

Dr. David A. DeSilva, 2 Peter and Jude Session 2

In this next section, the author expresses his goals for the letter in general and the reason behind its urgency. The audience hears the apostle Peter speaking about his desire to provide a perpetual resource for them, a reminder of certain key facets of the apostolic gospel, the faith that they have received, to serve as a resource that will keep them on the right path after his death and, therefore, his unavailability to do so personally. For this reason, I am going to keep on reminding you about these things, even though you have known them and have been firmly established in the truth that has come to you.

But I consider it right, for as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by a reminder, knowing that the putting off of my tent is quickly drawing near, just as our Lord Jesus Christ disclosed to me. So I will exert myself at every opportunity so that you will have a reminder of these things after my departure. This passage provides two reminiscences of Peter's life.

It is unclear whether the author expects the hearers to think of a tradition such as that found in John 21, in which Jesus, after his resurrection, speaks about Peter's eventual execution, or whether the author or Peter himself had a different revelation from Christ in the spirit about his forthcoming death. In either event, the contents of the current letter take on a greater gravity as the last lecture, as it were, of the great apostle to the churches he leaves behind. And this last lecture is geared for the most part to secure the hearers in the certainty of the conviction of Christ's return and God's judgments against the revisions that certain skeptics would introduce into Christian faith.

A principal reason that the apostolic testimony about the faith is to be received and retained in the face of innovators' challenges is that it is grounded in eyewitness experience of God's intervention in the world in Jesus Christ and not in human inventiveness. This leads to the second and far better developed reminiscence. For we did not make the power and appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ known to you by means of following cleverly devised myths, but on the basis of being eyewitnesses of his magnificence.

For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, a voice was conveyed to him from such majestic glory, This is my son, my beloved one, in whom I have been well pleased. We heard this voice coming from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain, and we have the prophetic word made more certain to which you would do well to pay attention as to a light shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. The author refers here to the strange event called the transfiguration known from the synoptic gospels from Mark 9:2 and following, Matthew 7:1 and following, and Luke 9:28 and following.

In case the episode needs some refreshing, I share an abbreviated version of Mark's account. Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves, and he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling

white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, This is my son, the beloved, listen to him. Suddenly, when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore but only Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

First, the author of Second Peter presents his narrative about the transfiguration as eyewitness testimony. In Aristotle's textbook on effective argumentation, Aristotle said that the strongest proofs one could offer were those that the speaker did not have to invent. Eyewitness testimony, oaths, and written documents fall into this category of strong proof.

Peter's eyewitness testimony here speaks of the glory with which God had invested Jesus. Together with James and John, Peter got a glimpse of the glory that Jesus, the eternal Son, had had with the Father before his incarnation. He caught a glimpse of the glory that Jesus would have not just on the far side of his resurrection, but on the far side of his ascension, and ultimately at his coming again as Lord and judge.

This was the glorified Christ that Paul would encounter as he rode off to Damascus to persecute the Jesus cult that he believed was eroding loyalty to the covenant of Israel. This was the glorified Christ that John would see on the island of Patmos as he entered into the visionary experiences that would eventually yield the book of Revelation. The author recalls the transfiguration as evidence of God's investing Jesus with a distinctive honor and glory, a phrase that recalls Psalm 8, verses 5 and 6. You crown him with glory and honor.

You put all things under his feet. Psalm 8 was originally understood to celebrate the amazing privileges that had been granted to humankind in God's order of creation. What is man that you are mindful of him, the psalmist says as he opens his praise, or the son of man that you give thought to him? Early Christians latched onto this mention of the son of man as a hint that the psalm also had a sense in which it spoke not just about humanity in general, but about Jesus in particular.

God's pronouncement that Jesus was God's son, moreover, would recall Psalm 2, verse 7. Psalm 2 was originally a royal psalm, a celebration of the divine favor enjoyed by the Davidic king and this king's place in God's cosmos. It came to be read, however, as a prophetic word concerning the Messiah, the ultimate Davidic king. As this son, Jesus, it was promised, would receive the nations as his inheritance from God and rule them with a rod of iron.

