

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. ² **As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.** ³ **For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.** ⁴ **They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.** ⁵ **But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.** ⁶ **For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.**

⁷ **The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.** ⁸ **Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.** (NIV 84)

Theme: You are Strange

1. You don't join in the world's wickedness.
2. You live the love of Christ.

The parents of a boy in middle school can't afford to buy him nice clothes. He doesn't wear Nike, Under Armor, or whatever other brands are popular right now. His parents don't shop in malls or department stores for clothes, but Walmart and Goodwill. His clothes are old and don't fit properly. So he is labeled as strange, different—not like everyone else.

Another boy's parents have all the money a young kid could want. He has all the nicest clothes and the latest in electronics. He likes sports, but he's simply not an athlete. He tries hard, but he's not fast or strong and he never learned how to throw a ball properly. He too is considered strange.

There is a third kid. He's in style. He's a great athlete. But he's dumb. His classmates notice that he struggles to read, and that he has problems with the most basic math problems. They don't understand how anyone can be so stupid. So he too his labeled strange, not normal—not like everyone else.

No one likes to be considered strange. Everyone wants to be normal, to fit in, to be just like everyone else or better than everyone else. Yet people are labeled as different. And that is what you are. You are strange. You are strange in the eyes of the world because you don't join in the wickedness of the world and you live the love of Christ.

Typically, someone doesn't become strange on purpose. They may do it to prove a point, call attention to themselves, or to support some cause. But people who are popular, or are well liked and well respected, and who are normal, don't typically become strange on purpose. They want to stay normal. Yet that is exactly what happened with you. You were once normal in the eyes of the world.

You have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. That is how you used to live. Back when you were an unbeliever, anyway. But for many of us here, we can't remember a time when we were unbelievers. I was baptized less than a week after I was born. For many of us that was the case. You may not even remember a time when you were an unbeliever. So the temptation might be to think, “this verse doesn't apply to me—for I hardly spent any time doing what pagans choose to do.”

That may be true. But how much time have you spent doing those things? How often have you chosen to do what pagans do? Peter talks about this as if these actions are in our past. But for you, these may be in the present. Lust, drunkenness, putting things above God. These are actions common among unbelievers. And yet you may commonly do them.

Peter says about the world, **they think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.** The world thinks someone is strange if they don't do the same things they do. Or they don't think the same way, or have the same values. But perhaps the world doesn't consider you all that strange. Maybe the world doesn't see you as all that strange because you don't act that differently then the rest of the world. And if that is the case, you should be offended. And you should take it as a warning. After all, you are a believer—wheat; you aren't an unbelieving weed. You are different, so you should act differently.

As wheat, you cast aside the ways of the world. You don't join in their detestable practices. But you follow the way of the Lord. For there is a distinct difference between you and the rest of the world. You don't follow the same God. You don't believe the same thing. And you don't act the way they do. You don't go out and get drunk like the world loves to do. You don't lust like they do, or go even further and act on that lust, as the world loves to do and even promotes.

You are strange. You put God and his Word first in your life. There are times in your life when you don't join in certain activities because it would get in the way of worship or Bible study. You live in this world, but you are not of the world. You don't act like the rest of the world. You don't join together with them. When the world says, "Yes, that sounds like fun, or that's wise, that's noble, or that's sophisticated" You say "No, that's against God's Word." You don't do what they do, you don't go when they go. So the world says, "You're strange; you're weird, you're not like the rest of us."

And when someone is strange or different what normally happens to him? He gets picked on. The same thing happens to those who are strange because of their faith. The world claims to be tolerant. But they are only tolerant if your beliefs correspond to theirs. And if you don't let your beliefs lead you to say or do anything about the way they live your lives. And even then, they are still going to think you strange. They will still look down upon you as something lesser.

Just like Christ. He suffered. He was betrayed, beaten, mocked, flogged, and crucified. The world hated him because of who he was and what he refused to do. And so he was killed. Murdered for being strange. But of course, we know that he lives. He rose from the dead. And now he lives forever.

And he gave that victory to you. He defeated sin, death, and the devil. He did so for you. And that is all you need to know when the world looks down upon you. They can pick on you, they can try to force you to do what they want to do, or to believe what they believe. They can think you strange or different. But they don't matter—God does. And because he lives we know that you too will live, despite what the world thinks about you.

You are strange, not just because you refuse to join the world in their detestable practices, but also because of the love of Christ that you display in your lives.

The world will have to answer to God for their actions. **They will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.** They will have to explain to God why they abused you. They will have to tell him why they joined in the despicable ways of the people around them. Why didn't they obey God? Why did they go against his Word to please their sinful desires? And why did they mock those who did obey him?

And they won't be able to offer excuses. Pleading ignorance won't work. Neither will saying, "everyone else was doing it!" "Because it was fun," "I don't agree with that rule, so I didn't want to follow it," or "I don't know" won't work either. They won't be able to explain themselves. And they won't be able to save themselves by their good behavior.

We too will have to give an account to God. Like everyone else on the Last Day we will face the Lord. We too will have to explain why we did what we did. Or didn't do what we were supposed to do. Why did we join in the detestable practices of the world around us? Why did we place things ahead of God in our lives? And we know that we won't have a leg to stand on. We won't be able to explain away our sins. Or offer anything as a payment.

But yet, we don't have to worry. Because Christ has made that payment for us already. He removed our sins by taking them with him to the cross. Then he paid the eternal punishment that our sins deserve. We won't be condemned because Christ was condemned for us. Our sins won't be counted against us because they have been removed. Christ has done this for all people. And this gift is received through faith. So we know that even though we should be condemned we won't be. When standing before God, we lift up Christ, our substitute.

We know what Christ has done for us. And not just for us, but for all people. So we want all people to know and believe this. Because we want **all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.** And if we want them to believe, then we'll have to share the gospel

with them. We will have to tell them God's Word. Show them Christ and the forgiveness that he has freely given us. For they can't believe unless they hear the Word.

That is what the Christian does. He shares the gospel in whatever setting he may be. That is what believers have been doing for thousands of years. **For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.** The gospel was spread to those who are now dead—back when they were alive, so that they may live in heaven when they die. And so that they may live according to God's Word—like wheat, not weeds, when they were on this earth.

That is the big difference between weeds and wheat—between believers and unbelievers. The weeds abuse and mock the wheat. But the wheat don't retaliate, get revenge, or hold a grudge. Instead, they show love. They forgive those who have done them wrong. And they share the gospel with them. Instead of hate, which the world would show, the believer loves and forgives. The believer isn't concerned about causing physical harm to another. But he is concerned with saving the eternal soul. That is the stark and major difference between the two. Weeds hate and wheat love.

Because love covers over sin. **Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.** Christ's love has covered over a multitude of sins. Actually it has covered over all sins. His love for us in giving up his life on the cross has covered over our sins. And the sins of the whole world. And as wheat—planted by the Holy Spirit through his gospel, we mimic that love. We show others love just as Christ loved us. Not holding sins against others, but forgiving them, sharing the gospel with them, and showing them the forgiveness we have in Christ. So that those weeds would be turned to wheat by the power of the Holy Spirit and join us in heaven forever.

You are strange. Not because of what you wear, how athletic, or smart you are. But because you go to Church, you don't join in the sinful actions of those around you, and you show love to all people. You are strange, but being strange isn't always a bad thing, especially when it comes to being wheat among weeds. As a strange wheat plant in a

field full of weeds, don't hide among the weeds. Stand out and be strange and show the love of Christ. Amen.