

This morning, we are in the eighth and final week of our sermon series through the New Testament book of 1 Peter, a letter written by the apostle Peter, one of the early church leaders, to a group of Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey. I have entitled this sermon series “Stranger,” because one of the main themes throughout this letter is that those of us who believe in Jesus are citizens of heaven, living here as strangers or resident aliens. Our primary identity, values, and hope are not given to us by the culture in which we live but are found in heaven. This letter has been mainly to encourage these Christians to remain faithful and trust in God as they go through times of suffering. This morning, we will be in 1 Peter 5:

***1 Peter 5:1-14** - To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, 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**. ⁵ Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 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 self-controlled and alert. 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 your brothers throughout the world are 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. 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.*

I want to take 5 minutes to address the first section about elders, who were the overseers of the church, and then spend most of the time on the section about resisting the devil. Remember that Peter is writing at a time of great suffering and persecution for those who are following Jesus. And so you can imagine that serving in church leadership would have been like being on the front lines of a real battle, with great stakes. And so, he encourages the elders to care for the people of

God like shepherds who are caring for sheep and protecting them from the wild animals who want to devour them. He tells them to fulfill their role with the right motives. As one of our elders, Duane, is fond of saying, shepherds should smell like sheep because they are involved in caring for them.

In this passage, Peter points out three motives elders should have when they step up to serve in this capacity. Those who serve in spiritual leadership would be wise to listen to Paul's words:

² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

In other words, caring for others is not something to go into with selfish motives. After all, if you have selfish motives, what will happen when the lion comes? What is going to happen when persecution or hard times hit the church? The one who serves with selfish motives will abandon the sheep. Jesus called such a leader a "hired hand":

John 10:10-15 - *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. ¹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³ The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me-- ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father-- and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

If you are going to lead like a hired hand, for selfish motives, it would be better for you if you didn't lead at all. Ezekiel 34 gives a great example of how God opposes shepherds who have selfish motives instead of caring for God's people.

Ezekiel 34:2-5,9-10 - *"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?' ³ You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. ⁴ You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and*

brutally. ⁵ So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals... ⁹ therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ¹⁰ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock.

Finally, Peter encourages the elders that whatever they are sacrificing now does not compare to the eternal glory and reward that are ahead for them.

⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will **never fade away**.

I thank God for those who have served this church as elders, and especially for the three men who are currently serving in that role. I can assure you they are not doing it for personal gain, but are serving because they love God and love the church.

He goes on to write this:

⁵ Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 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 self-controlled and alert. 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 your brothers throughout the world are 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.

The beginning lines about humbling yourself and casting your anxiety on the Lord could be separate from the section about being self-controlled and alert and resisting the devil, but I think they are related. Remember again that Peter is writing to Christians undergoing serious persecution and suffering. He wants them to be aware that there is an enemy, the devil, who prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour, who will use suffering and persecution to try to frighten them into abandoning God and missing out on His good gifts. Remember that Jesus said something similar: **John 10:10** - *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

Now, when it comes to the devil, I am sure that there are a variety of reactions and opinions among you. I have always appreciated what C.S. Lewis wrote in the intro to Screwtape Letters regarding the devil: *There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased with both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.*

In other words, some people have an unhealthy fear of or fascination with the devil and demons, while others don't even believe in their existence, or downplay Satan's power. And the devil can take advantage of both kinds of people. But the witness of the Bible is first of all that yes, there is an enemy. There is a devil, a supernatural personal force with tremendous evil and power. This means that evil is deeper than human systems or bad people. We will not simply improve things by better education or therapy or hard work. We are in a spiritual battle that does work through human people and systems and requires spiritual warfare:

Ephesians 6:10-12 - Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms

But while the devil is real and powerful, he is also limited.

1 John 4:3-4 - Every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. ⁴ You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

We have the Holy Spirit in us, who is greater than the devil. We are not simply at his mercy, but in Christ and by His Holy Spirit have the power to overcome him. So while we must be self-controlled and alert, we do not need to walk in fear, but in faith in Jesus, who is greater than our enemy. But we need to know how to fight, and we need to know the devil's tactics. So how does the devil oppose us? **The main way the devil affects us is that through our sin, he gains a foothold into our lives.**

Ephesians 4:26-27 - "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a **foothold**.

In this example, taking anger to bed instead of dealing with it with you gives the devil a foothold. It's like leaving the door open just a crack so that the devil can get his foot inside.

Do you want to resist the devil? Get rid of his footholds in your life. In today's passage, 1 Peter 5, Paul discusses two ways that we give the devil a foothold: **pride and anxiety**. Let's look at them one at a time.

1 Peter 5:5-6 - All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

God opposes the proud. Pride is one main way we give the devil a foothold in our lives. What is pride, how does it give the devil a foothold, and how can we combat the devil in this area?

At its core, pride is putting oneself in the place of God. It is taking God off the throne and putting yourself on the throne, making yourself an idol. Let me give three particular ways that our pride puts ourselves in God's place:

We refuse to acknowledge our dependence upon God

First, pride is a refusal to acknowledge your dependence upon God, but instead is a dependence upon oneself, an attitude of self-sufficiency. It is the failure to realize that you would not be able to take a single breath apart from God allowing you to live. It is living as a **cosmic plagiarist** – refusing to give credit to God for that which we are and do, thinking that your abilities and your accomplishments are your own and not a gracious gift from God.

*1 Corinthians 4:7 - For who makes **you** different from anyone else? What **do you** have that **you** did not receive? And **if you** did receive it, **why do you** boast **as though you** did not?*

Every single good thing in your life, from your good health to even your work ethic, are a gift from God. You really think if you were born in Nepal in the 13th century that you would have accomplished all that you have? The proud are those who do not realize that they owe everything to God and foolishly walk as if they are self-sufficient.