In the early church, this became an oracle pointing forward to the return of Christ to usher in his kingdom. The language of the author's retelling of the transfiguration story, therefore, casts that event as a proleptic experience of Jesus coming again as God's appointed end-time king and judge. This is, perhaps, far from incidentally, also how Mark understood the event.

As Mark shaped the sayings of Jesus and the stories about Jesus into his narrative, he prefaced the transfiguration episode with this statement by Jesus. There are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God coming in glory. Mark appears to have understood and to have guided his audiences to understand this

declaration to be fulfilled in the transfiguration, the next episode he relates, and the only episode in the story of Jesus up to this point that he connects to the preceding one with a precise timeline.

Six days later, Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up to a high mountain. The author of 2 Peter understands the transfiguration in precisely the same way. It was a visionary experience of Jesus at his second coming.

It was an experience that, for Peter, James, and John at least, made the prophetic word more certain for them. The author hopes that the recollection of this apostolic testimony can do the same for his audiences. Thus, he urges them, against the objections and the demythologizing of the skeptics, to hold on to that which the prophetic word announces as a future certainty.

In this way, the light of the dawning day of the Lord will illumine their steps through the dimness of this present life, so that when the day dawns in its fullness, they will be found to have walked well. We confess that the death and resurrection of Jesus occurred just as Jesus foretold. The transfiguration gives us additional assurance that the story will yet unfold as Jesus promised, that as the great traditions of the church have confessed in the Nicene Creed, he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

This is a conviction meant not merely to remain in our heads or find expression on our lips, but to shape our entire life, as our author will express it toward the close of this letter as he looks ahead to the cataclysmic coming of Christ to usher in the new creation. Since all these things are thus slated for destruction, what kind of people then are you obliged to be, awaiting and hastening the coming of the day of God in holy conduct and reverent piety? The author offers the revelation of Jesus' glory and honor at the transfiguration, together with God's pronouncement that Jesus was indeed God's son, a title rich with resonances with Psalm 2, with its expectation of God's appointed regent exercising judgment over all the nations, as evidence that makes the prophetic word more certain. This leads him into a brief digression, affirming the reliability of genuine prophetic words received by the community in the past, no doubt referring primarily to those of the Hebrew prophets that look ahead to the day of the Lord.

And so in chapter 1, verses 20 and 21, we read, be sure of this, no prophetic word in scripture came about by a person's own invention, for no prophetic word was ever conveyed by a human being's will, but people carried along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. This text has often been read as a warning against private interpretations of scriptural texts, which is probably a good warning in its own right, but that is not likely to have been the author's meaning. Rather, he is affirming the prophet's accurate understanding and expression of whatever ecstatic experience, dream, vision, or hearing of the divine voice that the prophet had received, such that the prophet's representation of its significance is accurate and reliable.

In the Greco-Roman world, we have to remember that so-called prophetic words were delivered and committed to writing under murky circumstances. We might consider the oracle at Delphi, who, in a mystic and possibly hallucinogenic trance, uttered sounds that

her priests wrote down as best they understood them, delivering the often ambiguous and, one might say, misleading oracles to the inquirers to make sense of as they saw fit. That might be an extreme example, but it provides some context for our author's affirmation that there was no margin for error or misunderstanding in the composition of the scriptural prophetic words.

The Holy Spirit carried the prophets along to speak and to write precisely what God intended to be set down. Such is not the case with all prophets, however, and the author reminds his audience that counterfeits frequently arose among the people of the first covenant, even as counterfeits will continue to plague the people of God in the audience's present setting. But there were indeed false prophets among the people, even as there will also be false teachers among you who will introduce destructive opinions, even denying the master who bought them, bringing swift destruction down upon themselves.

And many will follow after their shamelessly self-indulgent practices, on account of which the way of truth will be slandered, and they will covetously traffic with you with fabricated messages with regard to whom the condemnation from long ago is not sluggish and their destruction does not sleep. How does one tell the difference between the genuine and the false prophets? How does one know who is speaking for God? The author suggests that the individual's moral character and practice go a long way toward answering the question, is the prophet serving God's desires or using his or her influence to serve his or her own desires, often in very materialistic and sensual ways? As both the first and the third chapters of this letter suggest, consonance with the tradition of those whom the community of faith has received as genuine prophets, the prophets of the first and second temple periods, whose oracles are recorded in the scriptures, and the spirit-inspired apostles who introduced the audiences to the faith, is another principal criterion. Both Paul and the elder responsible for writing 1 John would agree.

