

# ARMOR OF GOD

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS WITH PASTOR JACK

## Knowing Our Adversary and the Armor of God Week 8: (Ephesians 6:17a) The Helmet of Salvation

November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015

### Introduction

- A. Paul's final word to the Ephesian church focuses on the conflict they will be facing as they seek to follow Jesus in this world, walking the walk. It is that conflict with our enemy and the resources God has provided for us that is at the crux of this series.
- B. The battle for the saints is found in three areas: the flesh vs. the Spirit (Gal.5), heavenly mindsets vs. the world's valuations (Jn.15), and the believer vs. the devil and his minions (Eph.6).
- C. Review weeks 1-3 of knowing our adversary.
- D. Review weeks 4-7 of the armor of God.
- E. Tonight we come to the helmet of salvation, the 5<sup>th</sup> piece of armor, having already considered the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, and the shield of faith.

### Putting on our Helmets

- A. The necessity of headgear to many different professions and activities suggests to us its importance. The Roman helmet was made of leather covered with metal patches and sometimes formed in brass.
- B. It provided protection from fiery darts flying through the sky but was primarily designed to protect the soldier from a blow to the head by a broadsword.
- C. Spiritually, it is the helmet of salvation, a knowledge that will allow us to stand when the death blows of Satan seek to take us permanently out of our walks with God.
- D. Since it is written to the saints, we know Paul is not talking simply about getting saved or our initial salvation.
- E. Salvation in biblical terms has 3 aspects -- past, present, and future.
  - 1. **Past:** When I received Jesus as my Savior and Lord I was saved from the penalty of sin. That truth is driven home throughout the Word (Ps.51:9)(Ps.130:3)(Isa.53:5)(Mic.7:19)(Rom.4:7-8)(Heb.8:12).
  - 2. It is the past work of deliverance that is often spoken of when we read of salvation.
  - 3. **Present:** There is a further work of God in salvation to be found in our daily lives, in the present tense. He seeks to deliver us each day from the power of sin, helping me now to put off the old man and put on the new one created in Him.
  - 4. That work is an ongoing one that requires our submission (Rom.6:14; 8:2)(Mt.1:21)(Jn.8:36).
  - 5. **Future:** The future holds an even more glorious hope -- deliverance from the presence of sin, when we join with our Lord in glory forevermore (1Jn.2:17)(Isa.35:10)(1Co.15:54)(Rev.21:4-5).
- F. So salvation is past (justification); it is present (sanctification); and it is future (glorification). It is this future aspect that Paul wrote about to the Corinthians (1Co.15:55) and Jesus spoke of to Martha (Jn.11:25-26). It is also that future hope that Paul speaks of here in wearing the helmet of salvation.

### Our Future Hope

- A. (Rom.8:22-25) We are saved by this hope of future salvation for without it, the grind of our daily walks would eventually overcome us. Removing a future hope from our spiritual walks would be like running a race without a finish line! Yet there is an end we are running towards (Gal.5:5).
- B. (1Pe.1:3-7) This hope is a living hope. As we are able to press on through many difficulties in life for the reward that awaits, so can we stand in the battle for it will soon be over and glory awaits! Paul speaks of this very thing in writing to the Thessalonians (1Th.5:8-11).

## **Full Assurance**

- A. The story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1Ki.18-19) teach us much about how discouragement can overwhelm us, even those whose ministries have been so powerfully used like Elijah!
- B. No wonder Paul felt led to tell the Galatians to hang in there (Gal.6:9).
- C. Paul told the Hebrews to hang on with a full assurance unto the end (Heb.6:11-12). How quickly we can go from the enthusiasm of the new believer to the despair of an old saint who has forgotten his hope.
- D. So Paul wrote (Heb.10:22-25)(Heb.12:1-4), and Peter added (2Pe.3:1-4,14-15).

## **Remedy for Battle Fatigue**

- A. One remedy for battle fatigue is to keep your eyes on the finish line and what awaits us there (Rom.13:11).
- B. Jesus told His disciples that endurance was a quality of life for the saints (Mt.10:22). He wrote similar words to the churches (Rev.2-3).
- C. Paul wrote to a discouraged disciple Timothy (2Ti.1:6-10) to fight the good fight, just as he had.
- D. God's work in and for us will produce a lasting and sustained hope (Isa.40:28-31).
- E. Aged John wrote (1Jn.3:2), and Paul assessed the present in light of our future hope (Rom.8:18). It is worth the battle!

