GLORIA DEI LUTHERAN CHURCH

WATER HOTHE WORD

A Bible Study by: **PASTOR BEN JOHNSON**



INTRODUCTION

So, what could be so significant about water that it deserves its own study? Water is one of the most powerful and mysterious elements that exists in creation. In the right amount it nourishes and sustains life but in excess it can be deadly. Water is a fundamental need for every living creature on earth. Water is the foundation for all ecosystems, climate and life on Earth. Water sustains plants, animals, humans and even microbes. The human body is made up of around 60% water and every system of the human body requires water to function properly. You could survive 3 weeks without food...but only 3 days without water.

And not just the essential aspects but also the powerful effects it has on creation and life. Water carves canyons, shapes coastlines, grows forests and cleanses the earth. Around 71% of the earth's surface is covered in water and it is the only substance that exists naturally in all three states (solid, liquid and gas). Now if we think deeply on this then it means you can never get rid of water. If you burn it and it becomes gas, if you freeze it then it becomes a solid. Water cycles the globe and never disappears…evaporates, condenses, and returns.

Water gives us a beautiful picture of God's ongoing provision and renewal. Throughout this study we will look at how water is used to communicate God's ongoing activity with humanity. Just like water humanity cannot survive without the nourishment from our God. Just as our bodies were made to function properly with water, we were also made to function perfectly in relationship with our God. If you remove water...we die and if you remove the presence of God...we die.

For this study I would encourage you to have your bible ready, a notebook/journal/pen ready, a favorite beverage of your choosing and a heart ready to engage with God's holy and living word. Whenever we come to listen to our God in His word, we are living out the message of Psalm 23:1-2 "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul."

We are also living and breathing the reality of Psalm 42:1-2 "As a deer pants for flowing streams so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God."

I pray this study would refresh your soul and open your heart, mind and understand to the incredible ways that God uses water to bring blessing into our lives.

PART ONE: WATERS OF CHAOS & DANGER KEY SCRIPTURE: GENESES 1:1-10; MARK 4:35-41; MATTHEW 14:22-33

Water is a powerful and mysterious element just like the presence of our God. My favorite place in all the earth to be sitting next an ocean. To be honest I do not to float on the waters of the ocean, unless I am on a boat. The thought of how deep, mysterious, and things down there could eat me...well yeah it just better to stay in the boat. The ocean makes me feel small and powerless and it is good for the soul to have those moments. We have all seen images and videos of tsunami's, deadly floods, hurricanes and all the ways that water can be devastating. Is there anything more scary than large amounts of water that are chaotic, deep and deadly?

This the scene of Genesis when the account of creation is given to us. Turn with me to the beginning Genesis 1:1-10: 1 "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.4 And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.⁶ And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. 8 And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.9 And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good."

In creation, the "waters of the deep" symbolize the primordial chaos before God brings order. The Hebrew phrase "tohu va-bohu" translates as formless & void. This implies an emptiness, confusion, lack of order. Not yet evil, but disorderly and uninhabitable. The phrase "the deep" refers to the watery abyss which was a symbol in the ancient world of chaos, danger, and the unknown. Many other cultures have similar teachings but they connect with chaos to a false god or entity but here we see this is still something that is under God's control. Genesis tells us that the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. This paints a picture of God's active presence as God's prepares to bring order and life.

No matter the chaotic nature of the water, the danger it imposes, and the mysterious power of these matters God is never out of control. God is never chaotic or out of balance. With a word God cuts through the chaos and brings order and peace. God splits the waters and places some above the sky and places more water below the sky and then God brings order to the waters of the earth, splits them apart with dry land (earth) and water (seas). These verses remind us of the sovereign power of our God. Unlike other ancient stories where gods battle chaos, Genesis shows a God who speaks calmly and authoritatively to bring it into order.

In Mark 4 we are given a similar scene of waters in chaos and the fear that it brings. It says in Mark 4:35-41: ³⁵ "On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." ³⁶ And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. ³⁷ And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹ And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" ⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

The same voice that brought order from chaos in the beginning is the same God that is now taking a nap in a boat in the middle of a deadly storm. Jesus had given the order that the disciples were to head across the lake and in the middle of this voyage a great storm swept down upon them. Now these storms were fierce and deadly. They would swirl over the mountains and descend violently catching many fishmen in their crosshairs. These seasoned fishmen new the dangers of this moment and woke Jesus in a panic. They accused Jesus of not caring that they were about to all die.

The thing about chaos is that we can start believe one of two things. The first is that the chaos is showing us that our God is not in control and He Himself is causing this chaos. The second thing is that the chaos shows us that our God might be in control but is choosing to do nothing about it. The disciples are falling into the trench of the second way of thinking that Jesus is choosing to allow this to happen and doesn't care.

