



RESIDENT ALIENS | WEEK SIX SERMON NOTES | SEPT 5

Week Six: Grace Means Service

1 Peter 5:1 *To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.*

Peter speaks first to the elders among them. This is a specific term that points to an office, not necessarily an age bracket. The concept of eldership actually has a historical grounding in both Jewish and Greek culture. For the Jews, eldership dates back to the time of Moses. While leading God's people through the wilderness, leadership would often become too heavy for one man to bear. 70 elders were appointed to assist Moses so that leadership could be delegated and shared. This concept stuck and elders very much became the behind-the-scenes leadership council of God's people. In Greek culture, every town had a team of elders that saw to the leadership of the community. They acted as judges, mediators, and wise counsel for all of the town's citizens. Both are very much in line with the New Testament eldership and Peter's challenges to elders here really help us build a clear picture of this calling.

1. Shepherd's of God's people - lead, care and protect.

2. Lead out of passion rather than obligation.
3. Lead to serve and not to gain.
4. Lead by example and not by intimidation or manipulation.

1 Peter 5:5 *In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."*

Peter turns his attention to the younger readers of his letter. When speaking to elders he was talking to an office and not an age bracket. Here he is talking to an age bracket from which some may rise to an office. He's very much encouraging the younger members of this scattered Christian community to follow the example of their elders so that they too may aspire to a higher level of leadership. The best way to do that? Clothe yourselves with humility. The word Peter uses for clothing is very interesting. It literally translates to putting on a garment that can be tied by a knot. Immediately two seemingly contradictory cultural images would have come to mind. First, this word was used to describe the apron of a slave which seems to make the most sense in the context Peter is using it. The second is a garment of honor worn by someone to whom prestige is being given. Both images actually help paint the picture Peter is going for here. Remember the point that Jesus often drove home with His disciples. The first shall be last and the last shall be first. The path of humble leadership is servanthood (putting on the apron of a slave) that leads to honor (putting on the robe of a son). The proverb that Peter quotes is very much in line with the idea that we humble ourselves now and God exalts us later.

1 Peter 5:6 *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. 11 To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

To close out his teaching Peter rattles through another list of key characteristics of those who claim association with Christ. These are especially important in view of the persecution that these believers are facing.

1. **A reminder to the old and the young that humility is our calling.**

Pride will be a constant temptation. We are right and they are wrong so we'll take our ball and go home. Your calling is not one of isolation and withdrawal. It's to press on in humble submission to the King who has called you to be witnesses.

2. **Cast all your anxieties on God because He cares for you.** Two

important things here: 1) In order to cast something you have to have that something. There is a stigma in the church that fear, worry, and doubt (the three main components of anxiety in my experience) should never even cross the threshold of our minds. If we find ourselves having any mixture of the three then we have already failed to exercise proper faith. This is not true. To be human in this fallen world is to encounter broken things within us and around us. God's expectation is not that we shield ourselves from ever feeling anxiety (we are not capable of this). His expectation is that upon feeling its weight we will immediately give it to Him to carry. Why? 2) He cares for us. The quest for salvation was one in which God came to us in spite of us, did what we couldn't do so as to lead us where we could not go on our own. We are as helpless as it gets in this journey but we have a Father who cares deeply for us. If you are a father you can sympathize with this desire to lift the burdens of our children and place them on our own backs. Our heavenly Father has shoulders broad enough to carry the load.

3. **On the devil.** He's a prowling lion looking for someone to devour. If you've ever watched any amount of nature programming on lion's you know that they are expert hunters. Patient and precise they can catch and take down most anything. This is a reminder that none of us, on our own, are strong enough to withstand these attacks... yet Peter commands us to "resist" the devil. Not try to or aspire to... but to do it. How? By utilizing the power that has been invested in you. The power of the Holy Spirit that has been gifted to you by Christ. This is what it means to stand firm in the faith. I do not fight alone... I have the God of angel armies, the God to whom every knee will bow, dwelling in me and fighting for me.

4. **This is temporary and your strength will be renewed.** Life is exhausting. It's a long and sometimes discouraging journey. Some days it feels like far more ground is lost than is made. Take heart and press on... this journey is worth it. Hope is alive.

1 Peter 5:12 *With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. 13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. 14 Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.*

Silas is a variation of the name Silvanus. Remember him from the beginning? He is who we believe has actually penned and delivered this letter likely after Peter's death. And then there is a greeting from an unnamed lady in Babylon and a son called Mark. Who are these individuals? The lady, as most scholars agree, is not a single person but actually a church. Remember, God often refers to the church as His bride and therefore church bodies are commonly referred to in scripture in the feminine. Babylon is also not believed to be referring to ancient Babylon but in this time period was somewhat slang for Rome. This all makes perfect sense given that our belief is that this letter came to be in Rome and therefore Peter is simply saying "the church in Rome says hi!" Now, who is Mark? Some speculated that this is Peter's actual son. Those who believe this also believe that the lady he refers to previously is actually his wife. I think what makes far more sense is that this Mark is the gospel writer, Mark. The Gospel of Mark is not an eyewitness account and it has long since been accepted that its writer, Mark, was a follower of none other than Peter. In fact, it is said that the whole gospel is based completely on sermons that Peter preached. It is very likely that this Mark had stayed close to Peter in Rome and very likely sat in on the discussions about Asia Minor with Silvanus. Who knows, perhaps he even lent some of his writing skills to this very project.