

Peirasmos and *Dokimion* in the New Testament: Contextual-Theological Analysis and Contemporary Implications

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Abstract

This study investigates the Koine Greek terms *peirasmos* (temptation) and *dokimion* (testing) in the New Testament to clarify the widespread confusion among contemporary Christians regarding the origins, purposes, and theological significance of trials. Employing a qualitative method grounded in textual analysis, linguistic study, and hermeneutics, this research examines the etymology, distribution, and contextual use of both terms across selected New Testament passages. The study reveals that *peirasmos* frequently denotes a challenge that intends to weaken or disrupt faith, whereas *dokimion* refers to a refining test designed to strengthen and validate spiritual character. Nevertheless, the findings also show that *peirasmos*, when responded to in faith, can function as a means through which *dokimion* takes place, producing endurance and spiritual maturity. In light of contemporary challenges such as materialism, moral relativism, digital pressure, and identity fragmentation, this study demonstrates the relevance of these biblical concepts for shaping Christian responses to modern ethical and spiritual struggles. By integrating linguistic, historical, and contextual-theological analysis, this research provides a framework for understanding how believers can transform temptation into opportunities for growth and spiritual resilience. The study contributes to contextual theology by bridging biblical interpretation with practical implications for Christian life in a rapidly changing world.

Keywords: crisis of faith; *dokimion* and *peirasmos*; modern era spirituality; spiritual maturity; weak loyalty

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji istilah Yunani Koine *peirasmos* (pencobaan) dan *dokimion* (ujian) dalam Perjanjian Baru untuk memperjelas kerancuan pemahaman di kalangan umat Kristen masa kini mengenai asal-usul, tujuan, dan signifikansi teologis dari berbagai tantangan iman. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif melalui studi linguistik, analisis teks, dan pendekatan hermeneutika, penelitian ini menelusuri akar kata, distribusi, serta konteks penggunaan kedua istilah tersebut dalam beberapa bagian Perjanjian Baru. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *peirasmos* sering merujuk pada tantangan yang bertujuan melemahkan atau menjatuhkan iman, sedangkan *dokimion* menggambarkan proses pengujian yang dimaksudkan untuk memurnikan dan menguatkan karakter rohani. Temuan juga mengindikasikan bahwa

peirasmos, apabila dihadapi dengan iman, dapat menjadi sarana bagi terjadinya *dokimion* yang menghasilkan ketekunan serta kematangan rohani. Dalam konteks modern seperti materialisme, relativisme moral, tekanan digital, dan krisis identitas, konsep-konsep ini terbukti relevan untuk membentuk respons Kristen terhadap pergumulan etis dan spiritual masa kini. Dengan mengintegrasikan analisis linguistik, historis, dan teologi kontekstual, penelitian ini memberikan kerangka untuk memahami bagaimana orang percaya dapat mengubah pencobaan menjadi kesempatan pertumbuhan rohani. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada teologi kontekstual dengan menjembatani pemahaman biblika dengan tantangan praktis kehidupan Kristen kontemporer.

Kata kunci: dokimion dan peirasmos; kematangan rohani; kesetiaan lemah; krisis iman; spiritual era modern

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Christian life faces increasingly complex moral and spiritual issues along with the current of globalization, the development of digital technology, and rapid social change. Phenomena such as materialism, consumptive lifestyles, and hedonism have influenced the way many believers think and act, reflected in the increase in unethical behaviors such as online fraud, corruption, and unfair business competition.¹ The development of moral relativism also blurred the boundaries between right and wrong, fueling polemics around ethical and theological issues.² On the other hand, digitalization brings new challenges such as social media addiction, the spread of hoaxes, hate speech, and easy access to pornography, which has an impact on the mental and spiritual health of Christians.³ This condition gives birth to a new form of *peirasmos* —the temptation to build a false identity, seek self-validation in cyberspace, and ignore the depth of spirituality. This complex situation requires Christians to revisit the meaning of trials (*peirasmos*) and tests of faith (*dokimion*) as described in the New Testament, in order to have a more robust theological framework for navigating today's moral and spiritual pressures.

A number of previous studies have touched on the issue of temptation in the context of the New Testament, but it still leaves some limitations. The study of Yuber, Maupak, and Hermin interprets *the peirasmos* in James 1:12–15 as a

¹ Giska Salsabella Nur Afifah and Muh Ilham Bintang, "Consumptive and Hedonistic Relationships to Corruption Intentions," *JIHHP: Journal of Law, Humanities and Politics* 1, no. 1 (2020): 60–72, <https://doi.org/10.38035/jihhp.v1i1.358>.

² Ivo Arbie Mauclau and Kalis Stevanus, "The Importance of Understanding Christ's Finality as a Saving Basis of Faith in the Midst of the Issue of Religious Relativism," *LOGIA: Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 3, no. 1 (2021): 37–54.

