



ABOUT “SCATTERED”

“Peter ... to God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered ...” 1 Peter 1

Scattered is a series of Bible Studies you can do alone at home, or with others in a group. They don't depend on a leader or someone affirming the right answer. The title of the series comes from Peter's addressing his letter to "*strangers in the world, scattered throughout*" the world. Christians will always be scattered in this world in all sorts of ways. Writing the series started during the Covid-19 lockdowns when we were as isolated as if we had been scattered. But Peter highlights the fact that it is our separation *to Christ* that separates *us from the world*. So he sees Christians as scattered strangers struggling in an alien world, and sets out to encourage us to live faithful and holy lives in Christ.

INTRODUCTION TO 1 PETER 4:7-19

In verses 5 and 6 of this chapter, Peter spoke of the certainty of God's judgement. Most of this letter has encouraged Christians scattered around the world through persecution to be faithful as they face that persecution. But now Peter turns to how we should be faithful in the face of what has yet to come ... God's judgement.

In such a context, Peter might be expected to direct believers to be more “spiritual”: to pray more, sing more, read the Bible more and separate from daily life more. But Peter's view of what is spiritual or religious is mainly doing ordinary things in a way that honours God. In particular, he directs believers to do practical things for the good of others.

But he then quickly returns to his theme of suffering. He says that there should be no surprise when more suffering arises. And it will be nothing superficial: it will be real suffering that he describes as a “painful trial.” How can already suffering Christians face yet more suffering? His answer is not found in some unusual gift of the Spirit or some formula to recite that black-mails God into taking away our pain. It is found in reminding us of some very basic ideas he raised earlier in this letter.

This section finishes as the last ... with God's judgement. But whereas it was not altogether at first clear in verses 5 and 6 who was being judged there, he makes it very plain in this section that believers are to be judged. Therefore, he calls on all who belong to Christ to obey the gospel.

Before doing this study, you might like to reflect on how obeying the Gospel fits the idea that the Gospel is about faith and not works.

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SCATTERED #11 1 Peter 4:7-19

GETTING STARTED

Please remember that this is God's Word. God used Peter to write God's words in God's way for us. So

1. Pray, asking God to give you his Spirit so that you will honour him, understand his word, and learn how to live better for Jesus.
2. Read the passage listed above for this study. What is it mainly about?
3. Now discuss/think about/answer the questions that follow.

LIVING WITH THE END IN SIGHT

1. **Again, in verse 7, Peter links what he is about to say with a "therefore." He says that since the "end is near," therefore we should pray.**
 - a. **What end is near?**
 - b. **In the light of that and the verses just before this, what might he expect us to pray about?**
 - c. **What sort of spirituality does he think fits us for prayer at such a time?**
2. **In verse 8, Peter, like the other apostolic letter-writers, says that love is the most important thing.**
 - a. **What does such love look like? Who and how are we to love?** (See Romans 5:5,8; 13:8-10; 14:15-21; 1 Corinthians 8:1; 13:1-13; Galatians 5:13-16; Ephesians 4:2; 4:15,16; 5:1,2; Philippians 2:2-4; Colossians 3:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:8; and the five times Peter has already mentioned love!)
 - b. **In Christ, our sins are covered: we don't have to worry about them any more. So what is the only thing that could be referred to when he says, (our) "love covers a multitude of sins"?**
3. **In verse 9, he tells the scattered believers to "offer hospitality." That comes as a bit of a surprise really, since it doesn't immediately seem to relate to deep love and difficult suffering.**
 - a. **How does offering hospitality relate to verses 7 and 8?**
 - b. **What, in their circumstances, might make offering hospitality a thing they would be likely to grumble about?**
 - c. **Read Philippians 2:12-16, then explain what the relationship between grumbling and Christian faithfulness.**

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

In verse 10 Peter talks about what each person should do with whatever gift he has. In one sense, we have all received from Christ the gifts of life, forgiveness, cleansing ... and more. But by saying "whatever gift" Peter clearly means something else, something that one person might have that another doesn't have. By this Peter is not limiting our gifts to only one each, nor is he implying that each believer has a "special" gift. Peter is talking about "various forms" of gifts that can be used in particular ways. Some Christians get tempted to try to work out what gift they have before they do anything. But James really has the answer to that when he shows faith involves feeding and clothing our brothers and sisters when they have need (James 2:14-16) – their need is our gift! Paul has a similar approach in Romans 12:12 – if your enemy is hungry, you have the gift of feeding him.

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4. **Why is the word "administer" used to describe how we should activate our gift?** (Think about how it is linked to God's grace).

5. Verse 11 has two things to do:
 - a. How would speaking ordinary words change if we thought they were God's words?
 - b. How much strength does God supply to those he calls to serve?
 - c. How does the end of verse 11 Summarise everything we have looked at in this section so far?
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LIVING WITH THE END IN SIGHT

6. Repetition and contrast are important clues to important ideas. Compare statements in verses 12-16 with what Peter has already said.
 - a. What is the same and what is different?
 - b. What is it about the things he repeats that makes them important enough to repeat?
 - c. How do the new things he says help us live faithfully during suffering?
 7. In verse 14 we are told the Holy Spirit given to us is the "Spirit of glory." What does that mean for us, and how does it link to the glory revealed in verse 13?
 8. How do we "carry his name" when we suffer for Christ?
 9. In verse 17 Peter says not only that judgement begins with the family of God (believers) but that it is time *now* for that judgement. Compare that with 1 Peter 4:6 and 1 Corinthians 10:3-15.
 - a. Since we know every Christian will be judge as free from sin and perfectly righteous, what will we be judged for?
 - b. Look carefully at 1 Corinthians 3:11 – will we be judged for what we build or what we build on?
 - c. In what way is it "hard for the righteous to be saved"?
 - d. What does it mean to "obey the gospel" and how does that relate to the "end" of the ungodly?
 10. How does James 2:18 help explain why Peter sums all this up by calling us to commit ourselves to our Creator (ie trust in God) *and* do good?
 11. In verse 19 Peter (rightly) calls God our Creator, but he hasn't referred to God as Creator before. How is knowing God as our Creator an encouragement to those who suffer for Christ?
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12. In the light of this passage: What can you thank God for? What can you pray for others? What can you trust God for?
 13. In the light of this passage, what changes do you need to make: In your faith? In your worship? In your attitude? In your life?