



## **“What Do You Wear to Work?”**

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### **Scripture (ERV):**

#### **Ephesians 6:10-18**

<sup>10</sup>To end my letter I tell you, be strong in the Lord and in his great power. <sup>11</sup>Wear the full armor of God. Wear God’s armor so that you can fight against the devil’s clever tricks. <sup>12</sup>Our fight is not against people on earth. We are fighting against the rulers and authorities and the powers of this world’s darkness. We are fighting against the spiritual powers of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup>That is why you need to get God’s full armor. Then on the day of evil, you will be able to stand strong. And when you have finished the whole fight, you will still be standing.

<sup>14</sup>So stand strong with the belt of truth tied around your waist, and on your chest wear the protection of right living. <sup>15</sup>On your feet wear the Good News of peace to help you stand strong. <sup>16</sup>And also use the shield of faith with which you can stop all the burning arrows that come from the Evil One. <sup>17</sup>Accept God’s salvation as your helmet. And take the sword of the Spirit—that sword is the teaching of God. <sup>18</sup>Pray in the Spirit at all times. Pray with all kinds of prayers, and ask for everything you need. To do this you must always be ready. Never give up. Always pray for all of God’s people.

### **Sermon:**

It was common. It was familiar imagery to them. The image of the battle of the God of the Jewish people, against lesser gods, demi gods, evil spirits. Zeus or Artemis...it didn’t matter...they were not the true God of all but rather spiritual powers that were defeated by Yahweh, and needed to be defeated in each believers mind. They were forces of chaos, of

darkness, running amok through the earth and the heavens. They were not God's messengers or servants, did not follow God's will or design.

Jewish scripture has, in many places, the message to deny, and to cast down and cast away, any of those lesser gods of other religions. Goddess of fertility Asherah, or the storm god Baal, or the god kings of Egypt...they were all false. None of them deserved the loyalty of the people of Yahweh. God reigned supreme as Creator and Sustainer of all. These petty demigods were as nothing.

Against a polytheistic world, the God of Abraham and Sarah, was different for sure. He commanded their loyalty against all that the world offered of gods and goddesses; powers over a spring of water, or a storm, or a sunrise, or children or the crops. Yahweh was Maker and Sustainer...none other.

And years later, Paul says that again; none of them deserved the loyalty of the followers of Jesus.

So, this writer, whether Paul or another, uses another common image of the ancient world: dress for battle against all these seductive or terrifying demi gods that seek your time, attention, your fear, your loyalty.

The prophet Isaiah speaks of the armor of the Lord, the Essene sect's writings from Qumran use this imagery, too. Belt, breastplate, sandals, shield, helmet, sword. Ready for a fight. Ready for a battle. Ready for a violent world, both the world seen and the world unseen; filled with demons and dark spirits, and the "evil one".

Ummm...that isn't going to work for me!

I do not know the world of the soldier. I'm sure anyone with a military background could transfer the images of that time, to something comparable in the gear of a modern soldier.

But it still bothers me. Because Jesus never raised an army. Nor did he raise his hands against others in battle. He was, to his last breath, against the violence that soaks our world in blood, he preached and healed. He did not wound. He did not fight like a soldier. His "weapons" were love, and inclusion. His "weapon" if you can even call it that, was his vision of God's kingdom of peace and justice and plenty for all.

It doesn't work for me, but I thought of something that does click better in my own understanding and in my world view: what I wear to work, what I wear when I leave my home and enter the wider world with its darkness of violence and hate-mongering, the

world of sorrow and of suffering and injustice on the streets, or at the McDonalds, or behind the steel and glass of business.

With what do I gird myself to face my world in 2018?

I always take some form of identification. My id, or passport. I will show it to people repeatedly throughout the day. And how do I identify myself? I try to be identified as a person of Love. My id should say, Andy who Loves. Who strives to show the face of the love of God, to all the world.

I carry a credit card or money, because every day, almost, I will interact with others about something I need or want, and something they wish to give me in exchange. In a pinch, my credit card can help me if my car breaks down, or there is some other emergency. Yet my truest “credit card” of great value and worth to me, the “credit card” that helps me get what I need and want again and again, is the “credit card” of my community, of my family and my friends and the people of my faith community. The people with whom I share my deepest values. They are my deepest wealth.

Every day when I awake and when I step out my door I try to take along two things: gratitude for all I know and all who have been my teachers, and an open mind to see what else I can learn today! Maybe they are the shoes upon my feet as I walk through the day, saying what shall I discover today, and what can I share with the world today? I carry a profound love of nature in me, and a fascination with evolution and ecology, birds and plants and ecosystems. And I carry a sense of excitement, because we simply don't know what is at the bottom of the ocean, or beyond the familiar realm of our planets and our jolly sun...the universe is vast and astonishing at every moment! And humbles us over and over, again. It is beautiful beyond words, and relentless in its vastness and power. I am a speck in the cosmos, a nanosecond in the vastness of time. I am humbled, and yet overjoyed to be alive at all! Astonished at the power of Nature to be self-aware in me.

So, there is one more thing I hope I carry out my door, when I dress myself for my work in the world: GRATITUDE. I put on gratitude like I put on lotion after a shower...I hope to have gratitude on every part of me! I want to walk into the world singing a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to my Maker, but I want it not just in my mouth but in my heart and soul and mind and spirit. I want the word GRATITUDE spelled out big in my datebook, every day. I want GRATITUDE to be with me like the lights in my office, like the coat on my back, like the chapstick on my lips! Fill my mouth with praise and with thanks!

O sure, there could be plenty of other things, I bet you are thinking of your own “supplies” even as I speak.

Maybe I could be more like the apostle Paul and say I wear salvation, I yield the sword of the Spirit, I guard myself against evil with a shield of faith.

But I don't think that way.

I identify myself through Love, my deepest treasure is authentic community, I carry curiosity and humility, and I wrap myself in an invincible cloak of gratitude.

And in this way, I walk with God, and in God. Day by day.

In times of darkness and in times of great joy, these are my “garments”.

Consider, if you wish...what do you wear to your work in the world each day?

Peace.