³ Jonathan Leobisa et al., "The Challenges of Social Media Use in the Era of Disruption and the Role of Christian Ethics Education," *Aletheia: Christian Educators Journal* 4, no. 1 (2023): 32–40, <https://doi.org/10.9744/aletheia.4.1.38-48>.

process rooted in human desire,⁴ while Gulo's study emphasizes that temptation arises when man is dragged by his own desires to the point of giving birth to sin and death.⁵ These studies highlight the moral roots of temptation but do not develop a conceptual relationship between *peirasmos* and *doxion*. Lumbaa, through reflection on 1 Corinthians 10:1–13, highlights God's provision of a way out, but still focuses on the pastoral aspect.⁶ Hendi and Gulo examine temptation from the perspective of spiritual discipline,⁷ while Marthen and Dominggus emphasize the role of suffering as a means of refining faith in Peter's letters,⁸ and Supriadi highlights faith's response to suffering through prayer, love, and service.⁹ Although valuable, such studies tend to be limited to a specific verse analysis or to practical and pastoral aspects, without comprehensively blending linguistic, historical, and theological analyses of the two terms. In addition, there has been no study that places the dynamics of *peirasmos* and *dokimion* in direct dialogue with the moral and spiritual challenges of modern Christianity such as consumerism, the digital identity crisis, and contemporary cultural pressures.

This gap points to the need for a more holistic study, which does not simply interpret one term separately, but examines the relationship between *peirasmos* and *dokimion* in the overall context of the New Testament. The dynamics of the relationship between the two concepts are important because the New Testament suggests that *peirasmos* can function as a means of refining

⁴ Adolvina Yuber, Eta Maupak, and Yunita Hermin, "The Theological Meaning of Temptation According to James 1:12-15 and Its Implications for Today's Servants of God," *Nautical: Multidisciplinary Scientific Journal* 2, no. 7 (2023): 1–6, <https://jurnal.arkainstitute.co.id/index.php/nautical/index>.

⁵ Hezekiah Gulo, "The Concept of Temptation According to James 1:12-15," *BONAFIDE: Journal of Christian Theology and Education* 1, no. 2 (2020): 165–79, <https://doi.org/10.46558/bonafide.v1i2.22>.

⁶ Naysalmin Lumbaa, "Reflections on Israel's Spiritual Life for the Church Today Based on 1 Corinthians 10:1-13," *Angelion: Journal of Christian Theology and Education* 5, no. 1 (2024): 95–119.

⁷ Hendi and Sésilina Gulo, "The Temptation of a Priest in the Ministry According to John Chrysostom," *Dunamis: Journal of Christian Theology and Education* 6, no. 1 (2021): 46–64, <https://doi.org/10.30648/dun.v6i1.430>.

⁸ Enjelia Marthen and Dicky Dominggus, "Understanding Suffering in 1 Peter 4:12-19 and Its Implications with the Covid 19 Pandemic Situation," *Diegesis: Journal of Theology* 6, no. 1 (February 2021): 20–35, <https://doi.org/10.46933/DGS.vol6i120-35>.

⁹ Made Nopen Supriadi, Manase Gulo, and Iman Kristina Halawa, "Theological Basis for Obedience to the Government During the Covid-2019 Pandemic in Indonesia," *Evangelical: Journal of Evangelical Theology and Congregational Citizen Development* 5, no. 2 (2021): 213, <https://doi.org/10.46445/ejti.v5i2.372>.

the faith when confronted with the correct response, while *the dokimion* describes the result or process of the refinement. A deep understanding of these two terms is also important in the modern context, as today's moral and spiritual challenges often serve as trials that can undermine faith, but they can also be an opportunity for the formation of a more mature spiritual character.

Taking into account these contexts, this study aims to enrich the understanding of *peirasmos* and *dokimion* through an analysis that integrates linguistic aspects, historical-theological contexts, and contemporary relevance. This research focuses on three main focuses: (1) analyzing the distribution and meaning of both terms in New Testament texts; (2) explore how historical and theological contexts shaped the use of the term in early Christian communities; and (3) explain its theological implications for Christians in the face of moral and spiritual challenges in the modern era. This research seeks to contribute to the development of contextual theology and provide a reflective foundation for Christians in facing trials and tests of faith in the midst of today's socio-cultural transformation.

THEORY

A proper understanding of the terms *peirasmos* and *dokimion* requires a theoretical foundation derived from the study of linguistics, hermeneutics, and contemporary theology. This section presents relevant cutting-edge theories as the basis for analysis in this study.

A Recent Linguistic Study of *Peirasmos* and *Dokimion*

Modern linguistic studies place the analysis of the meaning of words in the *semantic domain*, as Louw and Nida affirm that changes in social and literary contexts greatly affect the semantic function of a term. In this realm, *peirasmos* falls into the domain of "testing/temptation," which includes two main nuances: the downward temptation and the constructive test. In contrast, *dokimion* falls into the domain of "*proving/authenticity*," which emphasizes the process and results of character refinement.

Zimmermann's research also shows that terms related to testing and ethical formation in early Christian communities were not static, but functioned in communal relationships—not just individual.¹⁰ Thus, an understanding of

¹⁰ Ruben Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love: Discovering Paul's "Implicit Ethics" Through 1 Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Academic, 2018).

these two terms needs to take into account the linguistic, social, and rhetorical context of the New Testament writers.