We decide what is right and wrong

Pride is the belief that you are on the throne, that you are your own god, that you have the right to decide what is right and wrong for you, and that because you know right from wrong, that you are also wise enough to pass judgment others.

This of course is precisely what our culture teaches: you be you, you do you, be true to yourself, don't listen to what others say. In other words, you be your own god, deciding what is right and wrong, and ignore that there is a creator who designed you and knows what is best for you.

Isaiah 5:20-21 - Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. ²¹ Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.

You would think that with our cultural emphasis on being true to yourself that we would be the happiest, most fulfilled people ever, wouldn't you? Perhaps the skyrocketing cases of anxiety and depression should give us pause and help us to realize that putting ourselves on God's throne is only going to lead to disaster.

The proud man decides what is right and wrong. And so, the proud man thinks that he has the ability to look at others and judge their hearts, deciding who is right and who is wrong and what punishment each person deserves.

Listen to Jonathan Edwards on this: *The spiritually proud person shows it in his finding fault with other saints. . . . The eminently humble Christian has so much to do at home and sees so much evil in his own that he is not apt to be very busy with other hearts.*

We want to be worshiped

Pride is a refusal to give God the glory he is due, but is instead seeking glory for oneself. The proud man wants to receive glory and honor and worship from others instead of giving it God or receiving praise from God. Pride manifests itself in seeking out friends, likes, follows, mentions, all so that we can feel better about ourselves. Once again, the studies are clear that our desire to be worshiped and applauded is not making us happier, but having the opposite effect.

John 5:44 - How can you believe if you accept **praise** from one another, yet **make no effort** to obtain the **praise** that comes from the only God?

Our pride is so insidious that it can take even our worship and prayer – or even our preaching – and turn it into an occasion for self-congratulation and self-worship. Like when I was upset that someone “stole my prayer.”

How does pride give a foothold to the devil?

As we declare to God that we do not need him unless he is serving us, we open ourselves up to the enemy as we operate without God’s protection. We are blind and needy people, shunning the light, stumbling about in the darkness, trying to find life and joy and peace but looking in the wrong direction.

In our pride, we go out into the world thinking that we are god, expecting others to bow to us, to serve us, to agree with us. We judge others and put ourselves above them, giving the devil a foothold to cause all kinds of division and destruction. The devil loves it when we are all trying to be our own gods.

So how do we combat this pride and shut down the devil’s foothold? The antidote is humility.

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

True humility comes first and foremost from realizing that I am a sinner in need of a Savior. I am so wicked that nothing less than the death of God’s Son could save me, but I am so loved that He freely chose to die for me. If this is true, then how can I operate as if I am self-sufficient? And how can I look down on anyone else? Humility involves taking myself off the throne and acknowledging that there is a holy and all-knowing God who alone belongs in that place, a Creator who knows what is best, a judge to whom every knee will bow and give account for our life.

The humble, rather than wanting everyone to serve and worship them, follow Jesus in serving others.

Philippians 2:3-11 - *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Your attitude should be*

*the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, **being made in human likeness.** ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

The one who deserved all the worship humbled himself to serve all. When we follow in his footsteps, we will discover where true honor comes from.

Lay down your pride this morning. Get off of God’s throne. Remember Paul’s words in **Galatians 6:14** – “*May I never **boast** except in the cross of our Lord Jesus **Christ**, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*”

The second way is anxiety:

⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

What is anxiety? What is the root of our anxiety? If we read this verse closely, we see that anxiety is a refusal to believe how much God loves you and cares for you. If you are holding on to anxiety instead of casting it onto the Lord, it is because at some level you doubt God’s love and care for you.

If this is true, then you might even say that anxiety is very much related to pride. **Anxiety is really just an overconfidence in your own opinion.** You are sure how things should go in life, and you’re not confident that God has gotten the memo. You don’t trust that He knows what is best for you or will act in a way that will bring life to you, and so instead of casting your anxiety on him and trusting his care for you, you hold on to anxiety and worry and try to take care of things yourself, because after all, you are wiser and stronger than God is.

How does anxiety give a foothold to the enemy?

Think about your greatest fears and anxieties – rejection; failure; humiliation; conflict; your children abandoning God or dying; your husband or wife leaving you; never getting married. What are the fears and anxieties that cause your stomach to churn with anxiety? If you are honest with yourself and know that you

are more afraid of losing something or going through some difficulty than you are in being faithful to God, then the enemy has got a foothold in your life. After all, if you are too anxious about your children, then how can you trust God with them? If you are anxious about rejection, why would you ever share your faith?

As long there is something that is more important to you than faithfulness to God, you will make decisions out of fear of rejection, fear of conflict, fear of failure, fear of being alone, fear of disappointing others. You will continually give the devil a foothold because you don't want to lose those things that are most important to you, instead of walking in faithfulness and trust and peace with God.

How do you deal with the anxiety?

This is what Paul says in Romans 8:

Romans 8:31-32 - *What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*

He gave you His Son, and He will give you what you need. And more than that:

1 Peter 5:10 - *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*

We know that not only will he give us all we need in this life, but we also know that any suffering in this life will be followed by eternal glory with Him, where there will be no more suffering, death, or reasons to be anxious. And so you can put your trust in Him, and in prayer cast your anxieties on Him, so that the devil will not have a foothold in your life.

Philippians 4:4-7 - *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Your enemy prowls around like a roaring lion looking to devour. He is searching for footholds in your life, places where your sin opens the door for his lies and

temptation. Two powerful footholds are pride and anxiety. Let us humble ourselves before the Lord and cast all our anxiety on Him this morning.