Jesus hears the accusation, calmly rises in the boat, and with authority rebukes the wind and waves by saying "Peace! Be Still!". Scripture then says instantly a great calm came over the lake. Like in Genesis God simply uses His words to bring order into the chaos, to bring calm in the midst of the storm. Then Jesus turns His attention to the disciples and asks them a very direct and real question...a question that we can all receive in our lives. "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" It is now not the wind and waves that terrify the disciples the sovereign power and authority of God that fill them with great fear.

Jesus gave them a command to cross the lake, Jesus Himself is in the boat with them, and they doubt His power, doubt His love and doubt His authority in that moment. What storms of your life have forced you into one of these trenches? Either believing God is not in control or believing that God doesn't care? What difference does it make for you knowing that Jesus is in the boat of your life right now? The God that formed creation, the God who alone is Sovereign over all, is the same God that has promised He will never leave us or forsake us. In Matthew 14 we are given another story of Jesus sending His disciples across the lake, another story of a deadly storm and another story of God's divine intervention. This time Jesus came to the disciples walking on the waters. In Genesis, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters and in Matthew Jesus is hovering over the waters of the deep.

The disciples are terrified, but Peter calls out to Jesus and says that if this is really you Jesus command me to come to you on the water. Jesus says to him...Come! So Peter swings his legs out of the boat and walk towards Jesus. As long as Peter kept his eyes fixed on Jesus, He had the power to walk on His fears, walk on the chaos, and rise above the turbulence of life but the moment his eyes went to the waves, the storm, the danger then he started to sink beneath them.

Jesus came to Peter, pulled him to His side, got into the boat, calmed the storm and again asked the same question... "Peter where is your faith...why did you doubt me?". The life of following Jesus is one of faith and not site. It requires us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus who is the author and perfector of our faith. What does it look like in your life to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus no matter the storms that rage around you? What comfort does it bring to remember that our God alone is Sovereign over all things and is never in chaos?

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I pray that this study would bring you encouragement and strength for your ongoing journey of following Jesus. After this study, my encouragement is to take some intentional time to pray to your God as you fix the eyes of your faith upon Him. Remember the Spirit that is alive in you is greater than the spirit of this world. The Spirit that is alive in you is the same Spirit that hovered over the waters in Genesis, is the same Spirit that empowered Jesus & Peter to walk on water and is the same Spirit that ensures us God's divine presence no matter the storms we face. May the presence of God make all the difference as we walk on the waters of our fears with eyes fixed on Jesus.

PART ONE NOTES

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PART TWO: WATERS OF JUDGEMENT & SALVATION KEY SCRIPTURE: GENESES 6-8; MATTHEW 24:36-44; 1 PETER 3:20-21

I recall a time when I was in my backyard doing some needed care for our plants. I was watering the plants, and I noticed a large number of ants crawling in-and-out of a wooden retaining wall next to my home. I remembered we had been having some ant issues in the house and wondered if this might be where it was coming from. So I turned the hose to blast mode and started spraying the ants inside of the wood. As I sprayed all kinds of things started pouring out from inside of these wood beams and needless to say we no longer had an ant problem in the home. The same water I used to bring nourishment and sustenance to the plants also became a mechanism of judgement towards the ants.

Now this might sound pretty mean on my end, but the decision had to be made as the problem became worse. In Genesis 6 God is also faced with a very difficult decision: "⁵ The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. ⁷ So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them." ⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord."

Then again in verses 11-13 it says, "¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. ¹³ And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth." Then God says to Noah in verses 17-19, "¹⁷ For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. ¹⁸ But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons wives with you. ¹⁹ And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female."

Many of us know what happened next in this story. God sent rain upon earth for 40 days and for 40 nights. The waters increased and consumed every living creature on the earth, except for Noah, who hovered upon the water safely protected in the ark. The story of Noah, the ark, and the wickedness of humanity is a story of how God used water to bring both judgement and salvation to His people.

In the New Testament Jesus Himself directly refers to the story of Noah in Matthew when He is speaking of another event that will happen that no one will see coming. It says in Matthew 24:36-44 ³⁶ "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. ³⁷ For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹ "Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. ⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

In the New Testament, Noah becomes a picture of how God is going to deliver us through Christ. Just as Noah was saved through water, we are saved by Jesus through the waters of our baptisms. Peter says this of the link between Noah and baptism in 3:20-21 when he says, "²⁰ because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ".

The same water that brought judgement for the sin of humanity also brought salvation to Noah and his family. The problem was that even after starting fresh, human sin persists. The flood cleansed the earth but didn't cleanse the heart. The story of Noah points to the need for a deeper salvation—not just a new world, but new hearts. Peter says that baptism is that very cleansing that our sinful hearts need. Baptism washes the sinful human heart in the powerful waters of the grace of God. It drowns our old sinful selves and brings to us a deeper salvation that can only come from unity with Jesus.