Hermeneutic Theory and Contextual Interpretation

Osborne through the spiral *hermeneutics approach* emphasizes that interpretation must move dynamically from the text to the context and back to the text.¹¹ Thus, the analysis of *peirasmos* and *dokimion* does not stop at the level of etymology, but must pay attention to the historical situation of the author and the audience.

Carson also asserts that understanding the New Testament texts requires an integration between the analysis of the original language and its theological context.¹² This kind of hermeneutics allows the interpreter to see how the meaning of the term develops and functions theologically within the narrative and arguments of the biblical writers.

Contemporary Theology of Suffering, Temptation, and the Tests of Faith

The study of modern theology provides the perspective that trials and tests cannot be understood merely as moral-individual events, but as part of the formation of spiritual identity. Thielman points out that the test of faith in New Testament theology has always been associated with the purification of community and faithfulness to God.¹³

Wright emphasized that the social, moral, and spiritual pressures experienced by the early church show how trials could be a means of building deeper faith.¹⁴ Thus, *peirasmos* and *dokimion* are not only conceptual, but are tied to the real experience of the people. Contemporary theological literature also shows that modern developments such as moral relativism and the pressures of digital culture present new forms of temptation that need to be read within the theological framework of the test of faith.¹⁵

¹¹ G. K. Beale dan D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

¹² Grant R. Osborne, *Spiral Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Surabaya: Momentum, 2025).

¹³ Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2005).

¹⁴ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: Harper One, 2018).

¹⁵ Gulo, "The Temptation of a Priest in the Ministry According to John Chrysostom."

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach based on literature studies with a hermeneutic framework to analyze the terms *peirasmos* and *dokimion* in the New Testament. Data was collected by tracing the entire occurrence of both terms in the Koine Greek text through *the Logos* and *BibleWorks software* to identify the distribution, grammatical form, and literary context of each verse. The analysis is carried out in stages through a three-layered conceptual model that integrates linguistic, historical, and theological dimensions. In the first layer, linguistic analysis is used to study the root of words, morphological structure, and semantic nuances of both terms. The second layer places the results of linguistic analysis into the historical and social context of the early Christian communities to understand their function and intended use. The third layer, the theological synthesis, draws on hermeneutic principles and the views of experts such as D.A. Carson¹⁶ and Grant Osborne¹⁷ to interpret the theological meaning of the two terms and evaluate their relevance to contemporary Christian life. Through this analytical structure, the research ensures that linguistic studies, historical contexts, and theological reflections are systematically interrelated in answering research questions regarding the meaning, context, and implications of *peirasmos* and *doxion*.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the New Testament tradition, the terms *peirasmos* and *dokimion* have different but complementary meanings in describing the dynamics of trials and tests. These terms are not only used in various parts of the New Testament text, but they also contain theological nuances that are essential for understanding how the early Christian community lived out the challenges of faith. The analysis of these two terms is relevant to the focus of the study, as this study examines contextually-theologically the use of the word (lexical usage) in the New Testament text. Lexical references such as *BDAG* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich) and *Louw–Nida* show that *peirasmos* often deals with situations of temptation that have the potential to undermine faith, while *dokimion* contains a positive dimension as a testing process that results in perseverance and purity of faith.

¹⁶ Osborne, *Spiral Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*.

¹⁷ Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*.

By understanding semantic differences and the context in which they are used, this study builds a paradigm framework for how New Testament texts interpret trials and tests. This approach is in line with the research goal of interpreting the two terms in a contextual-theological framework, while demonstrating their relevance to the formation of Christian character in the modern era. The in-depth explanation in the next section aims to explore the root words, distribution, and theological meaning of *peirasmos* and *dokimion* based on their use in the New Testament.

***Peirasmos* (Temptation or Temptation)**

The term *peirasmos* (πειρασμός, G3986)¹⁸ is derived from the verb *peirazō* (πειράζω, G3985),¹⁹ which lexically means "to test," "to try," or "to tempt," and is rooted in *peira* (πεῖρα, G3984), "effort" or "experience."²⁰ Historically, classical Greek literature used this term to describe the evaluative process of intellectual competence or military skill. Nevertheless, the transfer of meaning from the classical realm to the New Testament corpus needs to be done critically because a significant semantic shift occurs when the term enters the Judeo-Christian environment. Some modern publications still assume the meaning of "neutral" *peirasmos* by relying too heavily on classical usage, an approach that lacks consideration for the conceptual transformations reflected in the biblical tradition.

In lexical studies, *peirasmos* is often associated with terms such as *dokimion* (δοκίμιον) and *apeirastos* (ἀπειραστος), but this semantic proximity does not signify functional equality. *Dokimion* refers more to the result or evidence of a test, while *apeirastos* is used in James 1:13 to affirm that God cannot be tempted by evil.²¹ The use of the term suggests that *peirasmos* should be understood as a semantic category that depends on the agent and the purpose of action, rather than as an inherently positive or negative term. Thus, the equating of *peirasmos* with *dokimion* as a theological synonym in some literature must be critically assessed.

