

A 24/7 FASHIONISTA



In today's world, to be a "fashionista" is to be trending, to be following the latest fad, to be on the cutting edge of fashion. The definition of a fashionista is a "devoted follower of fashion." In the past, the latest and greatest fashions were found on models walking runways and filling the pages of fashion magazines. Now, you find them everywhere on social media and one looks to the celebrities to exemplify the latest in fashion style and trends. I must confess that I don't quite understand the fashion of today: hoodies under blazers, trench coats, oversized bomber jackets and vests. My cardigans were never in style until Taylor Swift decided to sing about them. Stores sell new jeans with more holes in them than

the ones I would be too embarrassed to put on a garage sale. What does this mean?

Obviously, my family would never call me a "fashionista" except when it comes to wearing the clothing (armor) described by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6. The Christian is directed to not be a follower of the fads and fashions of this world but rather to be a trendsetter for fashion by girding the full armor of God. It's a matter of identity. Our identity is NOT found in Coach, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Cartier or H & M, but in Christ alone. A 24/7 fashionista for the Lord is the person who believes that the forces of evil are working 24/7, serious and cunning in their intent to destroy one's life and gain one's soul; therefore, they are dressed with the clothing God provides to be victorious in Christ in any and every situation. Yes, how you dress can make all the difference in this world and for eternity. **Read more** about the dress the Lord equips you with 24/7 to be a difference-maker.

When Queen Victoria ruled in England, she had several daughters, and her daughters were just like any girls. They went to school and saw the latest fashions, and they wanted to wear their dresses just like the girls down the street. So they'd come home spouting off to their mom, who just happened to be the Queen. And they'd tell her they wanted to wear their clothes like this and their hair like that. But she stopped them short saying clearly: "You are the daughters of the Queen, and the Queen's daughters do not follow fads. **They establish fashion!**"

We are sons and daughters of the great Commander and Chief, Lord God, King of the Universe. We are to live in society but not to be of society. We are to be trend setters and difference makers until that day when the Lord returns in all His glory and the enemy will be vanquished forever. Are you under-armed? Would you prefer to blend in with the world around you rather than be a bold trend setter? What do you think of the fashion described by the Apostle Paul?

Every fashionista goes against the current of the world to wear something bold and new until it becomes THE fashion of the day. They establish fashion. The Christian, **who is always at the same time a witness of Christ**, is a New Creation through the blood of Jesus. The Christian was dead in sin but in Christ is now alive for eternity. What a bold fashion for the world to witness and mimic. Remember the words of God in Ephesians 5:1-2, "*Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*" Because of

the life, death and resurrection of Christ, we put off the fashions of this world - bitterness, wrath, anger, hatred, and all malice, and put on Christ, bear the fruit of the Spirit and gird ourselves with His fashionable, functional armor.

The Apostle Paul paints the picture of the most powerful figure of the ancient world: a centurion. Everything about their fashion set the trend for the most intimidating and functioning difference maker walking the streets of Rome. Talk about a "fashionista". The centurion was easily recognized by his armor and respected by friend and foe alike. Everything about this outfit spoke of confidence for victory.

This really begs the question: Would the Church of God really appear so irrelevant to the world if the entire Church was girded with His armor and ready for battle 24/7? The world sees that the Church often wants to model itself after the world as it does business and even as it markets itself. When it comes to choosing your dress for worship - do you dress for success (to reclaim time from Satan as you focus on God's gifts to bless you) or to be comfortable for the day ahead? The Church is relevant for the world - but only as totally other, set apart, sanctified children of the King. Yes, that's you. A child of God. Bearing the fashion that readies you to face anything and everything the devil will bring at you, trusting in the victory that is already yours in Christ. You are a 24/7 fashionista for the Lord.

