But the last days also bring the promise of great revival. “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:17–18).

So we both prepare for spiritual attack and anticipate spiritual progress. On a personal level, the last days testify that our struggles are nearly over, for the end of time marks the end of our conflict. We need only withstand this final and furious assault to secure the eternity for which we have striven. One verse quoting the Lord Jesus Christ juxtaposes this battle and the hope we can find in it. “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 10:22).

As the enemy takes his last, vicious swipe at God’s church and its members, we can take solace in the fact our conflict is nearly over. We are approaching the day of our rest. We can, as Jesus encouraged us to, lift up our heads, for our redemption is drawing nigh. (See Luke 21 :28.) For some, the last few years have been difficult ones. Believers have faced opposition from friends, family, and even spiritual forces. But all who have endured should receive encouragement from Paul’s words to the Galatians: “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9).

## **D. Victory Is Certain**

The summary of the matter is quite straightforward. Our armor will not fail. Our minds can remain undefiled. Our hearts can remain completely committed. Our enemy will be defeated. Our God does prevail. The outcome is predetermined on that front.

*Victory is our spiritual inheritance through Jesus Christ.*

We need only be standing when the end comes, and we will secure victory through Christ. Interestingly, we are not commanded to win victory, but rather it is our spiritual inheritance through Jesus. “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Corinthians 15:57). Victory is given to us when we remain faithfully solid in our minds. The admonition in the next verse

reads, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). We can proactively make the decision to stand immovable in His service when our heads are properly protected by salvation.

## INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

A quick Internet search will reveal much misguided and even devilish teaching regarding the power of the mind. Some have elevated the power of positive thinking to almost deified status. For instance, in his book *Think Your Way to Success: Let Your Dreams Run Free*, self-help author Stephen Richards writes, "You are essentially who you create yourself to be and all that occurs in your life is the result of your own making." Such humanistic dogma is contrary to the biblical assertion that God orders the steps of a righteous man. (See Psalm 37:23.)

Still we would be foolish to ignore the power of the mind when it is in subjection to God and His ways. When we are thinking clearly, our emotions are balanced, and our wills are guided by His Word, we are well equipped to be spiritually successful. Therefore we must

do anything needed to ensure the helmet of salvation stays firmly about our head.

We must purpose to remove all negative spiritual influences from our lives. We must carefully guard against wrong input through our senses. All we read, watch, hear, and speak must be filtered through the salvation of God. Every pattern of thought must be measured against Scripture's direction to ensure it is worthy of our time and energy.

Those who have lived for God for some time have seen Christians who became confused in their thinking and ultimately deceived in their direction. Therefore, any child of God who desires to endure to the end, where salvation fully comes, must purpose to pray daily this prayer of the psalmist: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

Protected minds allow us to see clearly the wisdom or the foolishness of the path we are following. We can properly evaluate the righteousness or unrighteousness of impending decisions. We can choose what to embrace and what to shun. We can, from the resource of saved, protected minds, anticipate Satan's plans and proactively avoid his snares. We can make it all the way to Heaven! ■

## REFLECTIONS

- In thinking about the natural head and the spiritual head, what common elements require protection? Why is each important? Discuss.
- The spiritual helmet is called salvation. On a scale of 1 to 10, how equipped do you feel to explain the means of salvation to a hungry individual? What steps can you take to better equip yourself to that end?
- In what ways do you perceive the enemy to be at war with the saints more violently today than even just a few years ago? What is a proper response to his attacks? What are you doing personally to remain protected during this season?
- How has the spirit of lawlessness so prominent in our world attempted to attach itself to God's children? What dangers have you seen? Discuss.
- How often do you think about Heaven? What music do you listen to that talks about it? What do you read that discusses it? If the end is not regularly on our minds, is there a danger of getting too temporally minded?