Welcome All to “Jersey Sunday”

* Encouragement for the Eagle fans that God has our back...Mount like Eagles scripture
* Kids Special Song

Couple of things:

* Pastoral Care Hours: 1st & 3rd Tuesday of each month, 6pm-8pm – Schedule @ placegracechurch@gmail.com
* So honored to be able to bless our widows with a small token of love and care with lunch.
* In the Welcome Center our ladies ministry is selling “Valentine Brownie bags” $5 (Suger Free as well)
* We now have samples of the beginnings of some merch in the Welcome Center for purchase, with more on the way. See Krysti for details.
* Prayer

Thrive in 2025 Series

Pt. 5 Thriving Through Spiritual Warfare

Ephesians 6:10-18

2/9/25

Since the 1st week of 2025, we have given you the tools needed in order to thrive in Christ. We’ve seen the foundational thing we need to do is “S**eek God 1st, then walk with a repentant heart, grow and develop a humble heart, make fasting & prayer a normal part of our lives, and how giving to God with our first fruits, the very best of our increase, through tithe and offering will cause our lives to thrive! T**oday marks the final message of our series and it’s one of utmost importance. Today we are look at how are can “Thrive Through Spiritual Warfare!”

As we delve deeper into our journey of faith, we must recognize the inevitable confrontation with spiritual warfare. It’s a battle that every believer faces when they decide to draw nearer to God and commit to a life that honors Him. This struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the unseen forces of darkness determined to thwart our spiritual growth and connection with God.

Our main scripture today, Ephesians 6:12, reminds us, "*For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places."* This verse underlines the reality and the intensity of the spiritual warfare we are engaged in.

Understanding and recognizing our enemy is crucial. Satan is a formidable adversary who seeks to kill, steal, and destroy your purpose, your families, and your very existence. Yet, in the face of these challenges, we must remember that victory is already ours through Jesus Christ. We are called to stand firm, wielding the spiritual weapons and armor which is provided by God to overcome the enemy's schemes.

Nature & Reality of Spiritual Warfare:

As I mentioned a few minutes ago, spiritual warfare is an unavoidable part of the Christian journey, emerging prominently when we decide to draw closer to God and commit to living a life that honors Him. In 2 Corinthians we are told by Paul that we are to be aware of Satan's schemes, and recognize them, but not to allow them to paralyze us in fear but instead rely on God's greater power that has already defeated this foe! As a counter measure, we need to develop strategies against him.

Let’s take a quick look at some key strategies against Satan:

* Know his tactics:

Understand that Satan often operates through deception, lies, manipulation, and exploiting vulnerabilities to tempt people away from God's will.

* Stay grounded in scripture:

Regularly read and study the Bible to discern truth from falsehood and equip yourself with the spiritual armor needed to resist temptation.

* Constant prayer:

Maintain a consistent prayer life, seeking God's guidance and strength to withstand Satan's attacks.

* Be In Church / Community support:

Surround yourself with fellow believers who can provide encouragement and accountability in your spiritual journey.

* Develop a strong Christ-Like character:

Cultivate virtues like honesty, integrity, and self-discipline to resist temptations and stand firm in your faith.

* Recognize subtle temptations:

Be aware that Satan can disguise temptations as seemingly harmless desires or opportunities.

* Reject negative thoughts:

Actively combat negative thoughts and replace them with positive affirmations based on God's word.

* Seek God's protection:
* Trust in God's power and armor to shield you from evil and provide the necessary strength to overcome challenges.

The Armor of God and the Benefits of Wearing It Daily

Now in addition to these strategies, the most effective of these strategies against Satan is to don the Armor of God on a daily basis. Today, the Eagles and Chiefs will be playing, and each player will have every part of their uniform on, which is provided by the NFL for their safety and victory. Now if any player were to come out of the locker room without that protective equipment, they’d be the most unsmart person alive. They’d most likely be taken out of the game and broken in half within the 1st play of the game. Just like that football player, it’s even more important to ensure we are putting on the “God Provided” armor, because this isn’t a game, but a spiritual war, that has serious consequences if we’re not protected.

This Armor is described in Ephesians 6:10-18 and consists of several key components that provides spiritual protection and strength. Notice what scripture says, it’s GODs ARMOR, GOD PROVIDED. Church lets grasp this today...putting this on daily means we are able to STAND against EVERY & ALL strategies the devil had...meaning we CAN be victorious and overcomers, if we would heed and apply these items each day!

* Ephesians 6:10-18

***10****A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.****11****Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.****12****For weare not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.****13****Therefore, put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.****14****Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor (breastplate) of God’s righteousness.****15****For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared.****16****In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.* ***17****Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.* ***18****Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.*

* Belt of Truth:

Embrace honesty and integrity, grounding yourself in God's truth.

* Breastplate of Righteousness:

Live a righteous life through faith and good deeds, protecting your heart from evil.

* Gospel of Peace Shoes:

Stand firm in the peace that comes from the Good News, allowing you to withstand any challenge.

* Shield of Faith:

Use your faith to deflect the fiery arrows of the evil one, trusting in God's promises.

* Helmet of Salvation:

Protect your mind with the assurance of salvation, keeping your thoughts focused on Christ.

* Sword of the Spirit:

Wield the Word of God with precision, using scripture to combat deception and lies.

* Prayer:

Maintain constant communication with God, seeking His guidance and strength.

## Benefits of Wearing the Armor of God Daily

When we commit to wearing the Armor of God each day, there are numerous benefits that we will experience as we fortify our spiritual lives:

* Enhanced Discernment:
	+ By staying grounded in scripture and truth, we can better recognize and resist Satan's deceptive tactics.
* Spiritual Strength:
	+ The Armor of God provides the strength needed to stand firm against temptation and adversity.
* Peace of Mind:
	+ Trusting in God's protection and promises brings a profound sense of peace and assurance, even in difficult times.
* Resilience:
	+ With the Armor of God, we develop resilience and perseverance, enabling us to overcome challenges and grow in our faith.
* Positive Mindset:
	+ Rejecting negative thoughts and replacing them with positive affirmations based on God's word cultivates a healthier, more optimistic outlook.
* Divine Protection:
	+ Trusting in God's power and armor shields us from evil and provides the necessary strength to navigate life's trials.

In conclusion, **by equipping ourselves with the Armor of God daily, we can confidently face the challenges and temptations of life**, knowing that we are fortified by God's strength, wisdom, and protection. Let us embrace this divine armor daily and experience the transformative and thriving benefits it brings to our spiritual journey!

2025 has brought new opportunities, challenges, and the chance to reflect on where we are and where we want to go. This year, I pray we choose a to do things different than we’ve ever done before...That we choose to do something more powerful than just setting goals, but change our mindset and heart to a Conquer & Thrive in 2025.

To truly thrive, we must look beyond our own strength and recognize God’s hand in our lives, embracing the constant awareness to seeking God 1st in everything we are, we do, and desire to be!

Thriving doesn’t mean life will be without trials, it means choosing faith over fear, growth over stagnation, and purpose over complacency. It means trusting that with His help, we can and will conquer more and rise to meet every obstacle with strength, humility, and courage.

**For the rest of this year, I’m challenging myself and each of you to commit to seeking Him 1st in our goals, in our work, in our families, and in every area of our lives. Let’s not just survive, this year, but through Christ, let’s thrive! This is the way of the conqueror.**