## **Conclusion**

- A. Review – there is bright hope for the saint, but for the unbeliever, the future is not nearly as bright.
- B. Know that the Lord is coming soon. Put on the helmet of salvation and press on, for the end is coming and the rewards are well worth the effort and the wait.
- C. Next week we will focus on the sword of the Spirit.

## Introduction

### A. The conflict we face as we follow Jesus

Paul finishes his letter to the Ephesians by speaking of the conflict that would face those who would follow Jesus in this world. And, after having laid out so much that the Ephesians had been given (and then in chapter 4, beginning with "walk, therefore, worthy of your calling"), Paul ends the letter by saying, "It's not going to be easy to walk with God. You'll be opposed, you'll be withstood, you'll be thwarted, you'll be sidetracked. The enemy of your soul - courtesy of the devil and his cohorts: they want to take you out, they don't want you to do well. And Satan will make the most of your frailties, and he'll look to capitalize on your stumblings, and he'll point out your weaknesses to you and everyone else; and if you have fear, he'll try to expound on that; your lack of consistency - all because you have given your life to the Lord and because you want to serve Him. And he hates God and he hates you, being God's people.

### B. Our battle is found in three areas

So the Bible speaks of conflict for you and me, as Christians, in three areas: (1) Your flesh versus that spiritual life that God has given you - there's that warfare within, if you will (Galatians 5); (2) There is the fight between the heavenly mindset and the world valuing system that Jesus talked about in John 15; (3) And then there is this life of the believer versus the physical and spiritual and very real devil that we read about here, which is what Paul focuses on, though the devil certainly uses our flesh and the world around us to attack the saints.

### C. Review of weeks 1-3: Knowing Our Adversary

We've been studying, and we kind of set ten weeks aside to go through looking at the enemy and then the armor that God gives us to avoid and to overthrow the enemy. We looked at the enemy first. We spent three weeks looking at his creation, his fall, his capabilities, his limitations, his strategy of attack (he has a strategy against the world - those that are lost; he has a strategy against the church), and then we ended by looking at, ultimately, his future.

### D. Review of weeks 4-7: The Armor of God

We then began to, in chapter 6 here of Ephesians, look at the armor that God has provided for us, and he said we should stand and withstand and having done all we should stand. And then from verse 14 down through verse 18, he gives us the armor - one piece at a time - that we might put on and use so that we could stand against the enemy's wiles.

Paul was chained to a Roman soldier. He was imprisoned, if you will. He got to look at a soldier dressed up just like the Roman soldier we're looking at here, every day, and he took those

things, and he gave them spiritual counterparts and used them to teach us what we have in Christ to stand against the wiles of the enemy.

So we've seen four pieces of armor. We started in verse 14. We've looked at the belt, the breastplate, the shoes and the shield - all part of the Roman soldier's attire. And as Paul teaches us, God's provision - he takes this soldier's army, and he assigns them those, like I said, spiritual applications.

We mentioned to you, and we will again, that the first three pieces of the armor were worn all the time. So they are introduced by the word "having" - having the belt, having the breastplate, having the shoes. The other three pieces of armor that God has us focus on are kept nearby. The Roman soldier wouldn't always have them with him, but he would get up to go to battle with them, and so you will read the word "taking" - that you should take the shield of faith, and take the helmet of salvation, and take the sword of the Spirit.

E. The helmet of salvation - the fifth piece of armor

So we are, tonight, on our fifth piece - Ephesians 6:17. It says, "And take the helmet of salvation" - that's all we're going to look at tonight; and next week, "and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." And then we are going to end with, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

### Putting on our Helmets

A. The necessity and importance of the helmet

But tonight - the helmet on our heads. A helmet. I think everyone's familiar with a helmet. A soldier certainly wouldn't endeavor to go into battle without one. I would hope a football player wouldn't try tackling a guy without a helmet, or a batter in baseball or, for that matter, a motorcycle rider. You should wear a helmet. I rode in Hawaii for a long time without a helmet, and that was legal but not very smart. So there aren't too many good ways to fix your brain up if you scramble it.

B. The Roman helmet provided protection from fiery darts and/or death blows

So the Roman soldier's helmet, for the most part - the one that Paul was referring to, was either made of leather that was covered with metal patches, or it was made of brass. And it offered protection from (what we looked at a few weeks ago) the fiery arrows that maybe were falling from the sky, but its primary purpose was designed to keep your head from a broadsword's blow. The Greek word is "*rhomphaia*," but it's a three- to four-foot-long blade that you would hold, almost like a baseball bat, in two hands if you were on the ground or in one arm if you were riding a horse. And the idea was just to hit a guy in the head. And if you didn't have a good helmet on, one blow from this thing, and you were done. I mean, your days were over. You were just crushed - your skull. You needed the helmet. So that's what Paul looks at (and he refers to) in this portrait that he's painting.

