



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

2 Peter 2:17-22

Lesson 7

Spring 2020

"Rivers Of Water"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Seth, and good morning to all of you. It's good to be with you virtually, and we do look forward to very soon opening back up and having pews filled with people. But we are happy to be together, at least in this way, and continue our studies in 2 Peter. We've been in chapter 2, and we are going to finish up chapter 2 this morning with verses 17 through 22. You'll remember, Peter is speaking about false teachers, has had some very hard words for them, and it continues with verse 17,

"These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. For speaking out arrogant *words* of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A dog returns to its own vomit," and "A sow, after washing, *returns* to wallowing in the mire."

2 Peter 2: 17-22

Serious words. May the Lord bless this reading of His Word to our edification. Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

Father, again we thank you for this time together. It's a great privilege to join together in a time of study and worship. And even though it is unusual, as we mention most every week, nevertheless, we thank you for the technological situation that allows us to do this. And I pray that that would go unhindered this morning, and that we would be able to, at least in this way, be joined together in this fellowship, in this study, and in this time of worship together.

And I pray that the Spirit of God would be in all of this, that He would guide and direct those of us who speak this morning, and that He would open the hearts of all who listen, that we might listen with discernment and that the truths of this passage would be applied to our hearts, and that it would take root, and You would give us discernment and wisdom. That's certainly what Peter is calling for, and what he's instructing, to achieve that we would be a discerning people. Because there is danger out there, and we need to be able to understand that, and recognize it, and avoid it. So Lord, bless us spiritually and build us up in the faith.

There is a lot of negative material here, but there is from that positive truth that we gain from it, and I pray that You would encourage us with the things that we will study this morning. Bless us spiritually. Build us up in the faith. We need that fundamentally.

And Lord, we need Your protection physically, as well. We pray that You would give that to all of us, that as long as we are in this pandemic, that You would keep us safe. There are dangers all around us; they are innumerable. They are in the air; they are on the road; they are in the neighborhood. They are everywhere, more than we realize. And the reality is, You are protecting us far more than we realize, and we give You praise and thanks for that. And we pray that You would continue to bless us, protect us from the air we breathe and from the nefarious characters that are out there. That You would protect us from that and that You would bless our land with peace and order,

understanding and mercy. We look to You to bless in the material things of life as well, particularly for ourselves. And we pray that for our health as well. Keep us safe and keep us with our minds focused on You with gratitude for what You do for us every moment.

Economically, Lord, the country is opening up: We've had some good signs in terms of business, and I pray that that would continue. I pray this morning, as I have in the past, that You'd bless the men of this congregation who own businesses, that You would prosper them and bring those businesses back. I pray for the men and the women who are working and those who perhaps have lost their job, we pray that You would give them patience and open up an opportunity for them, and give them work and employment. And preserve the jobs of those who have them that they may continue to work and provide for themselves and their families.

Lord, we go through trials, and ultimately, they are from Your hand. And we may not understand them at the moment, and they may cause us great distress in the moment, but You'll bring us through those. We must rest in that; You are sovereign God and there's great practicality to understanding the truth of Your Word. Some of it may seem obscure to us, "theoretical". But it's not just theoretical: The sovereignty of God is a great, great truth that has great practical benefit to everyone of us. And one thing it does it allows us to rest in You and be patient and know that You will bless. So, Lord, we pray that You would cultivate that within the hearts of each and every one of us.

And we pray that You now bless us, Lord, as we turn to Your Word and to this text of Scripture. Give us the lesson that Peter intends for us to have as well as the encouragement that he intends for us. May we look to You and find that. So Lord, we look to You to bless us now, guide us in our thinking. And then bless us at the end of the hour as we continue in worship with the Lord's Supper. We look to You to bless, now, Father, in Christ's name. Amen.

Isaiah has been called the fifth evangelist—the other four being Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And we can see why the prophet is called that from passages like Isaiah 55, verse 1. There he cries out, "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters." "Water", of course, is "life". And he is saying, "Come and get life." - That's the Gospel.

That's the Good News. Then he said, "He who has no money, come, buy!" Buy without money, which is the way of saying, "It's free. It's God's gift." That's the Good News. Isaiah was the fifth evangelist.