Even though our author uses the future tense, it is clear from the way in which the rest of the letter unfolds that these false teachers have already arrived. The author will speak of them and their activity in the present tense beginning in chapter 2, verse 10, through the end of the chapter, and he will speak of their attack on the Christians' belief in the second coming of Christ and the last judgment in chapter 3, verses 3 to 7. It is also at this point in the letter that we begin to hear clear echoes of the letter of Jude, which continue through the end of chapter 2. While many of the topics are conventional, the concentration of these topics and their parallel development across a whole chapter strongly suggests that one author knows, values, and has used the work of the other to address a similar problem, namely, innovative interlopers who seek to modify the apostolic gospel for their own ends. The resource was not used slavishly, but adapted heavily to suit both an audience with a very different cultural heritage and a rival message with a significantly different focus.

The scholarly consensus is that Jude is the more original text, and that the author of 2 Peter has used its progression of topics as a basis for addressing his audiences, since Jude's focus on the certainty of divine judgment was so relevant to 2 Peter's situation, and since Jude had crafted such a rhetorically strong denunciation of self-serving innovators on the gospel. Giving attention to 2 Peter's modifications of the content we find in Jude, then, can help to underscore 2 Peter's interests and the character of his audiences. Here in 2 Peter 2, verses 1 through 3, we catch echoes of several topics from Jude verse 4. The innovators' infiltration

of the congregations and introduction of destructive teachings, the denial of Christ's lordship in some sense, and the fact that the condemnation of such people was announced long ago, at the very least in the scriptural record of God's judgment of all such people, if not of these teachers specifically and individually.

In the case of Jude, the interloper's denial of the Lord Jesus appears to have been purely a matter of practice. They might well have confessed Jesus is Lord with their mouths, but they denied it practically by failing to do what the Lord commanded. Here, the author of 2 Peter probably has in mind the rival teacher's denial of God's commitment to judge, and thus, the conviction that Christ would return as Lord and judge.

This, of course, also had practical consequences. Freed from concern about divine rewards and punishment, the way was clear to make the most of life for one's own pleasure and ends now. Our author adds an additional concern, namely, the impact of such pleasure-seeking on the reputation of the Christian group.

Christians were generally regarded as a degraded group of atheists, for they did, in fact, deny the existence of the vast majority of the gods, who no longer showed proper civic solidarity with their neighbors, either at public festivals or private gatherings, all of which would have involved some token acknowledgment of the gods whom the Christians rejected. Early Christian leaders were intent on assuring that any such reproach that might be leveled at Christians was for these causes that were truly virtuous, their commitment to the only God who is, and to the coming kingdom of their Lord Jesus Christ, and not for legitimate causes of immoral or overtly subversive behavior. The author of Second Peter incidentally reflects a similar concern here.

The way of truth will certainly be slandered, but let it not be for the immoral or self-indulgent practices of those who claim the name Christian. We may also find some reflection of this concern in both the letter's opening and in the author's careful construction of an answer to the rival teacher's criticism of the Christian belief in divine judgment in chapter 3. If the Christian faith suffers in the judgment of some people from being parochial or provincial, the author will demonstrate it to be, rather, in keeping with both the highest ideals of Greco-Roman ethics and with philosophical defenses of the belief in divine judgment. The concluding clauses of verse 3 in chapter 2 are particularly interesting, given the emphasis that will emerge in chapter 3 on the alleged delay of divine judgment, which Epicurus and those of his school regarded as a sign that the gods do not, in fact, concern themselves with human injustice.

The author makes a point of affirming twice that the personified judgment of these rival teachers is neither lazy nor nodding off. If God has not yet cut off the rival teachers, it is for one purpose alone, to make room for them to repent, to embrace the whole of the genuine gospel, and to live in line with the trajectory that began with their cleansing from past sins by the costly sacrifice of Jesus, and that moves in the direction of God's recreation of heavens and earth, in which only righteousness will have a home. The author begins to refute the rival teacher's assertion that God does not intervene to judge and punish by revisiting episodes from sacred history that demonstrate otherwise.