In the New Testament, *peirasmos* mostly appears as a singular noun describing a crisis situation experienced by an individual or community. The passive form of *peirazō* consistently indicates the involvement of external agents

¹⁸ James Strong, "Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament," preprint, Toronto, Ontario, 2016.

¹⁹ Strong, "Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament." 368.

²⁰ Strong, "Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament."

²¹ Strong, "Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament." 51.

whether it is Satan, social pressure, or internal human impulses. Interpretations that regard the entire passive form as a "divine test" are inconsistent with the testimony of the text, particularly James 1:14 which emphasizes the role of human desire in triggering temptation. Thus, the identification of *the source of peirasmos* is an important aspect of semantic and theological analysis.

The destructive dimension of *peirasmos* is evident in the narrative of Jesus' temptation (Matt. 4:1; Mk. 1:13; Luk. 4:2), in which Satan becomes an active agent.²² The textual variations in the passages, as Aland & Aland note, do not change the core theological meaning, but show how manuscript tradition enriches understanding of Christ's authority in the face of temptation.²³ Green asserts that Jesus' response illustrates faithfulness to God's will and thus establishes a Christological paradigm in understanding *peirasmos* as a threat to divine mission.²⁴ In addition, *peirasmos* is also used in the context of a constructive test of faith. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, Paul emphasizes that God provides a "way out," which indicates that *peirasmos* can serve as a means of purification if it is within God's set limits. The supplication in the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:13) also shows the Christian community's awareness of the destructive potential of *peirasmos* and the recognition of the need for divine help.²⁵

In Jewish tradition, especially in the Septuagint, the term *peirazō* is used to describe the test of Abraham in Genesis 22:1 (*ἐπείρασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν Ἀβραάμ*), which indicates the function of *peirasmos* as a means of evaluating obedience within the framework of the covenant.²⁶ Nonetheless, direct mapping of this concept to the New Testament must be done with caution because the context in which it is used is theologically different. In the LXX, the test is covenantal and unrelated to moral temptation, whereas in the New Testament *peirasmos* often occurs in the context of spiritual conflict, community pressures, and

²² Jeffrey B. Gibson, "Jesus' Wilderness Temptation According to Mark," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 16, no. 53 (1994): 3–34, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X9401605301>.

²³ Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995).

²⁴ Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, 2nd revise (Lisle, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2020).

²⁵ Michael P. Knowles, "Once More 'Lead Us Not Eis Peirasmon,'" *The Expository Times* 115, no. 6 (2004): 191–94, <https://doi.org/10.1177/001452460411500604>.

²⁶ Felix Gosal, "Basic Issue of Child Sacrifice in The Abraham's Trial: An Exegetical Study of Genesis 22:2," *Klabat Theological Review* 3, no. 2 (2022): 137–50.

ethical struggles. The use in Revelation 2:10 which mentions *peirasmos* in connection with the persecution of the Smyrna church shows the expansion of meaning into a form of external pressure that tests the steadfastness of faith.

These findings suggest that *peirasmos* in the New Testament serves as a complex and dynamic category. The term cannot be reduced to a mere "temptation" or "test," but rather must be understood as an ambivalent situation that contains the potential for fall as well as the opportunity for purification, depending on the agent, context, and response of the believer. An approach that combines linguistic, historical, and theological analysis shows that a thorough understanding of *peirasmos* requires a critical evaluation of secondary sources as well as a sensitive examination of semantic developments in the Greek-biblical and Judeo-Christian traditions.

***Docimion* (Proof or Test)**

The term *dokimion* (δοκίμιον, G1383)²⁷ lexically means "proof of authenticity," "test results," or "evidentiary process." This form is rooted in the adjective *dokimos* (δόκιμος, G1384),²⁸ which means "worthy," "tested," or "provably legitimate." The root word was widely used in the ancient world to describe the process of testing precious metals, as seen in the practice of *δοκίμασις* (gold/silver testing) which aimed to separate pure elements from impurities. Thus, the metaphorical associations of *dokimion* are not ornamental, but reflect a widely known socio-economic concept in the first-century Mediterranean world. To meet academic standards, an example of an original Greek quotation is required: in James 1:3, the term appears as τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως ("proof of your faith"), while in 1 Peter 1:7 it is used in the phrase τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως ("proof of your faith"), which is textually identical. Both quotes show that *dokimion* is used to mark the quality of faith that is evident through pressure or suffering.

Morphologically, *dokimion* is a nominative-acoustic neutral noun (δοκίμιον; nom./acc. sg. n.), and syntactically functions as a grammatical subject or internal object in a genitive construct describing the process of proof, e.g. *δοκίμιον τῆς πίστεως* ("proof of faith"). By concordance (NA28), *dokimion* appears twice in the entire New Testament, namely James 1:3 and 1 Peter 1:7. Its limited appearance does not mean that its meaning is insignificant; On the contrary, in both contexts *dokimion* becomes a key theological term describing

²⁷ Strong, "Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament." 129.