Seven and a half centuries later, Jesus stood up in the temple and cried out in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink." (Jn 7:37). What a statement! Isaiah said, "Come to the waters." Jesus was very personal and said, "Come to Me and drink." He is "the waters" that Isaiah prophesied. He is the source of eternal life. All who want life and want forgiveness, all who want to be clean and refreshed are to come to Christ and receive it. It can't be bought or earned. Only received. That's the Gospel proclaimed by the prophets and apostles, the message of Christ. It is about grace, free grace, God's free gift.

But it was not long after the Lord's resurrection and ascension into heaven that different versions of the Gospel began circulating in the churches. — False gospels. That's the reason Peter wrote this second epistle, to expose the danger. False teachers were in the churches, talking about "waters" different from what Isaiah and Christ described.

So Peter wrote to alert Christians—to wake them up! He did that with some strong language. A British commentator called the chapter, "Peter's violent and colorfully expressed tirade." Tirade is over the top. —It wasn't that. But he was angry, and rightly so. The men he was describing were aggressive opponents of the truth and the life-giving Gospel. So when reading this chapter, it is necessary to remember who Peter was writing about. He's not describing unbelievers in general, men of the world, pagans, and criticizing their morality. He is not describing Christian ministers or believers who have drifted spiritually and fallen into sin. That is a danger for all of us. We're warned of it. But it's not the warning here.

Rather he was warning of apostates in the church, of wolves in sheep's clothing, men who profess to be Christians, but are not. Men who are seeking to draw people after them and away from the faith, and into their vices. These men are not just

confused or weak and in need of correction—They are clear minded and calculating. Peter described them as “enticing unstable souls.” They are men who forsook the right way, the straight way. Today they occupy the pulpits of churches and the faculties of seminaries and universities. Paul called them “deceitful workers”, “Satan's ministers”. Peter calls them “dogs” and “pigs”. It's colorful language, but it is all fair and accurate. They were polluting the pure waters of the Gospel—and poisoning the well.

So all through chapter 2, Peter has been unmasking them. He's already exposed their false teaching, their bad character, and their certain judgment. Now he continues in verse 17 with a description of the emptiness of their teaching. Maybe they had been saying something like, "Come to the waters. We've got them. Truth that will refresh and free." But Peter wrote in verse 17, "These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved." “Springs without water” promise much, but don't deliver anything. That would be disappointing to anyone.

Water is essential for life everywhere in the world; in a wet climate as well as a dry one. But this description was especially meaningful for Peter's readers and those traveling in the arid east, through the Syrian desert or living in other barren regions of the Middle East. It would not only be a disappointment to come to a well, expecting to find water, and then find nothing—it would be deadly. That's what these false teachers were for all who came to them for answers.

Truth is life, spiritually. And like water, it brings refreshment and vigor to the soul. It's what nourishes us spiritually. And these “men of the cloth”, these “ministers” claimed to have it. And maybe they spoke of “living water”, quoting Jesus in John, chapter 4, and used all of the right words. But they had no real water, no real spiritual water—Just a false promise. They were “springs without water”. They were like a mirage out on the desert. It looks like water. It appears to be a source of refreshment and life. And then, when one approaches it—it vanishes. It's all an illusion.

That's what they were. Peter says, They “are mists driven by a storm.” They are ephemeral, fleeting, momentary. There's not much to a mist—and that's true of heretics, whether in religious cults or liberal theology. They talk of God, but not the God

of the Bible. They talk of life and ethics and Christ, but not according to the Scripture. It may seem new and novel, and it may gain a following, but it soon becomes passé and fades.

One of the commentators, Michael Green, wrote, "You have only to visit a second-hand theological bookshop, with its piles of unsaleable rubbish, (once the latest things in theological audacity), to see the force of this." Back in the 1960s there was Joseph Fletcher, and his "Situational Ethics", and Thomas Altizer with the "God is Dead" theology. You rarely hear those names anymore. They are "mists driven by a storm." They are transient, like a mist that a storm blows away—Just a vapor. But while it's there it obscures like the fog or haze. They don't enlighten—they darken.