He looks to the destruction of the ancient world and its inhabitants in the flood, and to the conflagration of Sodom as historical examples that prove God's concern with human injustice and God's commitment to intervene to bring it to an end. These examples, however, also serve as historical precedents in support of the Jewish scriptural and apostolic conviction that God will intervene again in the future to judge all unrighteousness and eliminate it from God's new creation. This is in keeping with the general principle of logic articulated by Aristotle in his *Art of Rhetoric* that, as a rule, the future resembles the past, and that it is by examination of the past that we divine and judge the future.

These precedents, therefore, make the confession, Christ will come again, or he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, credible. And so we hear in chapter 2, verses 4 to 10. For if God did not spare angels who sinned, but consigning them to Tartarus in chains of darkness, handed them over to be kept for judgment, and did not spare the ancient world, bringing the flood upon the world of the ungodly, but guarded the eight who belonged to Noah, the preacher of righteousness, and reducing the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, condemned them to ruin, setting them up as an example of what was to come upon the ungodly, but rescued righteous Lot who was grieved by the shameless conduct of the lawless.

For that righteous man dwelling among them day after day tormented his righteous soul by the sight and report of their lawless deeds. Then the Lord knows how to rescue pious people from trial and to keep unjust people under punishment for the day of judgment. And all the more those going after the flesh in polluted desire and despising authority.

The author invokes the example of the transgressing angels, now linked more closely to the great flood, and the example of Sodom also found in *Jude*, verses 5 to 7, omitting *Jude's* mention of the Exodus generation. He introduces, however, the positive counterparts to these episodes of judgment, namely the deliverance of Noah and his family from the flood, and the deliverance of Lot from the city of Sodom. This double emphasis suits the author's goal not merely of undermining the rival teachers, but also of promoting the audience's ongoing commitment to pursuing righteousness, the course that he had laid out in chapter 1, verses 3 to 11, that results in deliverance from the coming judgment that he will discuss in chapter 3, verses 1 to 15.

The wayward angels and the flood are closely connected in *Genesis*. The whole episode of the flood story is prefaced with the brief and tantalizing reference to the angels who mated with human females in *Genesis* 6:1 to 4, a connection nurtured in Second Temple Jewish literature as well. In the *Genesis Apocryphon*, a text found in the caves surrounding Qumran, for example, Lamech fears that his abnormally beautiful son Noah might not be his, but rather the result of one of the angels having intercourse with Lamech's wife.

In other texts, the flood is said to have been necessitated particularly by the evils that those angels introduced to and acted upon by human beings. It was quite natural, therefore, for our author to associate the angelic watchers both with the flood and with Noah as a positive counterpart, testifying to God's protection of the righteous person in the midst of judging the ungodly. It is interesting that our author calls Noah a preacher of righteousness.

There is no indication in the Genesis narrative that Noah tried to witness to or reform his neighbors, but Second Temple period expansions of the story portray him in this way. In the first sibling oracle, for example, God commissions Noah to proclaim repentance to all the peoples so that all may be saved. And Josephus, in his paraphrase of the biblical story, says that Noah was very uneasy at what they did, and being displeased at their conduct, urged them to change their dispositions and their acts for the better.

This tradition may push against tendencies to be concerned only with the in-group's deliverance, reminding them of their duty, like Noah, to bear witness to God's righteousness and to invite their neighbors to safety in the face of God's judgment. As Jude did in regard to the interlopers of concern to him, the author of Second Peter now launches into an all-out vituperation of the character and motives of the rival teachers. Presumptuous and arrogant persons, they do not shudder to slander glorious beings, whereas angels greater than them in strength and power do not bear a railing judgment against them before the Lord.

But these people, like beasts without reason that operate on instinct and are conceived only to be captured and destroyed, slandering in regard to things in which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their corruption, experiencing wrong as the reward for wrongdoing. Considering banqueting in the daytime to be a pleasure, blots and blemishes reveling in their tricks as they feast together with you, ever on the lookout for an adulteress, never resting from sin, enticing unstable souls, having hearts well exercised in greed, they are children of a curse. Leaving behind the straight path, they have wandered off, following in the way of Balaam, son of Bosor, who loved the reward of wrongdoing.