As Paul is writing the words of Ephesians, his right wrist is in chains, and the other end of that chain is attached to the left wrist of a Roman soldier. Paul is up-close-and-personal with what a soldier wears for daily battle, what it takes to go to war with an enemy, but he also knows there is an even greater enemy than flesh and blood - the old evil foe that only the full armor of God and the strength of the Lord can defeat. We hear his encouragement to arm ourselves for battle. It is a concept that is always on our minds, living as we do in a world in which animosities between countries and ethnic groups and terrorist sects continually threaten to flare up into open conflict. As we battle challenges of the pandemic, fires, earthquakes, tropical storms, hurricanes, and flooding. America wears a target on its back but that target pales in comparison to the bullseye you wear as a Christian because of the spiritual warfare of which Paul speaks. He directed the Ephesian Christians to their need to be girded with the fashion befitting the struggle *"against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."*

Paul knew that one of the keys if you hope to be victorious is knowing the enemy. But there's more to this than just being aware of the devil and his temptations. One of the famous misquotations that came out of the *Pogo* comic strip was Albert the Alligator's "We have met the enemy, and he is us." There is a lot of truth in that as it applies to what threatens the daily walk of our life, whether it be war or terrorism or pandemic or violence. Our own sinful natures are often only **too willing** to go along with the suggestions and the temptations that come from *"this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil."* Instead of resisting and fleeing from the tempter, we seem at times to entertain him and his temptations.

When we do aim at combating him, it becomes obvious that we will not be able to overcome him and his influence just by our own efforts. So Paul's clear urging in his opening words is vital to us: *"Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might... Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day."* *"The One who is in us is greater than he who is in the world."*

Paul's encouragement revolves around what was worn by the Roman soldier of his day. They armed themselves for battle 24/7 because they knew the enemy did also.

Paul Harvey in his "The rest of the story" told this appropriate anecdote about the devil. "If I were the devil, I would gain control of the most powerful nation in the world; I would delude the minds (of the people) into thinking that their power and prosperity had come from man's effort, instead of God's blessings; I would promote an attitude of loving things and using people, instead of the other way around; I would dupe entire states into relying on gambling for their main source of revenue; I would convince people that character is not an issue ... I would make it legal to take the life of unborn babies; I would make it socially acceptable to take one's own life, and invent machines to make it convenient ... I would take God out of the schools, where even the mention of His name was grounds for a lawsuit; I would come up with drugs that sedate the mind and target the young, and I would get sports heroes to advertise them; I would get control of the media, so that every night I could pollute the minds of every family member for my agenda; I would attack the family, the backbone of any nation ... I would compel people to express their most depraved fantasies on canvas and movie screens, and I would call it art ... I would convince the people that right and wrong are determined by a few who call themselves authorities and refer to their agendas as politically correct; I would persuade people that the church is irrelevant and out of date and that the Bible is for the naive. I would institutionalize the Church to the degree that her number one priority would be preservation of the institution, not preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ... I would dull the minds of Christians, and make them believe that prayer is not important, and that faithfulness and obedience are optional, and that it really doesn't matter what you believe about God as long as you are sincere in your belief. I would....well, come to think of it, I would leave things pretty much the way they are now!"

So you think fashion is only for the models, celebrities and those shopping on Fifth Avenue in New York or Rodeo Drive in California? Fashion is a matter of life and death (especially to teenagers, right?). Satan is alive and well. His forces of evil are present in your world. But God has given us a message to bear to the world: Satan is not the trendsetter. His children are! Clothed in His armor, we gird a fashion that exudes something brand new - the forgiven, healed, restored, redeemed, victorious child of God. The world is longing to hear about this fashion - how it makes your life different. Not free from struggles but confident in the midst of them. The world is also longing to see this fashion in action rather than the Church seeking to blend in with the world. The Church is relevant when the Church is living out the truth it holds in its heart.

