

Peter Communion Mediation

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I'm so glad that you can be with us tonight as we remember the Lord's death on our behalf at the Lord's table this evening. We, as Christians, are in a very privileged position of advantage, aren't we, as those whose sins have been forgiven, those who have been redeemed, those that have been chosen by God before the foundation of the world. We are in a position of great privilege as believers as we walk through this life and yet, I know that you are just like me, that you stumble along the way and there are things that come out of your life from time to time that are not what they should be, that make you have a sense of shame and a consciousness of remaining indwelling sin and you want to get rid of that and yet it somehow still clings to you. Well, I thought tonight that we would look at an illustration that helps us grasp and have a sense of the Lord's mercy toward us in that. I wanted to look at the life of Peter tonight as an illustration of the way that the Lord deals with us when we stumble even in the midst of the great advantage that we have. Peter is a good illustration for us tonight.

You know Peter. He was a fisherman who became a leading apostle for Christ. He had some successes, he had some failures like we do, and he left behind two letters that are in the New Testament that we still study today. Peter was impulsive in word and in deed. His life is almost a bundle of contradiction. He walked on water and yet was weak enough to tell a servant girl that he did not know Christ. How do you put those things together? You look at Peter's life, how do you fit all of that together? And if we were somehow able to step outside of our own lives and look at our own lives, we would say, "How can we put our advantage and our successes side-by-side with the ways in which we stumble as we walk through life?" We ourselves are a bundle of contradiction as we come here tonight and it's through the prism of Peter's self contradictions that I think we see the light of God's grace displayed in multicolored splendor that gives us a sense of encouragement as we come to the Lord's table tonight.

So I want to look at both the advantages that were given to Peter and also the way that he stumbled and kind of by way of contrast. Let's look at the advantages that Peter had for just a moment as indicative of the advantages that are given to us. His privileges were vast. He had unparalleled communion and access to Christ and we see this as we go through the Gospel of Matthew. We're just going to kind of take a quick survey of some passages in Matthew here this morning. Peter had the advantage of position in his life. He had things that were given to him that were not given to others and if you turn to Matthew 10 as a starting point here, he had a position, an advantage of leadership that

was given to him that was almost unique in the course of all of history. Look at Matthew 10:1-2 where Jesus is choosing the 12 disciples and you see Peter given at the head of the list. Matthew 10:1, "Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these," and here's our man at the head of the list tonight, "The first, Simon, who is called Peter," and then the rest of the 12 are listed later on. Peter was a leader of the 12 disciples. Whenever they are listed together, his name is always at the head of the list. He had an advantage, a privilege of position that was given to him, that gave him a unique perspective, that gave him a unique advantage that was not given to others. Here's Peter with his position of advantage as Christ opens his ministry, as it were.

As you go on and continue to read in the Gospel of Matthew, you realize that Peter did the miraculous, he walked on water. Turn to Matthew 14:25, "in the fourth watch of the night Jesus came to them, walking on the sea." You have to love how understated the Scripture is. "Yeah, he was walking on the sea," as if that was commonplace almost by the lack of dramatic detail that is omitted. Christ is walking on the sea and in verse 26, "When the disciples saw Him," from the boat, "walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.' Peter said to Him, 'Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.' And Jesus said, 'Come!' And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus." Now, stop there for just a moment. I realize that people tend to hurry to Peter's failure of faith that is just ahead in this passage, he looked at the waves and he started to sink, but let's not go too quickly past verse 29 there. Peter had the privilege, Peter had the advantage, he had the courage to actually step out of that boat and for a moment he stood on water which is contrary to nature. Peter had that experience given to him. Verse 30, "But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?' When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, 'You are certainly God's Son!'" Peter sank, for sure, but there for a moment he had an experience that was unique. He walked on water. He walked toward the Lord standing on the sea. That's a great position of strength. You would think that that kind of miraculous experience would secure him in spiritual stability.

