



### Trouble Without and Within: 1 & 2 Peter

James wrote his letter to “the twelve tribes in the Dispersion,” and Peter addresses his first letter to “the elect exiles of the Dispersion,” specifically in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia—territories of Asia Minor. Whether or not Peter had ever been to these areas in person can’t be proven or disproven, but his love for his Christian brothers is clear! Also, given the location Peter wrote to, and

much of what he says about their former life throughout his letter, it is almost certain that Peter wrote to a predominantly Gentile-Christian audience. These Christians are facing some sobering and serious challenges from without, as Christianity becomes more and more of a target for persecution. Thus, Peter’s first epistle encourages his brethren to persevere through the suffering. He reminds his readers of the blessed hope they have of Christians—they are exiles, pilgrims, and sojourners who are travelling to a better country. But they must remain faithful. They must live holy lives, and as they do they will become examples to others. They must learn submission to authorities, to Christians, and of course to God. Yes, there will be suffering, but Christians can “...entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.”

Peter writes a second letter, this time to tackle problems from within the church. Outsiders pose the threat of persecution to be endured—some insiders pose the threat of false doctrine that must be overcome. God’s Word is to be trusted and obeyed. God’s Word has made clear He expects His children to obey His teaching, and we will be judged based on our faithful obedience. That judgment will occur when Jesus returns and all this universe is dissolved and men stand before Christ to be judged. Knowing that end, Christians should give themselves to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!”

### Questions

1. What should be the Christian’s response when he/she meets various trials? \_\_\_\_\_
2. “Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become \_\_\_\_\_ of all of it”
3. Which two Old Testament figures does James use to show that faith without works is dead? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How does James describe the “wisdom from above?” \_\_\_\_\_
5. Who does James use an example of the power of prayer? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Peter says our inheritance is \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and that does not \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Why do you think Peter refers to Christians as “sojourners” and “pilgrims” (ESV—exiles)? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Why should Christians be sober and vigilant? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Peter says Christians must add to their faith: \_\_\_\_\_
10. Why is God long suffering toward us? \_\_\_\_\_
11. What dwells in the new heavens and new earth? \_\_\_\_\_

## “That You May Grow Thereby...”

A weekly Bible reading plan



### James, First Peter, & Second Peter Letters to the Dispersed

#### Overview

James, First Peter, and Second Peter make up the first three of seven books commonly referred to as the “General Epistles” in the New Testament. Whereas Paul’s letters are mostly written to specific congregations or people, these letters have a much broader initial audience. For example, James writes to “the twelve tribes in the Dispersion” and Peter addresses the “elect exiles in the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Pet. 1:1). James and the books of Peter provide wide-ranging yet intensely practical admonition for Christians of all circumstances and in all ages. Paul’s letters often provide theology first, then practice. James and Peter often give practical exhortation, and back it up with theological reason. These differing styles do not contradict—they supplement. Christians should have an intense yearning to understand the doctrine of God’s Word, yet they should have an equally strong desire to let the knowledge of God’s Word mold them in everyday living. James and Peter help us do that tremendously!

#### Suggested Reading Schedule

Monday: James 1-2  
 Tuesday: James 3-5  
 Wednesday: 1 Peter 1-2  
 Thursday: 1 Peter 3-5  
 Friday: 2 Peter 1-3

**FAITH**  
 without  
**WORKS**

### The Letter of James

There are four men in the New Testament named James. The majority consensus from the second century on has been that the author of the New Testament letter is the Lord’s half-brother, James. While it seems James may not have believed fully in Jesus during His public ministry (Jn. 7:5), Jesus appeared specifically to James after His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7) and that certainly seems to have been a turning point. James didn’t just become a Christian—he became a leader and pillar in the early church, as is seen throughout the book of Acts. James writes only one of the New Testament books, and while it is fairly brief it is quite powerful. Christianity had begun to spread through the world. Persecution caused many to flee Jerusalem, but they took the gospel with them as they did (Acts 8:4). Others, like Paul, preached the message in new lands. Truly, the people of God were dispersed in many places. Be that as it may, they were all still citizens of one, new kingdom. This new kingdom faced challenges—persecution, false-doctrine, and mediocrity were constant threats. In this setting, James writes an epistle that strongly calls Christians to faithfulness. A key message of that call is that faithfulness implies action, not just belief. James exhorts his readers to be “doers of the Word, and not hearers only.” The rest of the book explains much of what Christians are “to do.” James addresses the use of our tongue; our care and good deeds for others; the pursuit of wisdom; proper attitudes towards the world and riches; the need for endurance; and the importance of prayer. Many have remarked that James is the most practical of all the New Testament books. It provides straight-forward admonition that every Christian needs. It’s direct style and it’s interest in wisdom has also earned it the moniker of “The Proverbs of the New Testament.” However we might think of it, we will surely be admonished, rebuked, encouraged, and equipped if we give ourselves to truly reading and studying this great letter from the Lord’s brother!



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