C. Spiritually, the helmet is the helmet of salvation

But, notice, it's not just a helmet; it's the helmet of our salvation, right? This helmet - this protection, this thing that's to keep your noggin secure - is the helmet of salvation to keep you from a death blow to your spiritual wellbeing; to keep you standing when the battle is over.

D. Paul is not talking about getting saved or our initial salvation

Now the fact that Paul is not speaking about your initial salvation, I hope is fairly clear to you. He's not saying, "Now that you're in the army of God, and now that you're fighting the battle with the devil, equip yourself, get saved." That's not what he's talking about. That's not the counsel.

E. Biblical salvation has three aspects - past, present and future

There are basically three elements to your salvation in the Bible. They are past, they are present, and they are future.

1. Past tense - when you and I first received Jesus as our Lord and Savior, the Bible declares that we were made free from the penalty of sin, that the payment for our sins was paid for by Jesus Christ. His death, my sin. What I deserve, He paid. So, when I gave the Lord my life, my sins were placed upon Jesus at Calvary, and He paid for them entirely. When David prayed in Psalm 51, "Lord, hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities" (verse 9), that was the cry for God's mercy and for His forgiveness. In Hebrews 8, as Paul writes to the saints that were also under tremendous pressure, he said (as the Lord is speaking through him), "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (verse 12). Wonderful news, isn't it? The day you got saved, your sin account was wiped clean by the blood of the Lamb; and not just the sins you've committed - the ones you will commit. Your life, washed from failure. David wrote in Psalm 130:3, "If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" But He doesn't. Because Isaiah said, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). We're healed. Paul wrote to the Romans in chapter 4:7, "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin." Well the minute you came to Jesus, in the past tense, you were saved. Right? You were saved. If you were to die three seconds later, you were going home clean - washed in the blood of the Lamb. Micah, when he was describing God's grace, said, "He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). No way to find them; they're gone. And that's the past portion of our salvation.

2. My coming to Jesus by faith provided forgiveness from my sinfulness by His sacrifice. In fact, when we have communion every last Wednesday of the month, we celebrate that first - the past work of deliverance, the past salvation that we have; and the past work of salvation

frees me from the penalty of sin. I no longer owe that. That's been paid. The debt's been paid. Past. Penalty.

3. Well there's a present part of salvation, and the present part of salvation is that, as I begin to walk with God, and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within me, He begins to change my life. He begins to enable me to say "no" to sin and "yes" to Him. He begins to change my appetites and my hungers and my desires. He begins to work in me. This new man begins to grow, and I begin to be delivered - not from the penalty of sin; that's paid for, that's past - but from the very power of sin. What used to own me doesn't own me anymore. What used to overcome me no longer overcomes me. At least not all the time. Now there are days I have victory in Christ over those sins that used to hold me down. Before I came to the Lord, I was dominated by a sinful nature. There was nothing I could do to change my heart. I don't know if you remember - since we're kind of heading for New Year's - about New Year's resolutions. Mine wouldn't last until the Rose Bowl, (Laughing) which came on January 1<sup>st</sup> at 1:45 in the afternoon. Whatever I had promised God, it was done by then. "I've done it again." I had absolutely no power to deliver myself from the power of sin. Yet when Jesus came into my life, and He sat down upon the throne in my life, His power and the work of His Spirit began to save me - present tense. I'm being saved - being saved - from my old life; being saved from my old ways; being saved from what I once was. The very power of sin is being broken, and the influence of sin - the binding of sin that used to grip my heart - now begins to be freeing in my life.

4. You come to the Lord, you're forgiven of your sins, the Holy Spirit moves in, but you're pretty much the same person you always were - except you now have a new heart, and now you've got to learn to walk with Him. So Paul writes to the Romans in chapter 6:14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace." How good is that?! Or you read in Romans 8 (same author, same book), "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (verse 2). "If the Son makes you free" - what did Jesus say? "You're free" - what? "Indeed." John 8:36. "If the Son has made you free, you're free indeed." That's present tense. There is a present portion of your salvation. It is the part that begins to deliver you from the power of sin.