As you go on you see that not only was Peter a leader of the 12, that he walked on water, you see that Peter received revelation about Christ before the other apostles did. Look at Matthew 16:13, "Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.' Jesus said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'" He stands out from the crowd, stands out from the other apostles even, and makes this bold declaration about the deity of Christ and in verse 17, Jesus commends him and says to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." Jesus tells

him, "Peter, you are the recipient of a divine favor. You have a divine privilege that has been given to you that was not given to others for you to be able to see and receive and understand this and to be able to declare it. And this didn't come, Peter, from within yourself, my Father who is in heaven gave that to you." What a privilege that this man had. His leadership, he walked on water, he received revelation, revelation that the Jews had been waiting on for centuries and it belonged to Peter. This was his. He lived this in time and space. A man with flesh and blood like you and me was up front in the lead on the incarnation and understanding it and experiencing the direct miraculous element of the incarnation of Christ. That's how much advantage Peter had.

It doesn't stop there. Turn over to chapter 17. Peter saw the transfiguration. In chapter 17, verse 1, "Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him." Can you imagine that suddenly the one that you had been walking with who had human flesh like you did suddenly his face is transfigured and it's like looking into the sun; that his appearance becomes like light; that along with that, Moses and Elijah appear and start talking with them as well, start talking with Christ, I should say. What is this that's been given to Peter to witness with his own eyes this kind of stunning display of the glory of God? James and John were there, no one else. Peter is a leader. Peter walked on water. He received revelation from the Father in heaven. He saw the transfiguration. Peter had advantages not given to anyone else. They were unique things that were given to him.

Now, let's step back and think about ourselves for just a moment. We don't have the same kinds of advantages that Peter had but we're privileged, aren't we, as believers in Christ? Greatly privileged to have been the object of God's electing choice before the foundation of the world? To have somehow in the orchestration of God's oversight of the universe that he put us in a position where people who knew the Gospel shared it faithfully with us and his Spirit worked in our heart and brought us to saving faith in Christ. The judgment that we deserve has been passed over, as it were. Christ bore the judgment on our behalf. Here we are walking through this world now with our sins forgiven, secure in Christ with the indwelling Spirit, with our minds opened to understand the revelation of God, all of those privileges and 10,000 beside, knowing full well as we read through the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus says that it's a narrow gate and few are those who find it. Here we are in Petersburg, Kentucky, of all places, the recipient of that kind of vast spiritual privilege. Praise God for his goodness to us by name. How can we be, how can we receive this which has not been given to everyone else? How is it that we who are sinners stand in this privileged position that we enjoy? Blessed be his name for his grace and goodness to us. We once were lost but now we are found. We were blind but now we see. We are so privileged. We have an advantage as Christians that has been withheld from the world and so while the advantages that Peter had were of different kind, the quality and the grace that is involved are the same. There was undeserved favor poured out on Peter's life, there has been undeserved favor poured out on our lives.

Now, going back to Peter for a moment, if you knew nothing else, if you had never opened a Bible before you came in here and if you knew nothing else about Peter than what we've already said, you would assume, you would think that Peter must have been an impeccable spiritual success. If so much has been given to him, then you would think that surely he rose to the position of his advantage and he lived according to the advantage and privilege and advantage that was given to him. But as you know, that was not the case. Let's look at the advantages that Peter wasted in his earthly life. He wasted this advantage and as we prepare our hearts to take the Lord's table, what I want you to see is that the way Peter squandered his advantage didn't live up to all that was given him parallels the same way that you and I fail to live up to our advantage in our own Christian lives. We look at Peter not from a position of condescension looking down and saying, "How could he fail?" we look at Peter in what we're about to see and we say, "Oh, I see a man of like fallen flesh like myself. I see Peter and I look and I see in Peter my own failures illustrated."

How did Peter waste his advantage? Well, first of all, he did it in sudden words. He spoke too quickly. He had a quick tongue and he spoke before he thought. Look back at Matthew 16 for just a moment. This is really almost impossible to get your minds around, the greatness of the privilege and yet how Peter failed in the midst of it. Matthew 16:21, "From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. Peter," there's our hero, so called, "Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.'" Peter, Peter, what are you doing? You just said that he's the Christ, the Son of the living God and now you're going to take it upon yourself to rebuke him and you're going to tell him that what he just said must take place is never going to happen? "God forbid, Lord, that what you just said should come to pass." What are you doing, Peter? Why are you talking that way? Verse 23, "Jesus turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.'"

