

Ephesians 6.10–20

Protected

Amington Parish Church

Sunday 5 April 2020

Ephesians: that was then, this is now [12]

Getting dressed

I wonder how long it took you to choose what to wear today?

After the last online service, I'm well aware that some of you may still be in bed, enjoying church in your pyjamas! Maybe we need to replace Café Church with Pyjama Church instead... or not!

If you *are* dressed, perhaps you ran through your day in your head, and figured out what you needed to do. When I got dressed today I thought, 'I need to record some videos for church, so I had better put a shirt and dog collar on.' I also decided to crack out my waistcoat, which probably none of you have ever seen!

In days gone by, when we were allowed outside, you may have looked at the weather report and got dressed accordingly. A friend of mine always says, 'There's no such thing as bad weather – just the wrong clothing.'

Struggles

But what do you decide to wear when you face life's challenges, when you face all those little decisions we make every day, when you have an opportunity to share your faith with someone?

Paul – or rather, God – knows all the challenges we face, in the world, as his children. We all face times of trial and temptation, times of challenge and change – sometimes, all at once.

The last two weeks have been a particular challenge for Jess and me personally. She ended up in hospital – with a full-on infection in her throat that required IV antibiotics, caused by we suspect glandular fever. She is still wiped out, and getting rather bored of watching TV.

I've shared before that I struggle with anxiety and depression – things that you can't 'just snap out of'. I wasn't able to produce a service for last Sunday, and it was touch-and-go producing this one. Today is a good day for me – yesterday was not.

God's army

There are two important things about going into battle.

The first is that you wear the right clothes. Most of us are blessed not to have seen war first-hand, but I expect most of us have seen pictures on the news – of soldiers wearing *armour*, driving *tanks*, and holding *weapons*. They don't go into war with drinking straws, riding bicycles, or wearing swimming trunks.

All the different bits of armour – they are important – make sure you spend some time reading through the passage in your own time. But the most important bit of the passage are the very first words:

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand.

Ephesians 6.10-11 (NIV)

Be strong in – *the Lord* and in *his* mighty power. It's not about you, or me, being strong enough – it's about *God* being strong enough. And, my friends, *he is*.

The second thing is that we don't go into battle alone. English doesn't distinguish between 'you' and 'you' – talking to one person, or many people.

Here, Paul is talking to *you people*. He calls us to stand – *together*.

The armour Paul describes is the armour of a Roman soldier – but what made the Romans so effective in battle, is that they didn't fight as individuals, they fought *together*, as a *unit*.

And that means when one of us is feeling weak and vulnerable – like your vicar at the moment, and maybe you are as well– we don't stop fighting, we don't stop standing firm.

Sometimes we may be tempted to go it alone, as though we don't need each other.

Sometimes we may feel we are so strong by ourselves that we don't need the rest of the 'weak' people, because they pull us down.

Sometimes we may simply forget God, and prefer simply to try life in our own strength.

No. Only *together*, and only *in the Lord* are we *strong* – strong with a strength that *nothing* can overcome.