

Slaked Slakers 2

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[0 : 0 0] This morning I'd like us to turn back to John chapter 7. So although we read from Galatians 5 and I'll be referring to Galatians 5, we're actually going back to John chapter 7, which was the chapter that we were looking at last week, which is one of many chapters, one of the several chapters that we have in the middle of John which record long discussions that Jesus has with people who are following him. And often these discussions are centered on people who are becoming more offended by what Jesus is saying. Let me read again verse 37. In John chapter 7 Jesus has come down to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. People are kind of discussing about Jesus' summer scene. He's good summer scene. No summer scene. Maybe he's the Messiah summer scene. Maybe not. There's all this kind of like intrigue and questions and controversy. The religious leaders are looking on saying he's not, he's not the Messiah. He's not somebody that we should be listening to. In verse 37 and 38 we read that on the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. We began looking at these verses last week under the title slaked slakers. Not slacker slakers. Slake is a word that you've maybe not heard of but it's a very cool word. It means to have your thirst quenched. And so to be slaked is to have your thirst quenched. To be a slaker is to be a means through which other people can be slaked, through which their thirst can be quenched as well. And we're using this title because these verses that we have before us there, 37 and 38, are touching on two of the deepest cravings that we have as humans. As humans we long for our spiritual thirst to be slaked. And that was what we were looking at last week, how all of us long for things that are spiritual, that are not physical but are real. And that can show itself in many different ways. Last week we looked at seven, how we thirst for ultimate answers, about reality, about truth, about life and death, about time and eternity. We thirst for true justice. When we see something that's wrong in the world, we long for justice, whether we are hurt or whether we see people being brutally exploited by others. We thirst for unconditional compassion. So yes, while we long for justice at the same time, when we make mistakes, we are desperate for mercy and forgiveness. As we said last week, if you got pulled over for speeding this week, you wouldn't be thinking to yourself, oh, fantastic, justice is going to be done. You'll be thinking, oh, I hope that this is a compassionate police officer. We thirst for genuine friendship. We all need companionship, support, fellowship. We need other people in our lives. We thirst for lasting joy. So many things cause us sorrow in life. So many moments of happiness are far too short. We thirst for joy that will last. We thirst for deep healing, healing for our brokenness and ultimately healing and hope for a world that is in the grip of death. And most of all, we thirst for eternal love. Our thirst is not quenched when we conclude that love is just a happy coincidence in an otherwise meaningless world.

We know that love matters more than that. We know that love matters more than anything. And that's what makes death so agonizing because it breaks our deepest bonds of love that we have with others. And that's why we crave a love that is eternal, a love that not even death can take away. We thirst for these things. Jesus says, come to me and drink. And it's telling us that Jesus is the ultimate thirst quencher. All of these things, he is the one who gives us what we crave. And that's what we went through together last week.

And the amazing thing about Jesus is that he doesn't say, come to me and sip as though, you know, we come to Jesus and we just get this tiny bit of hope and truth. He doesn't say that he says, come to me and drink. And that means that we can come to him and we can keep on getting our thirst quenched. And so as we study God's word together each week, we are learning more and more of the glorious answers that he's giving to us, that we can learn more about the worldview, the philosophy that the biblical present, the Bible presents that actually makes sense of both the world around us and of everything that you know is true in your heart. We come to Jesus and we see that he is the one who administers impeccable justice. He reigns over everything. He is absolutely just and fair. And when he returns, every wrong will be put right. We come and we just marvel in the beauty of his extraordinary compassion. We see that, you know, you think of, you think of mucking up badly in your life tomorrow. And you might think of all the other people that you've got to kind of confront in the rest of the week, whether it's people you live with, people you work with, people in school, and you're so fearful of the hard time that they'll give you or the fact that they will judge you. You think, I have stuffed up. There are so many people who I think have the potential to be horrible to you. But on Sunday, I can go and hear about the one who will be compassionate to me. In fact, you don't even need to wait until Sunday. You could open his word there and then and know that Jesus will show you mercy. We have the astonishing privilege of his friendship, knowing Jesus and being united together in his family. We have the fullness of joy that only he can give that is just, I think, I think the Sam we sang first, where Sam 23 talks about that as a cup overflowing. That is the best description I have ever heard of the joy that Jesus gives. It's just like a cup overflowing. Your heart just overflows with joy. You don't feel like that all the time as a Christian, not at all. But when you do, oh man, it's good. It's so good. And you have hope of healing in Jesus that nothing can take away. And you have knowledge of his love that actually surpasses knowledge. You just come to know this love of Jesus that's actually bigger than anything that we can get our heads around. That is what that's what Christianity is about. That's what the Gospel is here to offer. That's the message that God is communicating. You can come to Jesus and be slaked.