The very purpose that the Father sent Christ into the world was to do exactly what Jesus said. He was sent on a mission to die. He was sent to be a sacrifice. Peter in his thoughtless, impetuous speech was trying to hinder that very work that had been appointed for Christ before the foundation of the world. He was standing in the way of the eternal plan of God, so directly, so plainly that what he was saying, Christ said, was from Satan himself. This man of privilege, this man of spiritual opportunity poured out upon him, is suddenly acting on Satan's behalf because he couldn't control his tongue; because he spoke what came to his mind and presumed to know better than Christ himself what should be said and done. And so with his mouth, he squandered the advantage of the position that he had.

It wasn't just there either, it wasn't just with his mouth, you see him squandering it in self-sufficient pride. Look over at chapter 26 in Matthew, and verse 31. Oh, Peter. Oh, Peter, you just want to grab him and say, "Peter, stop." You want to put your hand over his mouth but it's too late because he has already spoken. Peter's self-sufficient pride comes

out in verse 31 and the passage that follows. "Jesus said to them," this is on the verge of his crucifixion and speaking to his disciples he said, "You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED.'" He says its appointed. This is night that is appointed. Scripture says this is going to happen and I'm telling you that you will fall away. It's written in the Scriptures and tonight is the night.

Verse 32, "'But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.' But Peter said to Him," oh, Peter, please just stop. Don't say it, Peter! Stop! He didn't stop. "Peter said to Him, 'Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.'" Jesus had just said that he would and Peter boasts about his own courage and faithfulness before the events come down and he makes his own prediction of the future and says, "I'll never fall away." He sets himself apart not only from the words of Christ but presumes to set himself apart from the other disciples and says, "They might fall but I won't." Nothing but unmitigated pride coming out of his mouth. In foolish self-confidence, Peter again contradicted the Lord and yet in only a few hours he would deny Christ exactly as Jesus said. He thought he was something that he wasn't. His subsequent life in just a few short hours was going to show that his boast was empty.

So Peter stumbled, squandered in sudden words, in self-sufficient pride, and we are not done yet. This one strikes close to home. Peter wasted his advantage in spiritual indifference as well. In spiritual indifference. Look at verse 36 there. Actually, I'm not sure that I finished reading the passage there. Let me do that. It all flows right together. Verse 33, Peter had said to him, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away." Jesus said, "Oh, Peter, to the contrary. Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." And Peter didn't relent. He kept on talking and said to Christ, "'Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.' All the disciples said the same thing too." That's a point that I think is sometimes overlooked, all the disciples were saying the same thing. The Scripture focuses on Peter but they all said the same thing, protesting their spiritual manhood when Christ had just told them what was going to happen.

Well, with that in mind, with that display of spiritual pride, the narrative goes on and we see the spiritual indifference of Peter in verse 36, "Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. Then Christ said to them, 'My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.' And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.'" I love the self-surrender of the Lord there. He feels the weight of this in his humanness and yet submits to the will of the Father knowing that it's going to cost him a crucifixion.

Verse 40, "And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, 'So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'" You know,

this isn't the first time that Jesus taught the disciples to pray to make it part of their prayers not to fall into temptation. This is part of what's called the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6, "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." Peter had been taught this and he was reminded again at the hour of Christ. He says, "Pray this way, Peter. Watch and pray." But he squandered it. With all of his advantages, he didn't step up to the occasion.

Verse 42, "Jesus went away again a second time and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.' Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. Then He came to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!'" Now it's too late. The time for prayer was gone. The opportunity had passed and Peter had squandered it and slept it away. In the extreme hour of Gethsemane, Peter failed to watch and pray and it led to his lowest hour.

His sudden words, his self-sufficient pride, his spiritual indifference led to this final way in which Peter squandered his advantages in sinful denial. In sinful denial. Matthew 26:57. The soldiers had come, let's actually pick it up in verse 55 as Jesus speaks to the soldiers. Matthew 26:55 just to get a running start at the context, "At that time Jesus said to the crowds, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me. But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets.' Then all the disciples left Him and fled." Verse 57, "Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. But Peter was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome."

