



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 2:18-25

For many readers it will come as a shock to find Peter now giving slaves instructions about God calling them to submit to their masters, even cruel ones. Possibly even more startling is that Peter makes no comment about how slave masters should deal with their slaves, or even if they should have slaves at all. Nor does he say anything about the evil nature of slavery.

Peter is not blind to the injustice that normally accompanies slavery: he recognises that the Christian slaves he is writing to might well receive beatings for doing good! It quickly becomes clear that in these few verses Peter is not considering the rights and wrongs of slavery, nor is he concerned with putting to rights social injustice and abuse. It is not that social injustice and abuse should not concern Christians who are in a place to extend care and love to others – in fact, justice is a big concern of God in both the Old Testament and the New (see for example, Isaiah 1:17 and James 1:27). Peter's concern is that Christian slaves are called by God to honour those in authority, submit to those in authority, and if called to suffer unjustly, to be like Christ who, instead of defending himself, left justice to God to sort out.

Peter also continues his theme and that just as Jesus suffered, we are called to suffer. Suffering, without complaining (Philippians 2:14) is a mark of being Christs. It is a mistake to think that life in this world should be free of suffering for Christians. Great evil is done when Christians are told they would be better off if their faith were only better! But there is a time coming when all suffering will be finished with for those who trust in Christ – it is not what we are called to now ... but read Revelation 21:1-4 and think about *all* that is promised for all who serve Jesus now.

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SCATTERED #7 1 Peter 2:18-25

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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CHOSEN TO SUBMIT

1. **In this section Peter helps slaves see how their faith should be worked out in action. What principles in verse 11-17 are the foundation for the instruction he now gives?** (Yes, this is revision!)
 2. **In verses 18, what is to characterise the attitude with which slaves are told to submit to their masters?**
 3. **What difference should they have in their attitude to good masters compares with abusive ones?**
 4. **Not many people consider it noble to submit to abuse without protest. But Peter says it commendable, if the person abused is "conscious" or "mindful" of God. That could cover many things, but comparing this with Ephesians 6:5-8, what does it mean for the slave to have God in mind?**
 5. **It is unlikely that anyone doing this Bible study is a slave, but what principles can be taken from verses 18-20 that apply to other situations where we have unjust or abusive authorities over us?**
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SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

This is not the place to consider the evil of slavery, but nor can we look at this passage and ignore it! Slavery can take many forms, but any concept of people owning other people and being able to trade them as commodities, abuse them, or fail to accord them their dignity as image bearers of their Creator is evil. Any failure to "love your neighbour as yourself" (Luke 10:27 etc) is failure to honour God. Yet, Peter does not encourage rebellion against slave owners, even though they were known for the abuse of their slaves in his day. In another context, the love he has for all might well have impelled attempts at social reform – we have no better example of that than the ministry of John Newton. But Peter's point, in writing to slaves, is that they are called (as are all Christians) to live in submission to those in authority over them (however legitimate or illegitimate that authority might be) as if serving Christ. Slaves, like the rest of us, are called to live for Christ, not to live for our rights. When the Apostle Paul sent the runaway but converted slave Onesimus back to his lawful owner Philemon, he did so with the encouragement for both men to regard and care for each other as brothers in Christ. (If you don't know the letter to Philemon, it only takes about 5 minutes to read – well worth it as part of this study.)

CHOSEN TO FOLLOW CHRIST

6. **According to verse 21, what two things has Christ done that should encourage believers to be like him?**

7. In verse 22 Peter pairs deceit with sin? There are lots of sins he could have mentioned – think about the events of Genesis 3, and explain why deceit is so basic to sin.
8. Look at 2 Timothy 3:10-17. Compare what characterises those who love deceit and those who love Christ?
9. What three things did Jesus do that slaves should imitate when they are abused?
10. You are probably not a slave, but can you list situations where the same applies to you?
11. In verse 23 Peter reminds us that Jesus entrusted himself to God’s justice, and not try to defend himself or his own rights. When did he receive God’s justice? (See Romans 1:4) When will we receive ours? (See 1 Peter 1:3)
12. In verse 24 Peter recalls that Christ died for our sins. That reminds us that Jesus death cleanses us from all sin. (See 1 John 1:7) But instead of talking about that, what two things does Peter say should be characteristic of our lives as a result of Christ dying for us ?
13. Verses 22, 24 and 25 Peter is referencing Isaiah 53. Read that chapter, then answer these questions on the basis of what Isaiah 53 says:
 - a. What characterises sinners for whom Christ came?
 - b. What characterised Jesus sacrifice for those sinners?
14. Looking at the focus of Isaiah 53, and Peter’s call to expect suffering and to endure suffering patiently, what healing comes as a result of Jesus “stripes”? (Look especially at verse 25 of 1 Peter.)

CHOSEN TO BE SERVANTS OF GOD (... OR SLAVES OF CHRIST!)

15. In the light of these verses: What can you thank God for? What can you pray for others? What can you trust God for?
16. In the light of these verses, what changes do you need to make: In your faith? In your worship? In your attitude? In your life?