

# EPISTLE: 2 PETER

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## MP3

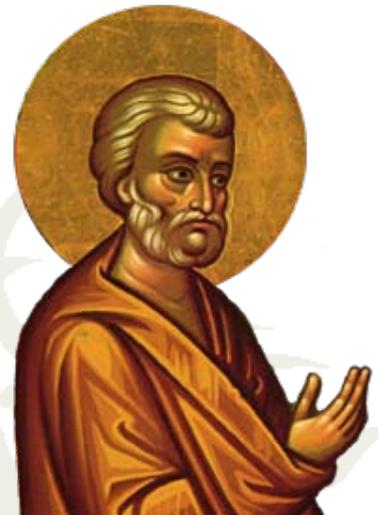
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## PRACTICE QUIZ

Take a quiz to test your knowledge of 2 Peter chapter 1.

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The second epistle of the Holy Apostle Peter has been a highly controversial book: many scholars believe it was written by another individual, while the Church—seeing the similarities in the apostle’s writings, and knowing the spiritual dangers of forging apostolic writings—has always accepted the book as having been written by the saint.

St. Peter begins by affirming that the faith of the Orthodox Church is “precious,” and through this Church God the Father and Jesus our Lord provide true knowledge (1:1-2). The apostle prays that grace and peace will be multiplied in Christians because, Blessed Theophylact says, “Grace and peace are the means by which God gives us everything we need in order to live godly lives” (1:2, 3).

God has given us what St. Peter describes as “exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature” (1:4). What does it mean to be partakers of the divine nature? The Church calls this *theōsis*, meaning divinization or deification, about which the *Orthodox Study Bible* says, “Deification means we are

to become more like God through His grace or divine energies.” Archbishop Basil Krivocheine provides a more extensive definition when he says:

*Divinization is the state of man’s total transformation, effected by the Holy Spirit, when man observes the commandments of God, acquires the evangelical virtues and shares in the sufferings of Christ. The Holy Spirit then gives man a divine intelligence and incorruptibility. Man does not receive a new soul, but the Holy Spirit unites essentially with the whole man, body and soul. He makes of him a son of God, a god by adoption, though man does not cease being a man, a simple creature, even when he clearly sees the Father. He may be called man and god at the same time.*

This definition lists the three key elements of *theōsis*: it is a total transformation of the person — both spiritually and physically — through the giving of divine intelligence and incorruptibility by the Holy Spirit; this transformation results in the person becoming a “god by adoption” while continuing to be “a man, a simple creature;” and this process involves the effort of observing the commandments of God.

This definition leads right into what St. Peter says next: that Christians should grow in faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (1:5-7). Through this we will grow in our relationship with God,

and in perfection (1:8-10). This is so important that the apostle wrote his message to ensure that people would continue to be reminded of these truths after his death (1:12-15).

The early readers and hearers of this epistle might have thought that the apostle simply made it up, and that he was yet another in the crowd of bogus spiritual teachers of the day. St. Peter therefore reminds us that he is instead proclaiming “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:16). This isn’t just an abstract theory for St. Peter—it is a truth which he has personally experienced, because he witnessed Christ’s Transfiguration (1:17-18).

The Transfiguration of our Lord confirms the prophecies of the Old Testament, all of which are a source of comfort and joy for Christians (1:19). Notice how St. Cyril of Alexandria puts it, “For those who have died in the faith, the light-bearing lamp has risen and the day dawns, according to the Scriptures, and to them the light of truth is sent, which is the face of the Holy Spirit.” To fully understand what Holy Scripture is saying, however, it is necessary to adhere to Holy Spirit-inspired the teachings of the Church, because human interpretation distorts Scriptural truth with our own opinions and interests (1:20-21).

## LIFE TIP

St. Ignatius Brianchaninov says, “Do not consider it sufficient for yourself to read the Gospel alone, without the reading of the Holy Fathers! This is a proud, dangerous thought. Better, let the Holy Fathers lead you to the Gospel, as their beloved child who has received his preparatory upbringing and education by means of their writings.”