Verse 69. A few things have transpired in between. For the sake of time, we'll skip over the contents just a little bit. Verse 69, "Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl," of all people; not a centurion, not the high priest whose position of influence and authority might account for the intimidation factor, "a servant-girl came to Peter," verse 69, "and said, 'You too were with Jesus the Galilean.' But he denied it before them all, saying, 'I do not know what you are talking about.' When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, 'This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.' And again he denied it with an oath, 'I do not know the man.' A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, 'Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away.'" And Peter, this one who was a leader among the apostles, who had walked on water, who had seen the transfiguration, who had had revelation given to him just shortly before, so to speak, in a manner of over the course of the Lord's brief earthly ministry, all of those advantages given to Peter and look at what he does. Verse 74, "he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know the man!' And immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, 'Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly." The reality of his spiritual condition was now undeniable. There was no way

that he could boast his way out of it, there was no way that his pride could survive the reality of what he had just done, and he wept in bitterness. And you see in those sinful denials that Peter's earlier boast just that evening were powerless in the hour of temptation, and what we have to see, what we have to remember is that Peter's denials were an outworking of his proud and impulsive heart. There was nothing in those denials that wasn't already pre-existent in the kind of man that he really was. Despite the external privileges and advantages that were given to him, he was still a proud and impulsive man. He thought too highly of himself and he thought too lightly of sin. His enthusiasm was superficial and he could not withstand the test of adverse circumstances.

Beloved, it's against that black backdrop of sin and failure that enables us to see the greatness of the grace of Christ toward Peter, that helps us see the greatness of the grace of Christ toward us as well because we're going to see that the Lord restored the advantages back to Peter. Turn over to the Gospel of John 21, and I'll leave to the work of the Spirit of God in your own heart the parallels between Peter's failures and your own in these areas of pride and hasty lips and the failures that we all have tasted. What I want you to focus on as we contemplate coming to the Lord's table tonight is not just a reminder of our own sins, but I want you to see the way that the Lord dealt with Peter as an encouragement to take the Lord's table with a sense of gratitude and confidence not in ourselves but in the goodness of Christ expressed to us, because you could not have blamed Christ after Peter denying him with curses, from a human perspective, you couldn't have blamed Christ if he had cast Peter aside after all those denials. You'd say, "Do you know what? I'll find somebody else to work with." But that's not what the Lord did. Instead, as you continue to read in Scripture, you marvel at the grace with which Christ dealt with his fallen lead apostle. You marvel at the grace, at the way that he restores that wayward disciple to service.

Look at John 21:15. This is after the resurrection. Peter has the stain of his denial still clinging to him, as it were, and the Lord is going to come and deal with that in verse 15. He says, "when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?' Peter said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend My lambs.'" He is commissioning him to service. What? "Lord, he just denied you. What are you doing?" Verse 16, "He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Shepherd My sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?'" Do you know why he was grieved? He was grieved because the third time was the parallel to the third denial that he had made before. It was obvious that what Christ was doing was walking Peter through a process to reverse those denials and here he is now, Peter is brought face to face with the shame and guilt of those denials in the courtyard in front of servant girls and bystanders and in verse 17, "Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend My sheep.'" I want you to notice, I want you to notice what Peter appeals to hear now in verse 17. In the past in what we have seen before, he boasted in his pride and his self-sufficiency, "Lord, I'll never deny you." Now his boast is outside of that. His confidence

is in something else. He appeals to the omniscience of Christ and says, "Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you." And what's implied in that is Peter's recognition that you and I feel ourselves in our own lives from time to time is that, "Lord, I know that if you just looked at my life, you wouldn't see the proof of what I'm saying is in my heart. Lord, what can I say? I just denied you three times with curses but I'm telling you that I love you. Don't measure me by my external conduct, Lord, measure it by what you know to be true." It's an utter appeal to grace, to omniscience, stepping outside of self-confidence and appealing to the Lord himself. And here's what I want you to see, beloved, that in response to this gracious, merciful initiative of Christ, Peter reversed his denials. His answers correspond with the way that he had denied Christ and Christ walked him through it three times and gave him an opportunity to reverse the denials publicly in front of the other disciples so that there would be no question lingering over Peter's character that he somehow hadn't recanted of those denials. And what did the Lord do? Here's the encouragement for you and me.