5. John wrote, as he's an old guy, "The world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:17). So, past salvation deals with the penalty of sin. Present salvation - you're being saved every day from the old life, you're being saved from the power of sin that used to dominate your life. But there's one other faction. There's a future-tense salvation. You are going to be saved one day and taken to glory. You're not there yet. But there is a future time when you will be totally delivered from the presence of sin, from the presence of sin. In the past, the penalty of sin; in the present, the power of sin; but in the future, it'll be the very presence of sin - when all that is sin, when everything that's in opposition to God, will be put away permanently. Won't that be a good day?! No more battles, no more fighting, no more enemy, no more sin. Just life! Isaiah wrote of that day, "And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:10). Paul said to the Corinthians, in chapter 15, about dying, "When this corruptible has put

on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory' " (1 Corinthians 15:54). We read in Revelation 21:4 about heaven, where the Lord tells us "He will wipe away every tear from our eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new. Write these things, John, for these words are true and faithful.' " Future tense. We're going somewhere, aren't we? This isn't the end of the line for us. This isn't where the bus stops.

#### F. Salvation is past, is present and is future

By biblical definition, salvation is past. The word that is sometimes used to describe it is justification. Big word. But you'll find it in the Bible. It means "just as if I'd" never sinned. Justified = just as if I'd never sinned. That's what past salvation does. It deals with the penalty of sin. The present deliverance from the power of sin that God brings to us is called sanctification. To be sanctified is the same word for "saint," "**hagios**." It means to be set apart for a single use. It's kind of like when you go to a picnic, and everybody gets a cup, and you put your name on it, and nobody drinks out of anybody else's cup. "That's my name on it." Well that's what happens when you get saved. God puts His name on you. You belong to Him. You're "**hagios**," you're sanctified, and God begins to work in you the work that He longs to do. That's the work of His Spirit in you. That's present tense. One day in the future, we'll be glorified. Justified, sanctified, glorified. We're going to be gathered up into heaven. And Jesus said to Martha (John 11:25-26), "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."

#### Our Future Hope

##### A. We are saved by this hope of future salvation

Well, it is undoubtedly that aspect of salvation that Paul is interested in you knowing about when it comes to protection of your mind and your thoughts and your outlooks, having on this helmet of salvation. It is your future hope that he's interested in having you hang on with because it is that which should protect you when the enemy comes in like a flood. Look, this isn't the end of the line. We're headed somewhere. There's a place for me. I'm going to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Even though I haven't done well, and I'm not that good or faithful, I'm going to get to hear that because of what God has done. That's for all of us, and that's our hope.

Paul, when he wrote to the Romans in chapter 8, says this, "For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance" (verses 22-25). And that's really what I think he is talking about to the Ephesians as well. Without a future hope that one day you're going to be delivered from this body, you're going to be taken out of this world, you're going to find full

victory and deliverance, it won't take long for you to despair of life here. If you don't have a place to go, and you're just fighting it out here, eventually you're going to get tired of that, and you're going to get burned.

But God has a plan for you, and the plan is you've got to look up. The length of the battle will take its toll, but if you look up, you put on the helmet, "Man, I'm going somewhere!" God is going to finish what He started. Then you have victory over the enemy. Removing a future hope would kind of be like running a race without a finish line. Right? "How many more laps?" "Who cares? Just keep going." "What are my time splits?" "It doesn't matter. You're going to be running forever." "Am I in first?" "It doesn't matter! First, last, just keep going, buddy. Don't stop. One long straightaway without an end. It's never over." But it is going to be over. We've been saved, we are being saved, and we have yet to be saved. God's going to finish the work that He's promised to do. So, Paul writes to the Galatians in chapter 5:5, "We through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." It's going to be a good day when the Lord calls your name. The battle will be over. And I'll tell you what - if you're suffering tonight, maybe greatly so, this hope should dominate your outlook. If we have an easy time of life, sometimes people forget to put on their helmet. They forget about what's coming. Their whole spiritual experience gets focused here. "I want a new car. I want a new house. I want a new job. I want a new family. I want new something!" And then you have all kinds of trouble or you're sick or you're struggling, and you go, "Man, I can't wait to go there!" All of a sudden your helmet goes on, and your thinking gets straightened out, and your outlook begins to be in line with what God has to say. Hope for the future will sustain us as we face what seems like an endless and sometimes uninterrupted onslaught by the enemy. Will this ever end? Yes, it will end. Will this ever be over? It's one day going to be absolutely, completely over. Our strength is - it is only for a while. And that truth needs to be applied. And to protect your mind and your hope, you've got to keep on the helmet. The hope of your salvation. Oh, you've been saved. You're being saved. But you're going to be saved. Right? There's a last lap. There's a last entry. There's a last walk. There's a last day. And then there's eternity.