²⁸ Strong, "Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament."

the process of refinement of the faith. In contrast to *peirasmos* (πειρασμός), which can contain ambivalent or even negative meanings, *dokimion* consistently carries a positive connotation that is, a test that produces evidence of the authenticity of faith. Thus, the claim that *dokimion* is a synonym of *peirasmos* must be critically reviewed; both are in adjacent semantic domains, but have different pragmatic functions. *Peirasmos* denotes a situation or event that testes, while *dokimion* denotes the quality or evidence produced.

In the context of the New Testament, James 1:3 affirms that "the proof of faith" (τὸ δοκίμιον... τῆς πίστεως) produces perseverance. The structure of the genitive syntax here (τῆς πίστεως) is exexegetic explaining the object of the test, i.e., faith. Thus, *the dokimion* shows not only the tested quality of faith but also the process of its formation through experience. In contrast, in 1 Peter 1:7, the metaphor of precious metals becomes explicit: ἵνα τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως... πολυτιμότερον χρυσίου τοῦ ἀπολλυμένου ("In order that the proof of your faith... more precious than mortal gold"). Here the *dokimion* is closely related to the motives of suffering experienced by the Christian community under imperial pressure, showing that the testing process not only reveals the quality of the faith, but also constructs the identity of a faithful community. Such readings are reinforced by Zimmermann emphasizing the communal dimension of the process of refining the faith; *dokimion* is not only an individual experience but also a process of ethical formation in the body of Christ. It should be noted, however, that some secondary literature emphasizes the individual aspects of this test without regard to the context of the suffering community in 1 Peter. This critical evaluation is important so that the analysis does not ignore the socio-historical background that is the original context of the use of the term.

In New Testament times, *dokimion* had a positive connotation related to the external pressures experienced by early Christian communities, including persecution, social exclusion, and moral challenges. The letter of 1 Peter was written to a community living under the threat of Roman persecution, and the use of *dokimion* shows that the process of suffering was understood as a divine means of purifying the character of believers. This is in harmony with the theology of suffering in 1 Peter 1:4–5 regarding the heavenly inheritance allocated to those who are nourished by the power of God through faith. Thus, the symbolism of the testing of precious metals in the ancient world helps to explain that the tested faith was not only resistant to pressure, but also purified and elevated in value before God. This linguistic-historical approach suggests

that *dokimion* serves as a theological category that emphasizes the constructive outcome of the process of faith testing, thus complementing not replacing the broader category of *peirasmos*.

Meaning and Context of *Peirasmos* and *Dokimion* Based on Stories in the New Testament

The story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness provides a powerful example of how *peirasmos* (temptations) designed to bring down, can be an opportunity to demonstrate the power of faith and faithfulness to God. In Matthew 4:1-11, after fasting for 40 days and 40 nights, Jesus was tempted by Satan in three ways: (1) turning stones into bread (temptation to physical needs). (2) jumping from the Temple Hill to prove His divinity (temptation to power and popularity). (3) worshipping Satan to accept the kingdom of the world (temptation to ambition and power).²⁹ Every temptation is designed to thwart Jesus' mission as the Messiah by tempting Him to compromise God's plan for personal gain. However, Jesus responded to every temptation by quoting from Scripture, showing total submission to God's will. In this context, *peirasmos* did not succeed in destabilizing Jesus, but rather became a means of confirming His faithfulness and obedience to God. This process reflects the element of *domition*, in which the test produces evidence of purity of faith and steadfastness of character. Through His response, Jesus showed that faith rooted in God's righteousness is an effective weapon against *peirasmos*.

The story of Peter denying Jesus three times is another example of *peirasmos* eventually turning into a *docimion*. In Luke 22:31-34, Jesus warned Peter that Satan had asked permission to "spare" Peter like wheat, testing his faith and faithfulness. However, Jesus also said that He had prayed that Peter's faith would not be lost. On the night of Jesus' arrest, Peter faced *peirasmos* when he was asked if he knew Jesus. Fear and pressure led him to deny Jesus three times. Although this *peirasmos* shows Peter's weakness, it eventually becomes a *docimion* that purifies his character and faith. After Jesus' resurrection, Peter was restored through a conversation on the beach (Jn. 21:15-19), in which he confessed his love for Jesus three times a process that reflected repentance and

²⁹ Harold Willmington, "The Temptation of Jesus Christ: Facts Concerning Temptation in Regard to Both the Son of God and the Saints of God" (Liberty University, 2017), 1.

restoration.³⁰ This test resulted in Peter being more humble and courageous in his ministry, as seen in the book of Acts.

Theological Implications for Contemporary Christian Life

The concepts of *peirasmos* and *dokimion* are not just ancient theological terms, but have profound relevance to Christian life in the modern era. These two terms provide a theological lens for understanding the challenges that believers face in their journey of faith, ranging from the daily moral temptations and the tests that shape character.

A deep understanding of *peirasmos* provides a significant theological perspective for Christians in dealing with the various moral temptations of the modern era. This term reminds us that temptation is not only an external threat, but also an internal challenge that tests loyalty to God. In Matthew 6:13, the plea to be kept away from *peirasmos* shows that Christians need divine wisdom and protection to overcome temptations that could potentially thwart faith. Prayer and spiritual discipline, such as Bible reading, meditation, and faith community, are key strategies to counter the moral pressures faced in daily life.³¹ Challenges such as ethical compromise in the workplace, social pressure to conform, or the temptation of consumerism require the recognition of *peirasmos* as a spiritual threat to be confronted with total dependence on God.