But they will be removed in judgment, as by a storm that drives them away. I think of the statement in Psalm 1, verse 4 about the wicked, "They are like chaff which the wind drives away." And the wind will drive this mist away with storm and wrath. And then the darkness they caused will be replaced by the darkness they experience, because Peter says, "They have been reserved for the black darkness." Not just darkness, but the "black darkness". Now that is poetic justice. That is a "*lex talionis*", the law of equal and just retribution. The man who gave darkness will get darkness, the eternal darkness.

The reason for their retribution is given in verse 18: They seek to entrap God's people. They speak arrogantly and they entice people by sensuality. They speak with confidence and authority. They may be intelligent, (they probably are), and may even have academic degrees from fine schools that give the appearance of credibility. But they don't have truth. Their words are described as vanity. And that will be clear, very clear to those who can measure their teaching by the Word of God. That is our standard, and that really is our only standard.

The ones they catch, the ones they snare in their net don't do that. They don't have that grounding in the Word of God, so they are naïve. Peter says, "They entice... those who barely escape from the ones who live in error." So these people are, at best, new believers. They have just escaped from that world of unbelief. So they are naïve.

They don't know much. And because they don't know much, and they don't have much understanding, and don't have much wisdom at all, they are vulnerable.

Now they may not be actual Christians. I say that because of the grammar. The participle "escape" may indicate that. It's in the present tense, suggesting that they are in the process of fleeing. So maybe they haven't quite escaped paganism, but the instruction and the warning that Peter gives here, the danger that he is posing here, is for the church. And it is for true believers who can be naïve and can be gullible.

That's the reason Peter is giving the church the warning. The church has an obligation to take care of new believers, those who have recently "escaped". They are vulnerable. And at the same time, it's incumbent on new believers to get into the Word of God, and not just to study the Word of God, but to be in fellowship with other believers and in that community of the redeemed. That's the warning Peter is giving. These guys are out there, and these guys are dangerous. They're out to get you, to draw the immature into fleshly sins. So they try to lure them into that by appealing to their weakness.

One way they entice people is to promise them liberty. That's the example Peter gives in verse 19, "promising them freedom", while they themselves are slaves of corruption. Now that's a cherished word, isn't it? —Freedom. We all want that. And it truly is a great promise. It's what Christ promises. "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." John, chapter 8, verse 32. —That's true.

But just before that Jesus said, "If you continue in My word." It is the truth of God's Word, it is faith in it, which basically, essentially, is faith in Christ as God's eternal Son, that gives freedom. And that is not the freedom that these men promised. They're sensualists. So you know what they're promising—freedom from moral restraint, from the struggle and the fear of judgment.

The Christian life is a life of freedom. It is a life of joy. It is a life of peace. But it is also a life of struggle. It is a battle. It's not easy. Paul speaks of it in 1 Corinthians, chapter 9, verses 26 and 27. He speaks of it in many places, but there he speaks of it in athletic terms. He speaks of running, and he says he doesn't run without aim, and he

says, "I don't box the air." So you have these sporting events, these kind of Olympic events, that Paul must have had in his mind. And the Panhellenic games were there in Corinth, and so they would have been very familiar with this. And so he speaks in athletic terms, and speaks of running. But he's not just running. He's running with a goal, and he's boxing with a target. Everything is directed in a certain way, but he expresses it in the most exhilarating kind of terms: Running and boxing. And he says he disciplines his body and makes it his slave.

That's the Christian life. It involves effort that's not easy. And oftentimes people are looking for an excuse to quit the struggle, because we know we have besetting sins. All of us do. And we're told by the author of Hebrews to set all that aside and run the race, looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, (12:1). But that's a difficult, challenging thing, and how much easier to just stop and not have to struggle and strain.

We do so by the grace of God, but nevertheless there is that responsibility to do so. And so these men come along, giving some theological rationale for giving up on this disciplined life. They encouraged people to relax rather than exercise, to indulge the flesh rather than discipline it. The apostles promised freedom *from* sin, and these men are promising freedom *to* sin.

We are free. It's one of the great truths of the New Testament: We are free. Romans 8, verse 2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death." Romans, chapter 6, verse 6, "Our old self was crucified...so that we would no longer be slaves to sin." The power of sin has been broken in the Christian. We are new creatures in Christ. We have new abilities, we have a new nature, we have the Spirit of God within us. Our hearts have been sealed with Him. This power of sin that held us in its grip has been broken.