## B. This hope is a living hope

Peter, when he wrote in 1 Peter, talked about that in chapter 1. I know we've been going over it on Sunday mornings. We just finished. But he wrote this (verses 3-7), "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Pretty good word for a church that was being murdered for its faith by Nero, who was out of his mind. Hey, look. You have a lively hope, a living hope, and there's an inheritance waiting for you. And no one's going to lay a hand on it. And now God keeps you by His strength and by His power for your salvation - future tense - ready to be revealed in the last time. That's the helmet you've got to keep on. Bad day - put on the helmet. Good day -



don't forget to put on the helmet. Remind yourself this isn't all there is. I can't imagine what heaven's going to be like, but it's going to be awesome, isn't it?

Now, we see that same kind of practice, I think, in many things. Our living hope is to go to heaven and receive the inheritance that God has prepared. But in a natural sense we, a lot of times, will keep ourselves going by having those breaks ourselves. I was talking to one of the kids who was graduating this year, and he was talking about what a tough semester at school he was having and how he couldn't wait for Spring break. "I can't wait for Spring break. I'm just going to hang on till I get to Spring break." And I think students understand that. They press on year after year with an eye towards graduating and starting their careers. Or, if you have a tough job, and you have that Monday through Friday thing, you live for the weekends. You just kind of labor, and, "Oh, it's Saturday. So happy." Right? Friday night, you're like a whole different person. All week, you're grumpy. And then Friday night, you are the happiest fellow around. A few days off, a little vacation, a time to get away. Spiritually, we have to do the same thing. We endure with a hope that we set off into the future. It keeps me going. I'm going to heaven. I'm going to be gathered with the Lord forever. And you and I are going to be with Him, and where He is, we're going to be. Put on the helmet. Don't be discouraged. Don't be overwhelmed. My spiritual walk and the battle - I have to put this helmet on to counter the discouragement that life can bring, to the lies that the enemy wants to bring my way, to the fact that there's no end to this misery. "Oh, I've been praying for weeks! God's not doing anything!!" Helmet. You hear someone do that, just go, "Hey, dude. Doesn't look like you're wearing your helmet. Put on your lid, man. Get your lid on." Put on your lid.

So what does Peter say? A lively hope for the future. That's anticipation. That keeps you sane! It ought to keep you focused. Because I have this hope, I can deal with temporary suffering - a little pain to reach the eternal goal. Unfortunately, in a practical sense, many believers, rather than standing, they despair at any sign of trouble or difficulty. They lose sight of the glory that should be filling their hearts and what awaits them and the assurances of the good purposes of God along the way, and they take off their helmets, and they're plummeted by the enemy into despair. "Oh, man. My life." Put on the helmet! A hundred years from now, if the Lord tarries, all of you - I'm a prophet now, listen - are going to be dead. (Laughing) A hundred years from now, you're all gone. You're all history. You'll all be in eternity. So, put on the helmet. Keep your eye on the future that God has provided. Peter called it a lively hope, and if you'll live that way, you'll be diligent, and you'll run for the finish line with joy. But you've got to keep on the helmet.

You know, if you ask an engaged couple when the big day is, you might hear, "62 days, 18 hours, 12 minutes and 38 seconds." They're looking to get married, man. Nothing makes them happier than talking about weddings. Nothing makes you more tired than listening to them tell you about what's happening in their marriage to come. They survive all of the pressures, all of the preparation, all of the family demands, all of the financial costs, all of the calling back and forth, and scheduling and issues and people because the big day is coming. And when it comes, we're off the hook. The worry goes away, the family pressure goes away, the unknowns go away. Oh, they'll be married. Wait, there'll be other stuff, but they don't care. Right now, they're

just getting married. Imagine planning forever for a wedding that never comes. You'd just want to jump right out of a window, wouldn't you? "I just want to jump." Put on the helmet.

Paul said this to the Thessalonians - this is the way he described this - he said (1 Thessalonians 5:8-11), "Let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation." Future, right? "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake" (are alive) "or sleep" (are dead), "we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing" with these words. There ought to be a future hope that keeps you going. The world is a disappointing place. Oh, there're a lot of good days. You'll have wonderful days. Children will be born. People will get married. Grandchildren will come. You'll get a raise. You'll feel great about yourself. But there're a lot of bad days, too, where people get sick, and you lose people you love, and you have arguments with people you care about. But.....helmet. Just lock it in place. I know you're not supposed to wear it all the time, but if you're starting to feel that way, then you'd better put it on and start thinking about what's happening.

