



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 4:1-6

Peter returns the theme of this letter: how the suffering of Christ relates to our suffering. In verse 1 Peter speaks of Christ’s suffering in his body – he is clearly speaking of Christ’s physical suffering. Peter goes on to say that believers who suffer in the body have “done with sin.” That suffering also clearly relates to believers’ physical suffering, but how does our physical suffering relate to our having “done with sin?”

There is nothing here or anywhere else in the Bible that suggests we can “be done with sin,” whether in removing the power of sin, the guilt of sin, the lust for sin, or the habit of sin, by physical suffering. It is by Christ and by Christ alone that we are redeemed from the power, the guilt, the desire and the dominion of sin. So what does Peter mean?

Christ’s suffering in his body accomplished something: the redemption of the unrighteous. But here, our suffering in the body is not said to accomplish anything, but to be a marker of something already accomplished: those who have suffered in the body “have done with sin,” broken with sin or left sin behind. In Greek, this is written in a tense that means it is something that God has done and done completely, with nothing more to be done. It is also something that continues to be completed. In other words, our suffering doesn’t do something ... it is a marker of something God has effectively and fully done, completed, and keeps in place. That “something” is our release from sin. Peter has repeatedly shown that our suffering identifies us as belonging to Christ, which means God has freed us from sin.

Peter opens this chapter with this logical argument: we know we belong to Christ because, like him, we suffer in our bodies because we are like him in our identity as believers; through *his* suffering Christ has freed us from sin, putting an end to it’s dominion over us; therefore, in *our* suffering, we should have the same attitude as Christ had in his suffering ... which is what we now turn to in this study.

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SCATTERED #10 1 Peter 4:1-6

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.
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ARMED WITH THE ATTITUDE OF CHRIST

1. **“Therefore” in verse 1 is a link to something Peter has said earlier. Which verse in the previous chapter spoke directly of Christ's suffering, and what, according to *that* verse did Jesus' suffering accomplish?**
 2. **We can't die as the “righteous for the unrighteous” as Christ did, yet what does Peter say we are to do “since Christ suffered?”**
 3. **To “arm” yourself with the right attitude is to weaponise your attitude; it is to consciously engage your attitude in spiritual warfare. Compare this with verse 2, and with Romans 15:5, Ephesians 4:23, Philippians 2:5 (some translations have “mind” or “mindset” for “attitude” here), and Galatians 5:16: how do you turn your attitude into a weapon for good?**
 4. **What is the link in verses 2 and 3 between desire, God's will, and choice?**
 5. **The expression “does not live” does not describe experience but deliberate conduct: such a man “does not conduct his life ...” in that way. What, according to this passage, does conducting our lives one way or the other depend on?**
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SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

In verse 1 the Christian is said to be “done with sin” or “finished with sin” as something completed. Peter doesn't say the Christian is “*finishing* or *becoming* done with sin,” but that this ending of sin in the Christian is an accomplished act. In verse 2 he says that the Christian no longer fulfils sinful desires but lives for God according to God's will. Again, this is described as an actual way of life, not merely a goal. In the light of such verses some arrogantly declare themselves to be sinless, claiming that they no longer sin. John rebukes such wickedness by declaring that such a claim makes God a liar and shows that his word is not in such a person. (1 John 1:10) This is a good point at which to pause in studying 1 Peter and consider why the Christian who has been regenerated by God, declared righteous in God's sight, renewed in his heart, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit still struggles with sin. Read Romans 6:6-22. Think about how some of the terms Paul uses work in regard to things other than sin. Consider how “being dead to something,” not being “under something or someone's dominion,” no longer “enslaved to something,” might still see you influenced by things you do not *need* to be influenced by.

- a. How is sinning like that?
 - b. The “old self” of verse six in some translations could be rendered “old man” or even “flesh.” Compare this with Galatians 2:20 and 5:24. What is this fleshly old man who still hangs around each Christian; how does his residence with us explain our struggle with sin; and what is to be done with him?
 - c. How does Paul's direction not to present ourselves to sin but to present ourselves to God, parallel Peter's call to arm ourselves with Christ's attitude and to choose to live for God?
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6. Peter might have said, “You have spent *too much* time doing what pagans chose to do.” Instead, he said, “You have spent *enough* time ...” Why “enough” and how does that link to the idea that pagans “choose” to live the way they do?
 7. The list of sins in verses 3 & 4 are rather gross, although we might find “idolatry” a surprising inclusion. What is common in individual mind-set and group mentality among these sins that Peter identifies in verse 3? (It also helps explain why idolatry fits so well amongst these “party” sins – see Colossians 3:5)
 8. Peter began his letter by identifying Christians as “strangers” in an alien culture, apparently referring to our having a different or strange faith. Yet verse 4 seems to indicate it is not faith but our way of life for which pagans heap abuse on us as strangers. What is the link between strangeness of faith and strangeness of life in these verses?
 9. Consider verse 5 with 1 Peter 2:12, Matthew 12:36 and Luke 16:1.
 - a. What will pagans be judged for?
 - b. What is indicated by the accounting term “give an account?”
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SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

It is not altogether clear what the beginning of verse 6 refers to. At first glance it seems to link to verse 5, in which case it would read “God is ready to judge the living and the dead, and for this reason the gospel was preached ...” That works, and it is possible to make sense of the rest of the verse if it is read like that. But it is more likely that “For this reason” refers to what follows. That would give it the following sense: “The gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, for this reason: so that they might be judged ...” That fits the structure of the original and makes it easier to understand what follows.

10. Read 2 Peter 3:8-10 then explain why, although God is ready to judge, his judgement is delayed.
11. Peter’s concern throughout his letter has been with believers who are suffering or are being discouraged because others have suffered *and died* because of their faith. It seems therefore that “Those who are now dead” in verse 6 who heard the gospel before they died refers to dead believers.
 - a. In what way have believers who are now dead been judged by men “in regard to the body”?
 - b. In what way do believers who are now dead live according to God “in regard to the spirit”?
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?