But that power is still present. We still have sin in us. Paul speaks of that in Romans 7, and he speaks of it in terms of a principle or a law, "the law of sin". And it's the struggle that we have. And he speaks very clearly about that struggle. And he does so in Galatians, chapter 5, in verse 17, of the battle of the flesh and the Spirit. It is a

constant battle. And we must be constantly joining the battle. And we have the power in the Holy Spirit, the power to fight and discipline our bodies and act wisely.

So Paul said, "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.", Galatians 5, verse 16. The book of Galatians is about Christian freedom. But earlier, in Galatians 5, verse 13, after saying that they were "called to freedom", Paul warns them "not to turn their freedom into an opportunity for the flesh", and to an excuse to sin. That's what the false teachers were urging them to do. But in doing that, they actually lost freedom. They "are slaves of corruptions", Peter says, "For by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved." Sin brings about slavery.

Peter may actually have in mind the custom of a victorious general taking a defeated army as slaves in chains and making a parade of them. That was a great privilege given to a Roman general by the emperor. They would take this parade of conquered soldiers and generals and the king and the rulers and parade them through the streets of Rome and through the Roman Forum with all the treasures that they had collected. And so maybe that is what Peter is thinking of here. If so, he gave a very familiar picture to show that an abuse of freedom results in loss of freedom.

Freedom is not the ability to do right or wrong, rather it is the ability to always do right. We know that from what we know about God. He is sinless. He can't sin. It is impossible for Him to lie, we're told in Titus chapter 1, verse 2, and Hebrews chapter 6, in verse 18. It's impossible for Him to deny Himself. It is impossible for Him to sin or do wrong. He is sinless. But He's free. —Absolutely free. So the closer we come to Him, the more freedom we will enjoy. Likewise, the farther people go from Him, the greater their slavery.

These false teachers, at one time, approached the truth. They came close to it and believed in the orthodoxy...at least they professed to have believed. Then they rejected it. That's how they're described in verse 20. "For if, after having escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first." At one time they responded to the Gospel. They moved away from

paganism; what Peter calls the “defilements of the world.” The Greek word for “defilements” is *miasma*. We have that same word in English. A *miasma* is a foul-smelling swamp emitting poisonous vapors. Now that's more than the Greek word means; it's just “defilements.” But it certainly gives a picture of what these men came from. They emerged from the swamp of the world, with all of its poisonous ideas and practices, by means of the Gospel. They got “the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” They learned about Him, and they gave intellectual assent to the Gospel. And they came near to the people of God. They became part of the congregation, claimed to embrace the truth as orthodox men, and cleaned up their lives. It was a moral reformation, but not a real transformation, not actual rebirth and real faith.

And time proved that—they apostatized. They rejected the Gospel that they claimed to have embraced. Then they sank back into the swamp of unbelief. “They are again entangled in them and are overcome...”, Peter says. Their experience resulted in nothing more than temporary change—Reform, then return. They didn't lose their salvation—they never had it. Grace never took root in their lives. Grace never worked in their lives. And they are not uncommon. It's the parable of the wheat and tares in Matthew 13. Hebrews, chapter 6, verses 4 through 6 speaks of those who were once “enlightened” and then have “fallen away.”

Simon Magus is a man like that, in Acts chapter 8. He showed initial enthusiasm for the Gospel. He seemed to walk with Phillip the evangelist—for a while. And then he fell away when he sought to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit from the apostle Peter. He never really believed in Christ, and he left.

Judas is maybe the best example. He walked with Christ for three, three and a half years and was close to Him. He went out preaching the Gospel; he even cast out demons—but was not genuine. And Jesus knew this all along. In John, chapter 6, verse 70, when the crowds had been blessed with the miracle of the feeding of the 5000, (meaning probably the 15 or 20,000 when the women and children are added in), when that happened and then Christ resisted the crowd who wanted to make Him king and feed them that way every day, and they disappeared, He asked the disciples, "Are you

not going to leave, also?" And Peter makes a great statement of faith, "No. You are the one that has words of eternal life." And He accepts that confession, but then He does state, "One of you is a devil." And He knew who that was. He knew about Judas and knew the condition of his heart.