But he experienced rebuke for his own transgression. An inarticulate donkey, expressing itself in a human voice, hindered the madness of the prophet. If indeed the author of 2 Peter is, as most scholars believe, using Jude as a resource, it is particularly interesting to note that he avoids any mention of the strange episode of the angelic dispute over Moses' corpse, even as he will omit the recitation of 1 Enoch, verse 9, as a testimony to divine judgment.

This has been understood to signal either his own lack of enthusiasm for such extra-canonical works or, perhaps more likely, his audience's lack of familiarity with such works and traditions. If, as most scholars believe, the author of 2 Peter is addressing a congregation somewhere in the area where the Pauline and Petrine missions overlap, they would be far removed from extra-canonical works and traditions that had currency in Palestine, and thus it would be more confusing than advantageous to invoke those traditions in this letter. Nevertheless, the author retains the charge that the rival teachers are speaking slanderously of spiritual beings who are higher up on the ladder of creation than humans.

In what sense they were doing this remains unclear, but a denial of the authority of angels or demons over human existence would seem to go along with a denial of the involvement of God himself in human affairs. They might indeed have asserted their freedom by speaking contemptuously of those spirit beings that their more superstitious audiences had been taught to respect. The audience might be expected to recall the episode from Zechariah 3, verses 1 to 6, in which Michael responds to Satan with, The Lord rebuke you, as in Jude, but no longer with the potentially confusing baggage of the story of Moses' corpse.

The author undermines the rival teachers' philosophical pretensions by claiming that they are, in fact, operating on the level of brute animals and not enlightened human beings. This shows through in their indulgence in food and drink, their alleged desire for sexual trysts, and the greed or acquisitiveness that motivates all that they do. The ultra-rich and the leisure class might indulge in their feasting and drinking bouts at all hours of the day and on successive days and nights, but in general, such self-indulgent indolence during daylight hours was considered degenerate.

Isaiah had already condemned such people, committed as they were to pleasure and not to God's work. The Testament of Moses, a product of the first century AD, also uses this trait to characterize the ungodly. Deceitful people, pleasing only themselves, false in every way imaginable, loving feasts at any hour of the day, devouring gluttonously.

The line that I had rendered rather freely as, ever on the lookout for an adulteress, was more transparently, having an eye full of an adulteress. This obscure expression seems to assume some knowledge of the fact that the pupils of the eyes were called in Greek the korei, or the maidens. Plutarch, writing in the late first or early second century, recites what appears to have been a contemporary proverb speaking of the lustful man who has pornei, prostitutes, rather than korei, maidens in his eyes.

The person who does not make this connection would still get the point. These teachers are on the prowl. Leaving aside Jude's references to Cain and Korah, our author focuses on Balaam's story, and he does so in regard to the better-known episode of Balaam's encounter with the angel of the Lord sent to cut him down before he could carry out his task of cursing God's people.

This episode is found in Numbers 22, verses 15 to 35. To Balaam's credit, he did not want to go to Balak, king of Moab, when summoned by him. Even when he eventually relented, he told the messengers that he could only speak the words that God put in his mouth, whether for blessing or curse.

On the way to Moab, however, the angel of the Lord stood in Balaam's path three times to kill him. Each time, the donkey that Balaam was riding turned aside from the path or finally just lay down in the road. When struck yet again by Balaam, the donkey spoke and called his attention to the fearsome angel in front of them, and Balaam's eyes were opened at last to the danger from which the donkey had saved him.

In a similar manner, the author implies, these rival teachers, while pretending to have genuine knowledge about things divine, are blind to the dangers that lie right before them on the road, the impending judgment of God that they themselves deny. The author continues his denunciation of these rival teachers, asserting the danger that they pose to the unwary, but also the danger they pose to themselves. To have known the redemption and the new life that Christ has provided, and then to turn back to embrace facets of that life from which he redeemed us at such cost to himself, leaves us in a worse state than those who have never experienced Christ's benefits.