### Full Assurance

Fill your mind with the truth - the full assurance; the fact that one day we will be with Him should keep us pressing ahead in the battles each day. Eternity is waiting. Salvation will one day be fully realized. The battle will be over then. It's your helmet, and God wants you to fill your mind with that truth. Your future is safe and secure and certain. Few things in life are. But that is. It's God's promise. You can count on it. Full assurance.

Satan would love to have you think there's no relief in sight, that there is no end to the struggle, there's no reward at the end of the line, it just isn't worth the effort. But that's why we need to keep this helmet on and really strap it down, and don't take it off.

A. The story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal is a good lesson

Back in 1 Kings 19 is the story of Elijah, and I know you know the story; you don't have to go there. But Elijah had a great victory one day over 450 prophets of Baal and another 400 prophets of Asherah. They met up on Mount Carmel, and the people weren't doing well, and it gave Elijah, I think, the opportunity to finally say to the people, "What God are you going to stand for? Who are you going to follow?" It was a miserable time in Israel's history. They weren't doing well spiritually. Their king was a horror, and there hadn't been rain, and God was just doing everything He could to get the people to their knees. And then there was this faceoff. And by the time that Elijah had built the altar - after these guys had done all day building and screaming and cutting themselves - it was Elijah who stood up and said, "Let it be known this day that You're the God in Israel, You're God, You're our God. Show them." And fire fell down and consumed the altar, and people just hit the deck. It was a great day of victory - 850 prophets of the devil were murdered. Their lives were taken. God had had enough. That was it. They died. Every one of them. In fact, 1 Kings 19:1 says that it became known to Jezebel what Elijah had done, "how he had executed all the prophets with the sword." I mean, they lost literally every bad guy running these false prophetic kinds of ministries. They were

gone in a moment. And what a relief it was and what a blessing it was to see the people saying, "We're going with Elijah's God, we think." Good choice, guys! And people began to hit the deck, and it couldn't have been a better time.

So you would get to chapter 19 after that, and you would expect to read that Elijah went on a victory tour. But he doesn't. What he hears instead is that Jezebel, Ahab's wife, was so angry that she sent a messenger to him and said, "May the gods do that to me and also, if I don't make your life as their life by tomorrow about this time." You've got 24 hours, and you're a dead man! And Elijah might have just gone "Pfft. The Lord just took out 850 guys. I'm worried about some woman who's mad?" But he's freaked out! And rather than put on the helmet, he runs for his life. He takes off with his servant, drops his servant out in the desert town of Beersheba, goes another full-day's journey into the wilderness, sits down in utter discouragement - fearful for his life, and prays to die. "I just want to die!" It is so inconsistent with a guy who just saw the magnificent power and deliverance of God. But that's how disappointment works, right? One day you're up, the next day you're down. Put on the helmet. Be sure of where you stand. And so, the great prophet of God has a heart gripped with fear, and in the midst of victory comes this horrible defeat. And he says, "Lord, let me die."

In response, in chapter 19, God gives him some restoring rest, and twice He sends the Angel of the Lord to feed him. Now I don't know what's in angel food, but it's pretty protein-filled, I'm thinking, because it sends Elijah - for forty days and nights in the strength of that meal - to Mount Horeb, to Mount Sinai, all the way down into the Sinai Peninsula. So he goes six weeks just traveling from far north completely down south, by himself, and there he arrives in the middle of nowhere. And it is there that God and he have a meeting, and Elijah was sitting in the cave and wanting to die. Finally the Lord came to him in a still small voice and said, "You've got no reason to be discouraged. Why are you so downcast?" ("Why are you so bummed out?" I believe is the original translation). And he gives God a song and dance about being the only one left faithful to Him upon the earth. "I'm the only guy. I'm forever paying to follow You." And God tells him in verse 18, "That's not exactly true. I've still got 7,000 other guys who haven't bowed their knees to Baal and every mouth that hasn't kissed him and his little figure. I've got lots of guys serving Me. You ain't the only guy, Elijah." And so, "Get busy, buddy. Pull your head out of the sand. I've got work for you to do." And rather than discouragement, which had gripped his heart, the great prophet of God - even in the midst of great victory - has to be told by the Lord, "Go to work. Get busy!" He gives him some names of some kings that He wants him to anoint, tells him He has a ruler that he has to put in place, tells him he's got a replacement to train and to teach for himself. He could have used this helmet. And so could you and I because not everything goes so well, and I doubt all of us are at that same faith level as we see our buddy here, Elijah. He had a man of great faith. So, he had disappointment in the midst of victory. We can have it, too. You can feel great tonight. "Oh, man, the Lord spoke to me. I was worshipping. It was such a good evening." And by the time you get to bed, you're all discouraged. Maybe before you get out of the parking lot, someone has brought you discouragement. It doesn't take much. Put the helmet on. We need the helmet. For sure.

