

What to Wear Today?

In the conclusion of his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul wrote: "A final word: Be strong in the Lord. ... Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil" (Eph. 6:10-11, NLT). How often do you feel "strong in the Lord"? Many Christians more frequently feel "small and puny" or "frail and afraid."

The good thing is, Paul wasn't telling the Ephesian believers (or us) that through self-effort we could just be strong-he wasn't saying, "Just do it!" as the Nike commercial says. He goes on in verses 13-18 to explain that being strong in the Lord requires getting suited up for battle. Spiritually speaking, he compares it to dressing like the professional soldiers in his day.

First, he says, we are to put on is the "belt of truth." Both truth and integrity must encircle every part of our lives as Christians. When humanism says that all truth is relative, God says, "I am truth" (John 14:6), and He never changes (see Heb. 13:8).

Second, we are to put on the "breastplate of righteousness." We need God's righteousness (being in right relationship with Him) covering and protecting our hearts. It is by Jesus' redeeming work on the cross that we can accept God's righteousness.

Third, we are to cover our feet with a readiness to go and preach the gospel. Have you ever tried to walk on gravel in your bare feet? It hurts! You don't want to move-it's easier just to stand still. That's why Paul urges us to cover our feet-so we can be ready to go with the gospel. Are you ready to proclaim the good news anytime, anywhere?

Next, we are to take up the "shield of faith." Romans 10:17 says that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of

God" (NKJV). Paul's instruction to "take up the shield of faith" (NLT) points us to the Word of God. You must fill your life with His promises.

To protect our minds, we are to put on the "helmet of salvation." Are your thoughts protected? The Fire Bible: Global Study Edition note for verse 13 says, "Being renewed in our minds (Rom. 12:2) and confident in our relationship with God will protect us in battle." You can do this by focusing on God's good things (see Phil. 4:8) and not on the corrupting influences of the world around you.

The next piece of God's armor is the "sword of the Spirit," or God's Word. It's imperative that we hide God's Word in our hearts (see Ps. 119:11), for it's not only a shield of faith but also a weapon for thwarting the enemy when he comes to put doubts in our hearts.

Finally, Paul tells us to "pray in the Spirit" on all occasions. Turning again to the Fire Bible: Global Study Edition, we read, "Prayer is not to be viewed as just another spiritual weapon but as part of the actual conflict itself," and "Failure to pray diligently with all kinds of prayer in all situations is to surrender to the enemy."

We must be like warriors who prepare and train for the battle they know they will face. This month, make your battle plan, ready your armor and draw close to God. In Him we are strong.