Origen, a Church Father from the 3rd century, in his work '*De Oratione*' (on Prayer), emphasized the importance of supplication in Matthew 6:13.³² He argues that this plea not only asks for avoidance from outwardly tempting situations, but also asks for strength to resist internal tendencies toward sin. Origen saw temptation as part of the spiritual warfare that believers constantly face, and therefore, dependence on God through prayer was essential. Similarly, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a 20th-century Lutheran theologian, in '*Life Together*', emphasizes the importance of Christian communities as a place where believers support and strengthen each other in the face of temptation.³³ He

³⁰ Ade Efrata Anugrah, "Jesus' Pastoral Conversation with Simon Peter: A Narrative Analysis of John 21:15-19 and Its Implications for the Pastoral Conversation of Church Ministers Who Are About to Resign," *SCRIPTA: Journal of Theology and Contextual Ministry* 18, no. 2 (2023): 125–35, <https://doi.org/10.46494/psc18i2.216>.

³¹ Davin J. Carr-Chellman dan Michael Kroth, "The Spiritual Disciplines as Practices of Transformation," *International Journal of Adult Vocational Education and Technology* 8, no. 1 (2017): 23–35, <https://doi.org/10.4018/ijavet.2017010103>.

³² Origen, *Origen on Prayer* (Rome: Aeterna Press, 2015).

³³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together-Prayerbook of the Bible*, ed. Geffry B. Kelly (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005).

argues that isolation makes a person more vulnerable to temptation, while Christian fellowship provides the accountability and support needed.

The phenomenon of moral and spiritual challenges in the modern era is not only narrative, but is reinforced by various empirical findings. A Pew Research Center report shows that 61% of Christians in urban countries experience significant moral distress related to consumerism, digital lifestyles, and social demands, which directly impact the quality of their spiritual lives.³⁴ Similarly, Sitanggang's research found that 72% of young Christians feel their faith "often falters" due to exposure to social media and popular cultural values that are contrary to Christian principles.³⁵ The WHO also reported a 25% increase in global post-pandemic anxiety and depression cases, which also affected the spiritual resilience of many believers.³⁶ This data confirms that *peirasmos* in its modern form such as digital identity pressure, hoaxes, pornography, or moral relativism, is not just an abstract threat, but has real psychological and spiritual impacts. The theological understanding of *peirasmos* is becoming increasingly urgent to equip Christians to face contemporary challenges in a healthy and faith-rooted manner.

On the other hand, various studies show that the test of life (*dokimion*) also plays a significant role in the formation of the faith of the modern Christian community. The Barna Faith & Resilience Report survey revealed that 84% of Christians who face severe stress such as job loss, family conflict, or digital loneliness, actually report a deeper growth in faith when they interpret the experience in a theological framework.³⁷ These findings are in line with Jie Du's research which notes that religious communities that have a spiritual perspective on suffering tend to be more emotionally and socially resilient.³⁸

³⁴ Gregory A. Smith et al., *Religion and Views of Right and Wrong*, Religious Landscape Study (Pew Research Center, 2025), <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/02/26/religion-and-views-of-right-and-wrong/>.

³⁵ Ariani Sitanggang, "The Value of Holiness in Popular Culture: A Christian Perspective on Music, Film, and Social Media," *Hikmat Jurnal Agama Kristen* 3, no. 2 (2025): 91–96.

³⁶ *COVID-19 Pandemic Triggers 25% Increase in Prevalence of Anxiety and Depression Worldwide*, 2022, <https://www.who.int/news/item/02-03-2022-covid-19-pandemic-triggers-25-increase-in-prevalence-of-anxiety-and-depression-worldwide>.

³⁷ *State of the Bible 2021: Five Key Findings* (Barna, 2021).

³⁸ Li-Jie Du, "The Associations between Religiosity and Resilience When Individuals Are Challenged by Risk Factors of Suicide and Mental Illness," *Frontiers in Public Health* 12 (2024): 1–5, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2024.1442248>.

With this empirical evidence, the concept of dokimion has not only theoretical value in biblical studies, but also practical implications that are very relevant for Christians today. In this context, theological reflection on the test of faith helps to build a resilient spiritual character, which is sorely needed in the midst of moral crises, digital pressures, and increasing social instability.

Faced with this challenge, Christians are invited to imitate Jesus in using God's word to resist temptation (Matt. 4:4). In addition, spiritual disciplines such as fasting from social media, meditating on God's word, and maintaining an accountable faith community can be practical ways to counter digital *peirasmos* and turn it into a *doxion process* that shapes spiritual character.

Tests and Growth of Faith

The concept of *dokimion* teaches that trials are not something to be avoided or feared, but are accepted as God's means of strengthening faith and forming spiritual character. James 1:3 and 1 Peter 1:7 describe the test of faith as a process that produces perseverance, patience, and purity that are more precious than gold. In contemporary Christian life, challenges such as economic crisis, family pressure, or painful loss can be a form of *dolomition* that leads believers to surrender to God and grow in faith. When these tests are faced with an attitude of surrender, they can form spiritual integrity and resilient character, enabling Christians to be authentic witnesses in a challenging world.