The Apostle Paul applied his knowledge to the Christian warrior in action to equip us 24/7 and get us ready for battle on a daily basis. Paul began with "*having fastened on the belt of truth.*" Literally, the phrase is "having your loins girded with truth." People of that day wore long, flowing garments, and girding their loins was a matter of pulling the skirt up between the legs and tying it firmly with a belt or a rope. It prepared a person for more strenuous activity without the long skirt flapping around and hindering them. The Roman legionnaire, however, wore a short tunic, so he didn't need that kind of preparation. His leather belt was important, however. It attached to his breastplate of armor to keep it firmly in place and attached to it was the sheath in which he carried his sword. As part of the armor of God, Paul called it a "belt of truth." Whether it is a matter of girding your loins or firmly fastening this belt, Paul's words are saying, "Let truth get you ready for action." Truth lets you see things as they are and not as the devil, the world, and our sinful natures distort and twist them. And the truth the Christian

needs always to see is: “You are a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ.” Let Satan come with his temptations; let burdens and circumstances combine to produce a severe test; the truth that you are a child of God, whom He will never, ever forsake, will keep you on the way of life.

The soldier’s *breastplate* of armor covered his chest and upper abdomen and protected his vital organs from the thrust of a sword or a lance. St. Paul said that righteousness is that kind of breastplate. True righteousness is ours as God’s gift of grace through Jesus’ atonement for our sin. Every Christian enjoys that righteousness as God’s gift. But this word *righteousness* may also refer to our Christian walk in the way of Christ, and that’s how Paul used it here. It, too, under the grace of God, protects us from evil. A slogan in the war against drug abuse is “Just say NO.” In the same way, our righteousness of walking in the right way with Jesus, our pursuing what is good and true in life, enables us to “just say NO” to wrongdoing and thus safeguards our spirits from destruction.

Sandals were important for ancient soldiers. Some historians say that Rome’s concern for supplying their legionnaires with sturdy sandals was a major reason for their legions being so successful in battle. So Paul invites us to wear the sandals of the Word, to walk in the Word so that the continued assurance of the love of God in Christ may enable and equip us to arrive strong at the times and places of our struggles with the spiritual forces of evil. Remember Jesus’ own time of testing by the devil in the wilderness after His Baptism. How did He win the day? He quoted the Word of God against the devil and His temptations. He was ready because He was fitted with God’s Word of truth. That’s how we need to walk in the Word, so we have the Word in us as a treasure and a ready resource of mighty power.

Next Paul pointed to “*the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.*” This *shield* is faith in Jesus as Savior and Helper. Let Satan suggest that God has forgotten us, or that our sin is too great and has separated us from Him; the assurance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ wards off Satan’s attacks and affirms the safety and health of our hearts and souls. In his first letter, John wrote, “*This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith*” (1 John 5:4). How important that personal pronoun “our” is! Even the devil knows what faith is and can say, “Jesus is the Savior.” But only a Christian can say with God-given assurance, “Jesus is **my** Savior” and thus enjoy the protection of a shield that the arrows of the evil one cannot pierce.

“*Take the helmet of salvation.*” A metal *helmet* guarded the head of the ancient soldier, and is still used by today’s soldier, dampening and diverting blows that otherwise would have at least rendered him unconscious and his enemy’s victim. That, according to Paul, is what the assurance of salvation does for us. The story is told of some gentlemen in Scotland who wanted some eggs from a bird’s nest on the side of a cliff. They tried to persuade a boy to get them, secured by a rope. They offered the boy money, but he would not go. They assured him that **they** would hold the rope, so he would be safe. He refused. Finally, he said, “I’ll go if **my father** holds the rope.” Knowing our salvation through Christ allows us to go through life with the assurance that our heavenly Father is holding the rope. Whatever happens, He will not let go. “*Nothing in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Romans 8:39). We are safe forever in God’s loving hands. That’s what assurance of salvation through faith in Jesus does for us. It’s the helmet we wear every day of our lives.