And that is so good. It is so good. And that's why you will not find anybody who's come to know Jesus saying, oh, actually, you know, I wish I'd waited longer before I came to Jesus. Everyone who comes to Jesus is like, why did I not do this years ago? Jesus quenches our thirst. But today, I want us to look at the second half of our title, slakers. And this is arising what we have in the second part, the second verse, verse 38. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart, how his heart will flow rivers, no, rivers of living water. And you can see the twofold image that's been presented here. You know, we've been told to come and drink. So that's water going into us. But this language rivers flowing out of us. And so you've got the twofold image being presented here. And it's telling us something amazing about you. If you are a Christian, or if you become a

Christian, it's pointing us to the fact that when we come to Jesus, we don't just get our thirst quenched. We also become a channel of blessing into the lives of others. In other words, following Jesus doesn't just mean that we get what we need and we crave. We do get that. But that's that's only half the story. The other half is that following Jesus opens the door for us to be an amazing channel, a river of good that is poured into the lives of the people around us. Now, at a very basic level, that's just reminding us that our goal as Christians is always to be like Jesus. Now, that doesn't mean that we're identical to Jesus. I don't say come to Thomas Davis and drink, not at all. But it does mean that that that just as Jesus came for the benefit of others, so too, we can be the same. We can be the means through which the blessings that Jesus offers are channeled through us into the lives of the people around us. So if you think about well, if you imagine a well, only Jesus is the well where the water is, but we can be buckets. In fact, we can be the most beautiful buckets that the world has ever seen. So that's what's been pointed to here, the fact that through us, the first quenching message of Jesus can be shared. We can be slakers, the means through which other people can have their thirst quenched. How does that happen?

[10 : 32] How does that work? That's the question we need to ask. Well, all of this is tied in with the work of the Holy Spirit. And John explains that in the next verse. So Jesus is saying, if anyone thirsts to me, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. Now, John puts in a explanatory note.

Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive. For as yet, the Spirit had not been given because Jesus was not yet glorified. So that's what I want us to think about today, about how the work of the Holy Spirit makes us a channel through which rivers of river, rivers of living water can flow. If you are a Christian, or if you become one, it's a fundamental theological truth that God, the Holy Spirit comes into your heart.

That's a crucial aspect of what happens to us when we become believers. And yet it's one that we don't, I think we don't talk about or think about enough. John explains in verse 39, that that's a key part of redemptive history. So we're talking about redemptive history. We're talking about how God's plan of salvation has been worked out across history as it's unfolded in the Bible.

And what John explains to us here, you can see that this is all being referred to here in the explanatory note that comes in verses 38 to 39. John is saying, Jesus is talking about the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is the one who believers are going to receive, but they haven't received it yet, because the Holy Spirit's not yet been given, because Jesus is not yet glorified.

Okay, so what's all that explaining? It's saying that when Jesus is glorified in the death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit after that is going to be given. So at the moment when Jesus is speaking, we're still here in the ministry of Jesus leading up to the cross. Jesus dies in the cross, rises again. After that, after this glorifications take place, the Holy Spirit gets given, and all who believe in Him receive Him. That's how it works. And this ties in with what Jesus himself taught. In John 14, he speaks about how he is going to return to his Father after his resurrection. But he says that he's not going to leave his disciples on their own. He says, I will ask the Father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you.

