

In 1 & 2 Peter, we don't have two volumes on the same subject. We have two different subjects that apply to Christian living. If there is a unifying theme, it is something like "watchfulness," or "walking in wisdom."

Let me illustrate with some comments on Purpose from the introductions to the books:

1 Peter

"This epistle could be understood as a handbook written for ambassadors to a hostile foreign land. The author, knowing persecution would arise, carefully prescribed conduct designed to bring honor to the One they represented. The purpose then of 1 Peter was to encourage Christians to face persecution so that the true grace of Jesus Christ would be evidenced in them (5:12)."¹

2 Peter

"The purpose of 2 Peter is to call Christians to spiritual growth so that they can combat apostasy as they look forward to the Lord's return."²

So under "watchfulness" —

The believer needs to live with an eye to the outside (to persecutors), whether persecution is due to maliciousness or ponderous incompetence. A believer needs to know how to live in that world.

The believer also needs to live with an eye to the inside (to false teachers), since such are expected, and will do what they can to exploit church people for their own ends.

Under "walking in wisdom" —

- When there is external pressure, blameless conduct is vital.
- When there is internal defection, spiritual strength is vital.

That brings us to an overview of the two books, thinking about their message. What I am doing here is combining information from various outlines of the

¹ Raymer, "1 Peter," 838.

² Kenneth O. Gangel, "2 Peter," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 862.

two books. Three sources that are helpful to everyone, from beginners to more experienced students are:

- The Bible Knowledge Commentary (2 vols.)
- Tom Constable's Expository Notes (available online)
- Warren Wiersbe's outlines (in the "Be" series and in "The Bible Exposition Commentary")

I. The message of 1 Peter

A. The basic outline

1. The implications of salvation for spiritual life and growth (1.1-2.10)
2. The implications of salvation for [mostly] authority relationships (2.11-3.12 [some make the break at 3.8])
3. The implications of salvation when suffering (3.13-5.14)

B. Message of 1 Peter Summarized

1. Key words: salvation, submission, suffering
2. Summary statements

"1 Peter is about God and the ramifications of orienting life wholly around him. This entails refusing the conventions of honor and status that constitute Roman politics in favor of the valuations and judgment of the merciful God who has chosen and honored what the systems of this world have dismissed. To read 1 Peter is to be told not how we might think about God, but what God thinks of us."³

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³ Green, *1 Peter*, 3.

⁴ Raymer, "1 Peter," 838.

3. Based on the salvation we have in Christ, Christians are to:
 - a. Pursue Christian virtues
 - b. Endure social suffering (persecution)
 - c. Live for the final redemption
 - d. Live in holiness and purity
4. Key verses
 - a. 1.3
 - b. 1.13
 - c. 2.1-2
 - d. 2.13-17
 - e. 3.13-14
 - f. 4.1-2
 - g. 5.6-7

II. The message of 2 Peter

A. The basic outline

1. A reminder of the Christian life (1)
 - a. Always growing in grace (1.1-11)
 - b. Founded securely on God's word (1.12-21)
2. A warning of internal threats: the false teachers (2)
3. An exhortation to spiritual vigilance (3)
 - a. Be mindful of the Word (3.1-7)
 - b. Be instructed of the Lord's coming (3.8-14)
 - c. Be diligent to wait on the Lord (3.15-16)
 - d. Be on guard so you may grow (3.17-18)

B. The message of 2 Peter summarized

"Peter was both a concerned pastor and a champion of theological orthodoxy. This final impassioned plea to grow in Christian maturity and guard against false teachers was precipitated by the fact that His time was short (1:13–15) and that these congregations faced immediate danger (2:1–3). He

desired to refresh their memories (1:13) and stimulate their thinking (3:1–2) so that they would remember his teaching (1:15). He carefully described the characteristics of mature believers and challenged them to make every effort to grow in grace and knowledge (1:3–11). Credentials of true teachers were given to help the readers be discerning students of God’s Word (1:12–21). Peter cautioned them against false teachers and exposed their evil characteristics (chap. 2). And he encouraged his readers with the certainty of Christ’s return (3:1–16).⁵

1. Key words: grow, false prophets, guard
2. Intense message: grow in grace
 - a. Adding to your faith
 - b. Relying on the Word
 - c. Watching for defectors (especially with respect to eschatology, *i.e.*, the Lord’s return)
3. Key verses
 - a. 1.2-3
 - b. 1.5a
 - c. 1.16, 19
 - d. 2.1
 - e. 3.1-2
 - f. 3.17-18

Conclusion:

The twin issues of how to live in the world and how to live in the church are worked out in these epistles.

In the world, we are to live like Jesus, submitting ourselves to authorities, reflecting the glory of God and Christ in our lives.

In the church, we are to constantly pursue growth and be wary of the rise of false teachings, guarding ourselves and our churches until Jesus comes.

⁵ Gangel, “2 Peter in BKCNT,” 862.