Thielman affirms that the test of faith produces endurance that brings glory to God.³⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, a Church Father from the 4th century, in his work '*The Life of Moses*', used the metaphor of climbing Mount Sinai to describe a spiritual journey.⁴⁰ He explained that the difficulties and challenges faced along the climb, even though it was hard, actually strengthened and purified the character of the climber. Similar to *the docimion*, the trials and difficulties of the Christian life are seen as an integral part of the process of spiritual growth that leads to a deeper closeness to God. C.S. Lewis, a 20th-century Christian writer and apologist, in '*Mere Christianity*' and *The 'Problem of Pain'*, also discusses the role of suffering in character formation.⁴¹ He argued that God used suffering as a way to "sculpt" the character of believers, molding them into Christlike likeness.

³⁹ Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach*.

⁴⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006).

⁴¹ Clive Staples Lewis, *Mere Christianity-Reprinted with Some Alterations from: Right and Wrong: A Clue to the Meaning of the Universe and What Christians Believe* (Golden, Colorado: Samizdat, 2014).

Case studies from Christian communities facing persecution in the Middle East provide a concrete picture of how *the concept of dokimion* works in their lives. In some countries of the region, pressure to leave the Christian faith is present in the form of physical threats, social isolation, criminalization of ecclesiastical activities, and even death threats.⁴² Despite the extreme conditions, many communities still show remarkable perseverance in holding fast to their faith, confirming that the test actually deepens their spiritual commitment. Their experience shows that *dokimion* is not just a theological concept, but a reality that emerges through life's hard and risky struggles.

One example can be found in the testimony of a church leader in a conflict zone, who recounted how the loss of family and possessions became a very profoundly trying moment in his life. However, instead of succumbing to despair, she found strength through prayer, community support, and faith in God's strengthening promises. This process not only helped him survive, but also shaped him into an example of courage for other congregations in similar situations. The experience shows that severe trials can result in greater refinement of faith, while fostering spiritual solidarity that strengthens the life of the Christian community.

A similar situation is seen in house churches in Southeast Asia that often face pressure from local authorities and majority groups.⁴³ In difficult conditions, the congregation demonstrated perseverance through strong fellowship, the secret preaching of the gospel, and a commitment to keep together despite the risks. Their resilience shows that *doxions* not only shape the maturity of the faith personally, but also strengthen the social-spiritual structure of the community. This experience proves that a common test can produce deeper unity, so that the congregation becomes a powerful witness in the midst of an environment that opposes their existence.

These case studies confirm that *the doxium*, as stated in 1 Peter 1:7, produces a purer and more precious faith than gold tested in fire. This principle remains relevant for Christians living in a more peaceful social context, where challenges may not be in the form of persecution, but present in everyday problems such as work pressure, family conflicts, loneliness, and identity crises. Although not extreme, these struggles are still the means by which God purifies

⁴² Abigail Hart, "Why It's So Dangerous to Be Christian in the Middle East," Global Christian Relief, 2024, <https://globalchristianrelief.org>.

⁴³ Kay Danielson, "House Church Attitudes towards Government Authorities," China Source, 2013, <https://www.chinasource.org>.

and strengthens the faith. Thus, Christians are encouraged to see every challenge of life large or small as part of a process of spiritual formation that is no less important than the experience of the congregation in the context of persecution.

Conceptual Relevance to the Challenges of the Modern Era

Social, economic, and technological developments in the modern era have given rise to situations that challenge the ethical and spiritual integrity of Christians. In this context, the concepts of *peirasmos* and *dokimion* provide a useful theological framework for reading the dynamics of today's struggles without getting caught up in reductive moral categorizations. *Peirasmos* marks a condition that has the potential to shift religious commitment through external pressure or inner impulses, while *dokimion* represents a process of purification that reveals and strengthens the quality of faith. This conceptual distinction allows for a clearer analysis of the forms of contemporary ethical crises without having to repeat the temptation-test dichotomy over and over again.

In the reality of globalization, Christians face structural pressures that affect their moral decision-making capacity. Competitive work environments, economic systems that normalize the pursuit of mere profit, and a political arena full of compromise show how the modern situation can become *an arena of peirasmos*, a context that challenges the alignment between beliefs and actions.⁴⁴ On the other hand, various forms of social injustice, marginalization of vulnerable groups, and the suffering experienced by religious minority communities are spaces where the quality of faithfulness and spiritual commitment is tested in a dimension that is in line with the concept of *domition*.⁴⁵ What distinguishes the two is not merely the type of event, but rather the theological function that arises from how believers respond to the situation.

The development of digital technology has also given rise to new forms of crisis that the early Christian community never imagined. The phenomenon of disinformation, hate speech, and polarization of opinions demands ethical wisdom in the use of situational media that can erode the capacity for moral

⁴⁴ Harapan Nainggolan, Jhon Remofe Malau, and Joshua Michael Nainggolan, "Submission to Leaders in the Tension of Faith and Justice: Biblical Studies and Christian Public Ethics Today," *DIEGESIS: Journal of Charismatic Theology* 8, no. 1 (2025): 87–101, <https://doi.org/10.53547/c7frr094>.