Finally, Paul says we are to take *“the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”* It’s an interesting sword. It can pierce, and it can heal. It can lay bare the inmost secrets of our consciousness so that we have to agree with God that we deserve His wrath and punishment, but in the process it can cut out and heal the cancer of sin and death so we can enjoy a health of spirit that can come to us in no other way. An interesting thing about this sword of the Spirit is that it can be a defensive weapon, warding off the devil’s thrusts, as Jesus used it in the wilderness, and it can be an offensive weapon, taking the battle to the strongholds of Satan, rescuing those under his sway and renewing them for life with God. *“The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God”* is the ultimate weapon, and it leads to the ultimate, the eternal, victory in Christ.

Every soldier knows that one of the worst things that can happen during a battle is to lose communication with headquarters. Then you and your unit are isolated and on your own, no longer fitting effectively into the larger picture of the operation. That same thing is true in regard to the struggle the Christian soldier is involved in, so Paul ends his instruction in this section encouraging us to be *“praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and . . . making supplication for all the saints.”* Keeping in touch with headquarters, keeping the lines of communication between us and our heavenly Father open and healthy, is a key factor in being strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Wouldn’t it be foolish of us then—and deadly—to neglect the heavenly resources that are available to us through communication with headquarters?

The point of the armor of God is this: it’s a question of identity. If you just view yourself as an ordinary Joe or Josephine who lives a very ordinary life and attends worship for a weekly feel-good session, then you don’t need any armor. You can go back out dressed in the fashion of the world. But if you believe that there is some importance to bearing the name of Jesus as His witness and the reason for the hope that you have, if you are going from the house of God determined to do battle with the enemy who seeks to destroy you and every person around you **then you have just the fashionable and functional armor to do it with:** a belt of truth, a breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the Gospel of peace, a shield of faith, a helmet of salvation, and a sword which is the Word of God. Ask the Holy Spirit to fashion you with the full armor of God daily! Remember Queen Victoria’s words: establish fashion. What difference could be made today if the armor of God was the established fashion? We know the answer as God tells us His Word never returns empty (Isaiah 55).

Whether you like or dislike the fashions of 2021, it’s impossible not to like the fashion statement of the Armor of God. Onward, Christian soldiers. Be strong in the Lord - His armor, His strength - it’s His gift to clothe us with this armor and strength that He has already won in the battle against the old evil foe once and for all and wins for us - every single day. As witnesses of Jesus, we take that fashion into battle for souls. Consider your neighbors, co-workers, family members - do we model for them the victorious fashion found in God’s armor alone?

As the Evangelization Team of the English District, we pray daily at 10:00 a.m. for all the mission projects, missionaries and for every member of the English District to be equipped and ready to share the Gospel. We get excited to bring before you the resources of our Synod that equip and enable us to be fashioned for battle. We encourage your pastor to print in your weekly bulletin the Witness and Outreach bulletin sentences which apply the Word to our hearts and lives of sharing the Good News. The new book, *“Connected to Christ, Witnessing in Everyday Life”* is a great resource to fortify your

armor. Are you ready for today's battle? The Evangelization Team is praying for you and asking God to equip you with everything needed for your body and soul but also for the mission field in which you live, move and have your being (Acts 17:28). Share with us your battle stories or challenges at the email evangelizationteam@englishdistrict.org We would love to lift them up to God in prayer. Need more resources to fill your quiver? Just reach out and we'll hook you up!

You are a 24/7 fashionista as you wear the armor gifted to you by Christ so that you might stand firm in battle. Your clothes you fashion are not made of the finest silk, cotton or sequins nor is it made of metal, wood, steel, and leather. Rather, our armor spiritually equips us to stand firm against the enemies of God and to live for His holy purposes - such as sharing the Gospel. As children of God, redeemed under Christ, we stand firm wearing truth, righteousness, the Gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God. With these weapons, the Church is relevant. We move out and seek to capture those sickened by sin, wounded by hatred and bigotry, blinded by selfishness, broken and in need of a Savior. To this end, may we find ourselves worthy to wear the fashionable armor given us by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May we stand firm, hold our ground, and bring Good News to a troubled world.

In Christ Alone,
Pastor John Diener
Galatians 2:20