[13 : 32] Jesus is saying, I'm not going to leave you on your own. I am sending my spirit. And that happens on the day of Pentecost. I won't read it out, but it's all recorded in Acts chapter 2. This is after Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension. The Holy Spirit is poured out on the church, fulfilling the prophecies of the Old Testament that God said He would pour His Spirit out on all flesh. And it means that if you are a Christian or if you become one, God, the Holy Spirit comes into your heart. And there's three crucial things that He is doing in your heart, if you're a Christian or if you become one. He has come to dwell in you. He has come to work on you. And He has come to do wonderful things through you. And I want to go through these very quickly, one by one.

The Holy Spirit has come to dwell in you, first and foremost. Now, this is incredibly important to recognize, because I think it's very easy for us to misunderstand the Holy Spirit. When I think, when you think of the Holy Spirit, when I ask you the question, right, think of the Holy Spirit and think, where is He? Where is He? I am confident that our instinctive answer for many people, and this would have been my instinctive answer for a long time, is like, out there somewhere.

Like somewhere there. And again, heaven may be kind of like, I don't know, like there, out there. And maybe kind of moving around a bit. So there's sometimes where maybe He's more like in Carlisle Way for a while, but then maybe goes away again to somewhere else, a bit like the clouds, lots of clouds, not so many clouds or whatever. We tend to think out there. And what we do when we do that is we take the description of the Holy Spirit in Genesis 1, and we make it normative.

Now, what do I mean when I say that? Genesis 1, we are told about the Holy Spirit in just the second verse of the Bible. It says, the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the water.

And we take that as normative. We think, when I say normative, I mean, we think that this is describing the normal circumstances. So we think Holy Spirit hovering out there, like cloud, like mist, like the northern lights or whatever, just hovering out there. What you have to recognize is that Genesis 1, 2 is not normative. It is unique. All the creative acts at the start of Genesis are unique. And this is a unique moment when the Holy Spirit hovered over the face of the water. But even the word hovering, that tells you that's never a permanent settled state.

[16:33] The normative pattern for the Holy Spirit is not that he's floating out there. So what is the normative pattern? The normative pattern is that he's in here, dwelling in the hearts of God's people. That's what you see. You don't see see talk of hovering coming up again and again and again in Scripture. What you have in Scripture is descriptions again and again and again of the Holy Spirit coming upon people. Now that's foreshadowed in the Old Testament. There's examples. I won't read them all, but you read about Bezalel. You read about Samson. You read about Ezekiel. And the Spirit of God comes upon them, upon him, upon them, upon me. And that's in the Old Testament where certain individuals, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in them, to equip them, to enable them to do something, is a shadow of the full reality in the New Testament where the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in the hearts of every believer. It's described in lots of different ways in the New Testament. There's an example in Ephesians 1-3 where it speaks about being sealed with the Holy Spirit. Theologians will often talk about this in terms of baptism in the

Holy Spirit, which is part of the description that we have in the New Testament. I can talk more about that to anyone later if you've got questions about that. Absolutely no problem. The point I'm trying to make and the thing I want you to take on board is that for every believer, God the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in you. And for that reason, you as a Christian, if you become one, are described as God's temple because God's Spirit dwells in you. And that makes perfect sense.

Old Testament, you had a building and God himself dwelt in the middle of that building in the glory cloud of his presence. That's a shadow of the full reality, which is the church, which is the people of God. And the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us. Everything that happened in the Old Testament temple was a shadow. The true temple is Jesus who comes as God with us and the church who is united to him that he indwells by his spirit. So let me ask you the question again. Where is the Holy Spirit?

And if I ask you the question, where is the Holy Spirit, you should not be pointing up there, over there, down in that big church, over there where there's loads of new people coming up there, out there. Where should you point? You should point at another Christian or at your own heart, if you're a believer, because that's where he is.

And, you know, if we want to look towards God, there's as much reason to look down there as it is to look up to the heavens.

[19:36] God, the Holy Spirit, has come to dwell in us. And this is a really important lesson for us to recognize.