B. Paul exhorted the Galatians to hang in there

Paul's counsel to the Galatians in chapter 6:9 was, "Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not" what? "Lose heart." Or "faint." Either one would have worked. Lose heart. New King James. Lose heart.

C. Paul told the Hebrews to hang on to the end

The book of Hebrews was written to believers who had been raised in the Jewish faith and who, having heard the good news of Jesus, had turned to Him for salvation, and it had cost them plenty. Families turned against them, you couldn't visit the synagogue, you were treated as dead. Maybe your family had a funeral for you. They'd lost you to foolishness. And so it was very isolating. But yet, "The Lord's coming. We believe in Him. We've seen Him." And they turned, many of them, to Christ, and then the days began to turn into months, and the months began to turn into years, and then guys like Nero came out and wanted to kill you for your faith. And the Jewish believers went, "You know, it was easy just being Jewish. And God's not been real faithful. He hasn't come back. He hasn't shown up. We're getting killed now! Now our family hates us, our government hates us. Pretty much everyone hates us. We need to go - maybe we ought to think about just going backwards rather than going forward."

And God gives to Paul the job of writing to Hebrew Christians (living in Rome) about their faith and how that they can't leave Jesus because He's the fulfillment of everything, as a Jew, they ever learned. So he went through their whole history - whether it was angels or the high priest or the sacrifices - and every point, he went, "Remember when you used to do this?" They'd go, "Yeah." And then, "Jesus is the fulfillment." "And then, you remember this? Well, Jesus is the fulfillment." And ten chapters of this tied to their history, and finally he said, "The just always have had to live by faith" (Romans 1:17). Chapter 11 gives them a whole history of people that they've loved and believed in, were very proud of as Jews. Guys like Abraham and Jacob and Moses and Noah. Lived by faith, died by faith, didn't receive the promises, saw them afar off. Hey, life's always been hard for the believer. It's always been difficult for the saint. But, look, you've got to stay the course. You've got to put on the helmet. In fact, he said to them in chapter 6, in the midst of all of this arguing with them, "We desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (verses 11-12).

Look, now is no time to give up, now is no time to wear out. When you're a new believer, you're always filled with tremendous optimism. Do you know any new believers? I mean really new believers. They're as excited as you could be. They'll wear you out with excitement. They're like vacuum cleaners. Every word you say (sound of a vacuum)....they write it down, they remember it. You go to new believer classes.....you want to be encouraged, go to a new believer class. Sit in there for a while. You'll get all excited. But then there're the older believers.....like some of you. (Laughing) "I know what he's going to say right now." We lose our enthusiasm. We lose our excitement. It becomes more difficult for us. Full assurance to the end. Years pass. Optimism slows. Future hope is lost. Present difficulties kind of bind us. And so we don't find ourselves able to go forward as we should. And here's Paul's answer, "Just put on the helmet, man!" Going to heaven ought to excite you to think about that. You can go to heaven this year or next year or tomorrow. And there'll be a place for you.

#### D. Paul (and Peter) wrote about full assurance

Hebrews chapter 10, still writing to them, he said this in verse 22, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." He is faithful. "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." Look, hope means we look forward. Right? Our sins are forgiven, our lives are saved, my name's in the Book of Life, I'm learning not to be overwhelmed by sin. God is giving us victory a step at a time, a day at a time - present salvation. But it's all with one purpose. We're going home to be with Him. Put on the helmet. Put on the helmet.

Chapter 12 of Hebrews (same book/writing) he says this, "Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin" (verses 1-4). Look, don't give up. Every time you want to complain, just think, "I don't have it as bad as Jesus did. He did all that for me. I've just got to follow Him." "For the joy set before Him, He endured. He pressed on to the end." Aren't you glad the Lord waited till you got saved? What if He'd have come in 1976? Well, some of you wouldn't have been born. But some of you wouldn't have made it. Or in '86 or in '96 or in 2006 or six months ago. And you wouldn't have made it. And the Lord was good enough to wait for you. Right? So now, here's your future hope - you're going to heaven. You're going to heaven. You're going to heaven! YOU! I know. No one believes it. But YOU (Laughing) are going to heaven. Praise the Lord.