Well, that's a great example of these men. So what happens? People come close to the truth, and then, in time, they disappear. They go away. And it was because of that, people like that, that John wrote 1 John. And in 1 John, chapter 2, in verse 19 he speaks of these men. He says of them, "They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us." This was the disruption that happened in whatever the church was that John wrote to, perhaps the church in Ephesus, and this group had gone out. And they left the congregation disillusioned and wondering, are they right or are we right? What is happening here? And John explains what's happening. They went out from us, but they were not really of us. They were among believers, acting like believers, but weren't believers. And time proved that. Eventually they left. "If they had been of us", John said, "they would have remained with us."

Peter says that, "the last state (*of these people*), is worse for them than the first." Now why is that? Well certainly because the greater the knowledge that is rejected, the greater the guilt. But also, (and I think this is probably more to the point), their last state is worse because they had become inoculated against the truth by the truth. Inoculation is injecting a mild form of a disease, (like smallpox), into the body to boost the immune system against the disease. Well truth does that, too. If people don't respond to the Gospel, it inoculates them against it—hardens them in their unbelief so that they resist the truth.

Hebrews, chapter 6, verse 6 says, "It is impossible to renew them again to repentance." Peter explains that in verse 21. "For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them."

Peter ends his condemnation of these men with two proverbs, which colorfully describe their condition. The first one is from Proverbs 26:11. It's a Hebrew proverb. The

second may be a Gentile saying. It's happened to them according to the true proverb, "A dog returns to its own vomit, and a sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire."

Wow, that takes me back. I have a history with dogs, pretty long history. There's Jack and Max and Knox. I loved those dogs. Scottish terriers. But they are dogs. —They were. You could take them to obedience school. You could take them to the groomer and have them bathed and clipped and made all fluffy. Yet when they came home, they were dogs, - and they did some icky stuff, dog stuff, what Peter's talking about here. That's these men.

They had an experience of moral reform, not spiritual regeneration. They'd been "to the groomers". They'd had a bath. But they were just dogs. They made some interchanges in their thoughts, and outer changes in behavior, but only temporarily. They changed things about their lives but remained fundamentally unchanged. Just as a dog never stops being a dog, and a pig never stops being a pig, these were still unregenerate men and they returned to that unregenerate life.

They are like the demon possessed man that Jesus described in Matthew 12, who was exercised of one demon. And as a result he cleaned up his life, only to end up with seven more demons, seven times as terrible. Jesus said, "...and the last state of the man became worse than the first. (vs45). And being moral without being regenerated, without salvation, is worse, because it is self-righteousness, not true righteousness.

These men never changed. They only became harder in their unbelief and behavior. And Peter's examples here are appropriate for these men. We love dogs. We have dogs as our pets and all. But in the early days, in the days that Peter wrote, dogs were rarely pets. They were not often domesticated. They were usually pariahs, and they would roam the streets of cities in packs, and they lived as scavengers. They were really dangerous animals.

And that's how Peter describes the false teachers. They are like unreasoning animals. Animals live by instinct. And so do these individuals. They call the life they live "freedom". But the real nature of it is not freedom at all. It is only slavery. And not only

slavery, but shame. It's like swine wallowing in mud and filth. That's the spiritual reality. Their return to the muck and mire of the world, the moral *miasma* is their own choice. It's what they wanted.

At the same time, it is God's judgment on them. He lets them go their own way. They want freedom to sin, so He doesn't restrain them. He gives them over to their own corrupt desires, as in Romans, chapter 1, verses 24 through 26. He lets them go their own way and withholds grace. And apart from His grace, we are in the same condition as those men, going our own way, lost and doomed.

We are what we are, as Christians; we stand as we do as the people of God only, only by God's good grace. We are debtors to mercy alone. Now, if we understand the truth of that, if the gravity of it really sinks in, that should produce gratitude, and galvanize obedience in us. It's only the good grace of God that blesses us and keeps us the kind of people we are, as true believers, and keeps us believing.

If you're a believer in Christ, God has given you, given us, light and life. We are to live life in that light and beware of those who would lead us away from it. That's Peter's interest here. He's warning us that the danger is out there, the danger is real. We must avoid false teachers and their false Christs, and their false gospels. The true believer will do that. False professors won't.