We do not need the Holy Spirit to come because he is already here. I often, often hear people speaking as though we need the Holy Spirit to come, as though he's hovering somewhere else. That is not biblically accurate. We don't need him to come. He's already here. The New Testament doesn't say, pray, come Holy Spirit. The New Testament says, pray, come Lord Jesus. The New Testament doesn't say, wait for the Holy Spirit. It says wait for the Lord Jesus to return. The New Testament doesn't say, pray, for the Spirit. It doesn't say, wait for the spirit.

It says, walk by the Spirit, who's already dwelling in you. But lead by the Spirit, who's already dwelling in you, live by the Spirit, who's already dwelling in you, keep in step with the Spirit who's already dwelling in you.

So to the Spirit who is already dwelling in you. All of these instructions are grounded on the fact that God the Holy Spirit is not floating out there. He's dwelling in here. He's dwelling in you.

God the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us. Amazing. Utterly amazing. But part of the reason why he's come to dwell in you is because he's come to work on you.

[21 : 26] When the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us, he begins a work of renewal. And that work of renewal will continue until the day Jesus takes you home to be with him in heaven. That work is described in Scripture by the wonderful word sanctification.

Sanctification is the word for holy. Sanctification is the word for it's happening. So being made holy, being renewed, being fixed, being changed.

And that's a process. So you'll sometimes maybe we theologians talk about progressive sanctification because bit by bit we're being made more and more like Jesus. Now when that process begins in our hearts it immediately creates tension in our experience because the renewing influence of the Holy Spirit is in opposition to our heart's inclination towards sin.

We are born with an inclination towards sin. And Phil and Helen will discover that when they have a two-year-old that does not want to listen to them.

And when you have a four-year-old who will lie not to get in trouble and all that. And I'm not saying that to kind of condemn children. Children are so precious but you just see it.

[22 : 45] You see it. You see it. And we carry on. And the only difference with us as adults is just we do a worse stuff. But it's all there. So there's that battle. And the passage that I can read for us describes that battle.

The desires of the flesh. When it says flesh it's talking about that kind of that inclination towards sin. The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit. The desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. They're opposed to each other. And we live in the reality of that conflict as Christians.

The Holy Spirit is working on us. But as he works on us it's creating a battle against impulse towards behavior that is sinful. And Paul gives several examples. And you see it in the verses there. Now here is a long list of different types of sin. Now we will all struggle with different ones of these. So you'll read through that list and there will be some which you're like, well I don't struggle with that. There will be others though that will expose your heart.

So sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality. Christians struggle with that. Struggle with sexual temptation. Struggle with the appeal of looking at something that's inappropriate. Christians struggle with that. Struggle with lust. Struggle with to control their thoughts. Lots of Christians struggle with that. Some Christians don't. Some Christians don't struggle so much.

Idolatry. Some people, well I don't think some people, I think everyone struggles with that one. Where we make something that's not God the most important thing in their lives. Whether it's our money or our career or our relationships or what other people think of us. Where we think that I need that so much in my life. We all struggle with that one. Sorcery, maybe that's not so common in our context but across history, across the world today, definitely an issue. Enmity. Just falling out with people. Strife, jealousy, well I'm finished. Supposing I could have maybe got away with some of the first ones. Jealousy. We're jealous. Fits of anger. Some people are not.

[25 : 05] Don't get angry. Other people. Very easy to get them angry. Rivalry. Envy. Strunkiness. As I said, different. We'll all struggle with different stuff but all of this is exposed in the fact that we all battle against things that are contrary to what God created us to be.

And that are actually damaging to ourselves and damaging to others. And it's good to ask yourself well which ones of them do I find hard. Interesting thing though is that also, you know, there will be some that you maybe think well I don't find that hard. That's probably the one you have to be careful of most of all because we can get caught out. Two things I want to say.

Two things I want to say about that. Never forget that the reality of this battle is hard. So the battle against sin is a battle. It's hard. And we need to be careful. We need to be vigilant.