A day will come when Jesus once more returns to bring judgement and salvation to this world. Jesus says that it will be as sudden as the flood was for the people who were not ready. The coming of Jesus will be judgement to many and salvation for others. The only way to withstand the flood of God's presence at this time will be in the ark of our relationship with Jesus. Jesus is now our rescue from judgement who will carry us safely to new life.

For your life, in what ways is Jesus your safe place, your "ark" in life's floods? How does this story point you toward your deeper need for Christ—not just behavior change but heart change? Where do you need to step back inside the safety of God's grace and the baptismal promises that God has made to you?

PART TWO NOTES

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PART THREE: WATERS OF REBIRTH & NEW CREATION KEY SCRIPTURE: 2 KINGS 5:1-14; JOHN 3; ROMANS 6:1-14

Water is essential for cleansing the body both internally and externally. Internally water helps to flush toxins and waste products through various bodily systems. There is even a process known as "water detox" which is proven to improve digestion, increase metabolism and help with our overall well-being. Externally water washes away dirt and bacteria from our bodies and leaves us feeling clean and fresh. In many ways water washes, cleanses and brings a feeling of renewal to our lives.

In 2 Kings 5 we are given an incredible story of the power of Word of God when combined with water. In 2 Kings we are introduced to Naaman who is a powerful Syrian military commander. He was a great man, held in high favor, successful in war, but Naaman suffered from a terrible disease known as leprosy. Leprosy is a disease of the skin that results in skin lesions, numbness, muscle weakness and nerve damage.

In one of the Syrian raids against Israel they carried off a little girl from the land of Israel and she was put in service in Naaman's home under the care of his wife. This little girl told Naaman's wife that if only he would get the help of God's prophet in Samaria he could be healed of this disease. Naaman's wife immediately tells Naaman, and he sends word to the King of Israel to ask for an audience with this prophet. The king of Israel thought this was a big joke, but the prophet Elisha saw things differently.

Naaman meets with Elisha, and he is instructed to go into the waters of the Jordan River 7 times and he will be healed. Naaman, in the anger of pride, was ready to go back home because of how ridiculous this request is. He feels the waters back at home would work just as well as these waters so why is he wasting his time. It took his servants to convince him otherwise with a "what do you have to lose" argument and Naaman listens. Miraculously, after the seventh washing, Naaman is healed of his disease and his skin became like that of a little child.

This story is a powerful look at how God's mercy and grace is extended to all people no matter what. This Syrian general is working against God's people, and yet, God still works through His Word to bring healing to his life. It wasn't the power of Elisha, the power of the waters of the Jordan, but it was the power of the Word of God that brings rebirth and renewal to Naaman.

Naaman received a physical washing that healed him of the horrible disease of leprosy. Yet even worse than this ailment is a deeper problem and that is a leprosy of the soul. Scripture speaks of an original sin that has been passed onto every human being no matter age, race, ethnicity or class. This original sin has been passed down from generation to generation and is a disease of the soul. Without miraculous intervention this disease will lead, not only to our deaths, but to our eternal separation from God for all eternity.

In John 3 Jesus is speaking with Nicodemus of this new birth that must happen for one to be saved. Jesus says in verses 5-6, "Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Jesus came speaking the need that every human has to be washed in the power of water & the Holy Spirit. Jesus then said in verse 16-17, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

Jesus is speaking of a condemnation that is upon every human being because the leprosy of sin that is within them. Jesus said He did not come to bring condemnation to humanity, but He came to save humanity from its condemnation. Jesus would do this by becoming the very disease that is killing us. Jesus would become sin, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21).

We, like Naaman, has been cursed with a disease that can only be cleansed through the miraculous working of the power of God. His promises, combined with our baptismal waters, now have the power to cleanse the human soul. This baptism unites us to the very person of Jesus as Paul describes in Romans 6:3-11, "3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

What a powerful reminder of who we are in Jesus. Water is essential for cleansing the body both internally and externally, but the waters of baptism are essential for cleansing a human soul. Once cleansed the power of sin no longer has any power over that person because they have been set free from the disease of sin and now live a brand-new life to the honor of Jesus and His Kingdom. If you have not been baptized we would love to discuss that with and if you have, take some time, to thank God for the New Life He has given to you.

PART THREE NOTES

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PART FOUR: WATERS THAT SATISFY THE SOUL

KEY SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 12; JOHN 4:1-24

I mentioned in the first part of this study that one of my favorite places to be is sitting next to an ocean. I remember one really windy day in Santa Cruz when the waves were exceptionally strong. I was standing next to some rocks and as the waves crashed into the rocks it blew water out a hole in the top of the rock. It was an amazing sight to see as water would go 15-20 feet in the air with enough force to knock a person off their feet.