But I think this also has broad application for us, because if false teachers aren't around, and they're not trying to draw us away, then the world certainly is. The spirit of the age certainly is, and its appeal is very strong for us, as it is for all people. It was for Israel. A generation after Isaiah invited the people to "come to the waters", Jeremiah said, "The people had forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters, and made for themselves cisterns." (2:13). But then he says that they were "broken cisterns", so that they couldn't hold the water they caught.

Whenever people follow a way contrary to the Lord, or to God's word, what they "make" won't hold water. They are nothing more than mirages on the desert, that promise refreshment, but are only an illusion. Only Christ has life and offers life. So, in

John 7, we read that He stood up in the temple on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, and He cried out saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink." (vs37).

What Christ is saying is "I am the water of life." Just as pure water satisfies the thirsty and gives physical life, so to, He gives eternal life to the tired, lost soul. He gives eternal life because He died a death of eternal value, when He became a sacrifice for sinners, as the God-man on the cross, bearing their sin in their place. And in doing that, He finished the work of salvation. "It is finished," He said. There's nothing more to do. All a person must do is drink. That's the offer. Drink, which means believe. Receive. He has come into our life when we do that. He comes into our life and refreshes us and cleanses us, gives us new life. He transforms us.

That's what He says next. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water." (vs38). He was speaking of the Holy Spirit there. In other words, the Holy Spirit, who lives in the believer, will make him or her a source of blessing to others, able to rescue others from error and calamity with help, with wise counsel, and most importantly, as we invite people to come to the waters. Who knows what influence you may have on others now, by living with purity, like Christ, being Christ to them, and speaking the truth to them in love, influencing people now, and perhaps even for generations to come. That's how wide your influence may be.

Books have been written about the plateau in Southern France, where descendants of the Huguenots live, and the Plymouth Brethren, Protestants, who protected Jews from the Nazis in the Second World War. Sheltering strangers was their Calvinistic heritage. So, when Jewish children came to the plateau seeking help, they took them in, and they saved thousands of lives. It has been called a culture of selflessness. Well, that culture goes back to the Gospel. And that's the power of the Gospel. Like rivers of water, it influences generations long after those original believers are gone. And that's what Christ makes us through the gospel of grace alone. Through it,

He comes into our lives and transforms us, and influences those around us, and even those yet to come, people that you and I don't even know, and won't know.

So if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, be that. —Live the Gospel. Let flow from your innermost being rivers of living water. And if you have not believed in Christ, you may think that you're alive, and that you're well, and you're not thirsty. But the reality is, you are dying of thirst. In fact, you are spiritually dead, and you don't even know it. Don't believe the lies of this age. Don't believe your heart. No, believe the Word of God. Look to Christ. Take His offer. Come to Him and drink. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and live, you will live forever. God help you to do that and help all of us who have to truly rejoice in what the Lord has done for us and live as channels of living water to those around us. Let's bow in a word of prayer and ask the Lord to bless these things to our hearts and our understanding. And also now prepare us for the taking of the Lord's Supper. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for this text of scripture. We've covered a few of them in this study of ours in 2 Peter. They're difficult passages in that Peter is not giving us the kind of encouraging truth on the face of it, at least, that we come to the Scriptures for. He's giving us warnings, and they're dire warnings. And he's doing so because he knew the danger that was out there, and knew what was happening, and needed to warn people of it. And we need these warnings at times, and we need to be aware of them and take heed to them. So I pray, Lord, You'd apply all of this to our hearts. Make us wise men and women to know that we must repair to the Scriptures. We must go to the Word of God continually. We must feed upon it, and not just read it, but read it with understanding. Give us that. Give us a hunger for it, give us an understanding of it, build us up in the faith, make us mature men and women that we would serve You faithfully and be a help to those around us.

We thank you for Your grace. We thank you for Your Son, for sending Him into the world that He would die for us. It was Your plan. You sent Your Son, He willingly

came, and went to the cross for the joy set before Him. So Father, we thank you for that. Lord Jesus, we thank you for that. We're grateful to the Holy Spirit for quickening us and bring us to a knowledge of that.

And now, Lord, as we celebrate that death that obtained salvation for every believer, we pray that You'd prepare our hearts for that, and that it would be a time of edification and sanctification and being built up in the faith. Help us to remember, we pray. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

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