⁴⁵ Edy Syahputra Sihombing, "Witness of Faith in Interreligious Dialogue and Intercultural Theology," *Societas Dei: Journal of Religion and Society* 7, no. 2 (2020): 173–96, <https://doi.org/10.33550/sd.v7i2.151>.

reflection. Meanwhile, the pressure to display an ideal identity in the digital space opens up space for superficial self-formation and performative behavior. These situations not only illustrate moral challenges, but also open up the possibility of character purification through the determination to choose what is right even when it is contrary to the dominant cultural current. Thus, the theological relevance of *peirasmos* and *dokimion* lies not in the repetition of the term itself, but in an understanding of how the dynamics of trials and tests of faith operate in an ever-changing context, as well as how the response of faith can transform crises into means of spiritual growth.

Spiritual Character Building

The formation of spiritual character in contemporary Christian life is rooted in the dynamics of *peirasmos* and *dokimion* as understood in the New Testament tradition. *Peirasmos* describes a situation that has the potential to shake moral commitment,⁴⁶ while *dokimion* refers to a process of purification that results in perseverance and maturity of faith.⁴⁷ The transformation from trial to proof occurs when individuals respond to pressure with dependence on God and faithfulness to gospel values, so that conditions that contain the risk of fall become a means of spiritual growth. Within this framework, the formation of spiritual character is integrative, encompassing moral, social, and digital dimensions, and demands the active involvement of Christians in confronting the complexities of modernity with wisdom and integrity.

In a culture characterized by consumerism and ethical relativism, moral decisions are the main arena for character building. A response that refuses to compromise with worldly values through integrity, honesty, and simplicity represents a *dokimion* that purifies motivation, in line with Willard's view of the collaboration between God's grace and man's response in spiritual formation.⁴⁸ Character building also takes place in the social and service realms, where resistance, conflict, or structural pressure tests the sincerity of motivation. When understood as part of God's calling, the experience shapes love, perseverance,

⁴⁶ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

⁴⁷ Johannes Louw dan Eugene Albert Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament- Based on Semantic Domains* (Swindon: United Bible Societies, 1989).

⁴⁸ Dallas Willard, "Spiritual Formation and the Warfare between the Flesh and the Human Spirit," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 1, no. 1 (2008): 79–87.

and social sensitivity, as affirmed in Rutledge's analysis of the praxis of faith and the narrative of the cross.⁴⁹

Personal and collective crises in the contemporary era such as economic pressure, social conflict, and political uncertainty can present *peirasmos* in the form of anxiety or spiritual exhaustion. However, the response of faith through solidarity, acts of love, and ethical commitment transforms the experience into a *dokimion* that strengthens spiritual resilience, a finding consistent with Graça and Brandão's study of the role of religious faith in the face of severe stress.⁵⁰ In the digital context, the rapid flow of information and performative culture presents a form of experiment that demands *new discernment*. Self-control and media literacy, as Zhang notes, are a form of digital integrity that shapes the spiritual maturity of today's generation of Christians.⁵¹

The formation of spiritual character is a theological and ethical process that places *peirasmos* as the starting point and *dokimion* as the result of spiritual formation. This process enables God's people to become a resilient, integrity, and relevant community to the world, while reflecting the New Testament teaching that trials and trials are divine means of forming believers in the maturity of faith.

CONCLUSION

This research confirms that a proper understanding of *the peirasmos* and *dokimion* in the New Testament provides a strong theological framework for reading the dynamics of trials and trials in contemporary Christian life. Linguistic and historical analysis shows that *peirasmos* functions as a temptation that has the potential to weaken loyalty to God, while *domion* is a process of refinement of faith that results in perseverance and spiritual character. The two are intertwined in the journey of faith, as the correct response to *peirasmos* can lead to spiritual formation through *doxion*. In the modern context, this study finds that the relevance of the two concepts is increasingly evident amid cultural pressures, moral crises, and digital dynamics

⁴⁹ Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Pub Co, 2017).

⁵⁰ Lídia Graça dan Tânia Brandão, "Religious/Spiritual Coping, Emotion Regulation, Psychological Well-Being, and Life Satisfaction among University Students," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 52, no. 3 (2024): 342–58, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00916471231223920>.

⁵¹ Liang Zhang, "The Digital Age of Religious Communication: The Shaping and Challenges of Religious Beliefs through Social Media," *Studies on Religion and Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (2025): 25–41, <https://doi.org/10.71204/de63mn10>.

that are shaping the Christian lifestyle. *Peirasmos* is reflected in the temptations of consumerism, moral relativism, and digital disruption, while the docimion appears in the experiences of crisis, suffering, and pastoral challenges that are part of the process of faith formation. This research makes a significant theological contribution by linking biblical studies and contemporary challenges, while offering a practical perspective for the formation of resilient spiritual character and integrity in the midst of the complexity of the times.

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