#### Remedy for Battle Fatigue

##### A. Keep your eyes on the finish line and what awaits you there

One remedy for battle fatigue is this helmet. If you wear it, it'll force you to keep your eyes on the finish line. Paul said to the Romans in chapter 13:11, "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed." It's closer now, isn't it? I got saved in 1973. That's 42 years ago; 42 years ago. I am 42 years closer to my salvation than when I first believed. Still waitin'. Still waitin'. I hope the Lord comes with the big bus, and we all go together. I think the greatest joy for me about the rapture is we all get to go together. Nobody hurts, nobody cries, nobody suffers. We just all go together. It'd be better, right, than all of us showing up in the taxicab one at a time. Come on, Lord, (Laughing) just bring the big bus. But I'll tell you what - you put the helmet on, and you realize that you've got to keep your eyes on it.

B. Jesus said that endurance is a quality of the saint's life

Matthew 10:22 Jesus says, "He who endures to the end will be saved." You shall be saved. Endurance is a quality of the believer's life. Revelation 2-3, "To him that overcomes, I will give life." We don't want to give up.

C. Paul encouraged Timothy to fight the good fight

When Paul wrote to Timothy (his last letter from prison before Paul was killed), he said this to a 40-year-old man in his first senior pastor role in Ephesus, a guy he had trained more than half of his life, he wrote this, "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 2:6-10). Come on, Timothy. And if you read the books, Timothy's life, in many ways, had hit the skids. He was tremendously discouraged. He was despised for just being 40, which was considered young to be in ministry. He was having persistent stomach aches, which probably had a lot to do with his diet; but also with the worry and stress that he was under. He felt like he was in over his head, and the people opposing the gospel in Ephesus were smart, college-trained, articulate guys who could fight against him. And Timothy felt, sometimes, like he'd been overdone. He was doing a lot of complaining. He was embarrassed. Paul was always in jail. He was fighting false teachers. And Paul was going to die. And Paul says, "Come on, buddy. Head's up. God's enabled you, He's empowered you. Jesus has come not only to forgive you, but He's brought immortality to light. We're going to live forever, buddy. This isn't the end of life. This is just part of life."

D. God's work in us and for us produces a lasting and sustained hope

Isaiah wrote this in chapter 40:28, "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." God's work in us and for us will produce a real sustaining hope, and I think that's what you and I need to have. If you're frustrated waiting for the Lord to come, imagine His frustration waiting for you to come to Him. Because I suspect He wants to be around you more than you want to be around Him. I think if you have to measure desire, His is far greater than yours. He knows what's waiting for you. He knows what He's going to bless you with. You're His inheritance. You want to, "Oh, Lord, don't come yet! Don't come until after the Super Bowl. Lord, don't come until after the vacation. Oh, Lord, don't come till we went to Hawaii." And the Lord's going, "I just want to come!" And the only reason He waits is so that more can come. Right? So that more can come.

That's His dilemma is waiting. His frustration is waiting. And you have to wait. He waits for the latter rain and for the final harvest - for just a few more. And He wants you to put on your helmet so you'll wait well - as He waits for you. There's no need to become discouraged. There's no need to allow the enemy to have a foothold. Victory is yours. Don't let Satan rob you of the anticipation of the future; and he'll steal it from you. Don't let him take from you the hope necessary to continue in your commitment to Jesus. He's worth serving. He's worth following. When all is said and done, you're going to be so thankful that you chose to put Him first. I guarantee you none of you will ever look back and go, "Man, I wish I'd put the Lord less first." You will never do that. No blow to the head, right? Keep the helmet on. Your head, your thoughts, your outlooks will be fine.

E. John and Paul both say it's worth the battle!

What did John say, there in chapter 3? "It has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). It's going to be a glorious day, isn't it? Someone said, "Hey, are you going to know people when you get to heaven?" No. I can't imagine getting dumber as I go. It is worth the battle, isn't it? It is worth the battle.

### Conclusion

Now, next week, we are going to turn to the only offensive weapon in the entire arsenal of the soldier. So you don't want to miss this one. This is what God gives you to start swinging. This is what takes the enemy out. This is what you can hold in your hand, and you can be that guy - that sword fighter. Bright hope for you and me as Christians. You know who has a horrible hope? The unbeliever. I read the whole Bible more than once - your future is not bright because what is glorious for the church is horrible for you. The coming of the Lord is a terrible day of judgment, and you have to make yourself ready to stand before Almighty God. And the only way you can do that is by coming to Jesus, the Savior, the Lord. Know He is coming soon. Make sure you're right with Him. Put on the helmet. Press on to the end. The rewards are well worth the effort and the wait. Just don't get discouraged. "Oh, man, life's so hard." (whining tone) Strap it on, buddy. You're going to keep it on, right?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson

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