And we need to help each other. And so, you know, and that's just such an important part of our life as a church family together to actually help each other with these struggles and to support one another to be kind and encouraging. But to just really be vigilant that actually we want to be less angry this week and we want to be less jealous and all of these different things as much as we can. So never forget that the reality of this battle is hard. But also, never forget that the reality of this battle is so good. The reality of this battle is so good. If you see this battle in your heart, if you feel its tension, if you are aware of the struggle and actually if you feel like you're losing, then it tells you one amazing thing. It tells you that the Holy Spirit is working on you. And it's, he's working on you because he's come to dwell in you. And it means that the kingdom of evil is no longer your friend. Struggling in the battle against sin might be hard, but it should not leave you despondent because it's telling you that you've changed sides. Now maybe somebody in here is looking for assurance about their faith. And maybe by assurance you're thinking, well, if I just had this big experience, or if I just had this kind of really clear sense of peace that Thomas talks about, or if I just had like a definite answer to pray, or if I just had like that confirmation, or if I was just a better person and stopped stuffing up or whatever. And we look for assurance in all of these things. And maybe you'll find it there. But maybe you'll find it here. If you're looking for assurance, and you're looking at yourself and you're thinking, that battle is in my heart. That is confirmation right there that you belong to Jesus. The Holy Spirit has come to dwell in us and to work on us. Last of all, he's come to do wonderful things through you, to dwell in you, to work on you, to do wonderful things through you.

The work of the Holy Spirit is in many ways the most private work of all. It's one of those private things of all. It's so deep in our hearts. And God the Holy Spirit becomes the closest person to you. You can't look at anybody else and know that they're in here. You can with God the Holy Spirit.

[28 : 53] So it's so deep. It's so private. The work that he's doing on us, and he's fighting a battle that nobody else can see. But even though he's doing all that deep privately within us, the Holy Spirit, he has not come to do a work on you that is secret. So although it's deep and private, it is not secret. He's come to do something, the effects of which are being poured out like rivers of living water. In other words, he's come to do wonderful things through you. And the image that the New Testament uses to describe that work is in terms of bearing fruit, which he enreared for us. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. And there's loads we could say about this. I'm just going to say three things very, very briefly. Fruit does three crucial things. It identifies the tree. How do you know an apple is an apple tree? It's got apples on it. How do you know a Christian is a Christian?

Fruit is evident in their lives. Not spectacular experience. Fruit, fruit, this kind of fruit, love, joy, peace, patience, which is why when we talk about people becoming members of the church, we're not asking you to come and give us some spectacular experience that most of us have never had. We're asking you to come and say, I love Jesus and we're looking at you saying, yes, and we can see the fruit. Whereas if you come and you're like, I actually quite like being angry and I quite like rivalries and I like dissension and I'm quite happy to carry on with my struggle with my indulgence in sexual immorality. I was like, well, there's no fruit there.

So that's the way things work. The fruit identifies the tree. Secondly, fruit provides something beneficial and pleasant to others. Do apple trees eat apples? No, we do. And so as we bear the fruit of the Spirit, we're doing something that's just good and pleasant and lovely in other people's lives. A reminder that you can be just something wonderful in other people's lives this week, whether it's at home or school or work, even in an email, even in a text, you can do this stuff.

And that can just be such a blessing. So fruit identifies the tree. It provides something pleasant and beneficial for others. And it also sows seed for new trees. Because right in the middle of an apple is a seed from which another apple tree can grow. And as rivers of living water pour out of us, Jesus is using that to quench the thirst of others. In other words, to make others become followers of Jesus, who can grow and bear fruit and become a source through which rivers of living water flow as well. And that wonderful work that Jesus is doing, building his church through his church, the Holy Spirit has come to work on us, to dwell on us, to work on us so that he can do wonderful things through us. And that's why, just to say briefly, when the Bible talks about grieving the Holy Spirit, what it means by that is treating other people badly with all this kind of stuff. And instead, being kind, tenderhearted, forgiving. If you're a Christian, or if you become one, you have the potential to be such an amazing blessing in the lives of others. Time is running away, far too fast. With Jesus, you can be a slaked slaker. That's the coolest thing ever. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, thank you that you quench your thirst. And Lord Jesus, thank you that you make us a channel through which rivers of your blessing can flow. May that be true of us all. Amen.