This is the image that I have in mind when I read Isaiah 12. Look with me at the text and what the word of God is showing us. "You will say in that day: 'I will give thanks to you, O Lord, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me.² Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation." ³ With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. ⁴ And you will say in that day: "Give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted. ⁵ "Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be made known in all the earth. ⁶ Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel."

These beautiful words are describing an outburst of praise that comes with seeing, experiencing and fully realizing what our God has done for us. Our God had every right to be angry with us but chose to turn away from His anger and turn towards us in comfort. Since our God has moved towards us with grace He has become the source of our salvation. No matter what life brings God has become our strength and our song and we are free to draw from the well of these waters whenever we want.

What does a life look like that draws water from this well of salvation. Isaiah says it is a person's who passionately give thanks to the Lord, one who calls upon His name and make known God's amazing deeds to all the people's. It is a person who exalts the name of God above every other name because He has done glorious things and alone deserves to have His name be known throughout the nations.

The waves of God's love come surging into our souls and erupt out of our mouths with songs of praise. This goes way beyond just what happens in a worship service, but this is a way of life for every follower of Jesus. At any time and in any place, we are free to praise God for His glorious deeds but most especially when we are gathered as the body of Jesus (the Church) to declare His goodness. Worship is a holy and sacred time that Christians gather to erupt together in joyful praise of our God for the salvation he has gifted to us. True worship is anything but boring but comes from deep inside each believer as a declaration of thanksgiving to our God for the sacrifice of grace He has given to us.

In John 4 Jesus gives us a real-life example of Isaiah 12's fulfillment when he encounters a Samaritan woman at a well. This woman came to the well around noon, which is not the normal time to draw water. Later we find out this woman had been married five different times and was currently living with a man who was not her husband. This woman had led a hard life and had face the scorn of her community, of relationships and probably felt from her God.

Jesus asks the woman if she might get him a drink from the well and she is utterly confused at the question. Jewish men would not associate with Samaritan woman and especially not a Jewish Rabbi, but clearly she has no idea who she is dealing with. Jesus replied to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." What does Jesus mean by living water?

In ancient time, "living water" referred to flowing water-like a spring or river-versus stagnant cistern water. Living water has a source, not a container, so it will never run out. Living water means the deep soul-satisfying fulfillment that nothing else in life can give. Physical water quenches thirst temporarily but Jesus offers a permanent spiritual satisfaction. Clearly this woman would love to have a never ending source of water and not have to come to this well over and over again.

Jesus replies to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." This Living Water comes to us and also symbolizes the Holy Spirit who refreshes, empowers, convicts, comforts, and connects us to God. Jesus is offering this woman the waters of Salvation but turning towards her, not in anger, but in comfort. He asks her to bring to Him all her broken cisterns that she had been trying to draw life from, and He replaced those with Himself.

The woman is still not fully convinced and tries to change the topic to what is the correct way to worship God? Do we need to be on this mountain or that mountain, contemporary or traditional, modern or ancient, organ or guitar? Obviously, those examples are not in the bible but the point is she is thinking there is only one correct way to worship God and is focused on the what's and how's of worship and Jesus brings her directly into the why of worship. Jesus says to her, "²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

The woman says to Jesus that she believes the Messiah is coming and when he does then He will straighten all of this out. Jesus then says to her that the one who is peaking to her is He! WOW! At this the woman takes off and must tell everyone. The surge of God's love that enveloped her heart and is erupting out of her mouth. It says in John 4 "³⁹ Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

Jesus is the fulfillment of all scripture, and we see the fulfillment of Isaiah 12 in this moment of John 4. Question to reflect on is are you personally drinking from this well of salvation or from wells that run dry? Cisterns of stagnant water are when we look for our approval and praise from our careers, families, others approval, earthly pleasures, earthly successes, wealth, etc. Jesus offers us all an opportunity to bring to Him our broken containers so that we can fully enjoy His unending gift of living water.

Jesus is saying that he can satisfy our deepest thirst, not just for survival, but for meaning, purpose, forgiveness, and connection to God. He is inviting us to not just drink once, but to become vessels through whom that water flows to others. This gift of living water is the only water that can cleanse a human soul, wash away sin and bring us to a brand-new life. What would it look like to draw more intentionally from the "wells of salvation" in your everyday life? How would this impact your worship and the passion we bring to the praise of our God and salvation we share in the cross and empty tomb of Jesus?

I pray that this study has encouraged your faith, strengthened your witness and brought nourishment to your soul. May our worship be not just in words, but in actions, in truth and lived out through our relationships. Water is an incredible thing throughout our world, but even more incredible is the way God uses water in our lives. If you found this study encouraging, consider sharing it with someone in your life. May God bless each and every one of you as we passionately continue to fix our eyes on Jesus who alone is the author and perfector of our faith.

PART FOUR NOTES

PART FOUR NOTES