These people are waterless springs and mists driven by gales for whom the gloom of darkness is reserved. For speaking empty, haughty things, they entice with shameless

desires of the flesh those who are actually escaping from those who conduct themselves in error. While promising them freedom, they are themselves slaves of corruption.

For by that which anyone has overcome, to that he or she has become enslaved. For if, while fleeing from the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again overcome, being tangled up in these things, their latter condition has become worse than the former. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having come to know it, to turn away again from the holy commandment handed down to them.

That which was articulated in the true proverb has befallen them, a dog returning to its own vomit and a pig cleaned up to wallow in the mud. Once again, we hear strong resonances with Jude's letter, for example, in the claim that the rival teachers have nothing substantial to offer as dried-up springs. Our author, however, introduces the danger that people face who, after knowing God's favor, refuse it and the holiness to which God calls us in favor of self-serving practices.

Such an emphasis was anticipated in the opening paragraph, where failure to move forward in the new life of virtue and holiness amounts to forgetting our cleansing from past sins. In chapter 2, verse 19, the author comes to a critical point, drawing a contrast between the freedom that the rival teachers following in Epicurus's footsteps promised their hearers and the far more shameful slavery under which these teachers labor, slavery to their desires and passions. He touches here on a well-known philosophical topic, namely, what constitutes genuine freedom and what constitutes genuine slavery.

One thinks, for example, of Philo of Alexandria's treatise, that every good person is free, or Diocrystus' 14th and 15th orations on freedom and slavery. In both, we read that genuine freedom is not licensed to do whatever one has a desire to do, even as genuine slavery is not a matter of social status. Rather, genuine freedom is the ability not to be driven in one or another direction by one's emotions, cravings, or physical sensations.

It is the freedom not to be coerced into performing any base or vicious act by any impulse. Genuine slavery, by contrast, is the opposite, being driven by one's lower desires into shameful behaviors contrary to the universally prized ideals of justice, courage, wisdom, and temperance. The rival teachers have perverted the good news of Christ in such a way as makes room for them to continue to make room for serving the passions of their flesh, to borrow a phrase from Paul.

In so doing, they have forfeited the genuine freedom that the gospel was intended to bring to human beings. Any who allow themselves to be persuaded by these rival teachers, of course, run the same risk. And the risk is not small.

It is not a return to square one, according to the author, for to spurn God's gracious provisions of life and piety, a topic with which our author opened his letter, is a far worse offense than to have remained ignorant of and never to have experienced the same, because it entails an intentionally made value judgment as the Exodus generation would have put it, better to enjoy the provisions of the flesh pots in Egypt than continue journeying on with God toward the land of promise. It is at this point in his letter that Jude

had introduced the quotation from 1 Enoch 1.9, regarding God's coming in judgment with tens of thousands of his holy ones.

Our author eliminates this reference in favor of material more central to the Jewish and Christian tradition. The first, their latter condition has become worse than the former, recalls a saying of Jesus known from Matthew 12, verses 43 to 45. When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but it finds none.

Then it says, I will return to my house from which I came. When it comes, it finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there.

And the last state of that person is worse than the first. So will it be also with this evil generation. The author of 2 Peter appears to have interpreted this parable in line with the person who had been delivered by Christ in a salvific and ethical sense, but then allowed his or her old life to take hold of him or her once more, as have the rival teachers.

The second resource is a maxim that comes more straightforwardly from Proverbs, where the fool who returns to his or her self-defeating practices is compared to the dog that returns to re-ingest its own vomit, that is, that which had earlier already proven itself unwholesome. To this is added yet another maxim, readily derived from animal husbandry, which teaches that there's little point in giving a pig a bath. Receiving God's favor, entering into the life, really setting out on the evacuation route that God has made available through Jesus' death and through the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, carries with it and lays upon us the obligation so to live now as to show that we know and honor the value of what we have been given.

For our author, this means consistently living along the trajectory that our cleansing from past sins for the righteousness that will find a home in the kingdom of God's beloved Son has set us on. To fail to do so, to depart from this straight path, should be unthinkable for those who have tasted and seen that the Lord is good and that the life that he gives is good.