That's weird. This thing is coming nearer. Maybe my time is up. I'll teach that a lesson. It probably won't stay because I don't know what to do with those things. All right, I tried to be nice, now you're on your own. There we go. A little comic relief for some reason reason. Providential? I don't get that.

Here's what I want you to notice, here's what I want you to think about as we come to the Lord's table tonight, as you're conscious of your own failures of the past week that you want to confess and deal with before you take communion: how can we measure the goodness and the mercy of Christ to Peter? This one who denied him with curses, Jesus now commissions to service, are you kidding me? Verse 15, "Peter, go tend My lambs." Verse 16, "Peter, shepherd My sheep." Verse 17, "Peter, tend My sheep." The Lord meets us in our sin. He gave his life to cleanse us from it. He is conscious of the fact, he knows better than we do the way that we have sinned and squandered the advantages given to us and yet he sends Peter into service, he sends us into service too. Who can calculate that? Who can calculate that? How quickly have we dismissed someone who has failed in work, in relationships or whatever, and you just write them off, and yet here we are, not written off by our Lord but written in: written into his service, written into his plan, brought near despite our sins and transgressions. The Lord restored Peter to a position of service, restored him to his position of advantage so much so that when you go to the book of Acts, you see Peter preaching a sermon and 3,000 souls are saved; you see him healing the lame; you see him raising the dead, so complete was the restoration that the Lord gave to him. Peter lived it all out in the book of Acts.

Does Peter sound like anyone you know? Anyone maybe you've seen in the mirror today? Have you sinned with your lips? With your spiritual pride? Your spiritual indifference? Have you denied Christ in word or deed? Well, if you have struggled lately, look at the life of Peter, look at the way that the Lord restored him and see in the way that the Lord dealt with Peter how he deals with all of his disciples. He responds to us with mercy. He responds to us with undeserved grace and favor and continues to use us. Proverbs 28:13. We have to look outside of ourselves at a time like this when our guilt comes to our mind. We have to look outside of ourselves and remember what it is that we

believe about the Gospel. The Gospel is not about our self-sufficiency, it's about the sufficiency of Christ. It's about the freeness of mercy bestowed on us when we were not deserving. Proverbs 28:13 says that, "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion." 1 John 1:9, we read it earlier, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Beloved, we don't have to work our way back. There is no way to do that, first of all, and the way back is through confession and repentance, not through deeds of penance, not through trying to work as though we could somehow work our way out of it while the Lord stands back with his arms folded across his chest waiting for us to show enough self-effort before he'll be gracious to us again. It's not that way. What we remember tonight is that the Lord's grace and mercy has been bought at the price of his own blood and that for those of us that know him as we sin in our walks with Christ, that the restoration has already been provided for; that the grace is already sufficient. We remember that we don't have to work our way back into his favor. He has more grace to give you even if you can't undo the consequences of the past. So we come to Christ for his love and mercy, not because we deserve it. We've cast that aside. No, what we see in Peter is this, is that if Christ forgave Peter, surely he'll forgive us too. In fact, Peter in his writings pointed to the only place where sin can be forgiven.

Turn to 1 Peter here. 1 Peter 2:24. We say it many times, we'll say it again: Christianity is not a religion of personal merit, it's a statement of God's mercy upon the undeserving, bought at the price of Christ's own blood. 1 Peter 2:24, remember this is Peter now, the one that we've been looking at now writes this, "He Himself," speaking of Christ, "bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." Chapter 3, verse 18, same book, "Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God." The death that Peter tried to forbid was the place where sin was removed. In his body on the cross, Christ bore the sins of everyone who would ever believe in him. It's at the cross where our favor and privilege with this great and holy God is restored and, beloved, the door is open for us tonight as we are about to receive communion to confess our sins, to have confidence that the restoration that Christ bestowed on Peter is the same kind of restoration that he gives to us. He is full of compassion. He is full of mercy. He is ready, willing and able to forgive as we come and we confess our sins before him. That's what we celebrate tonight at the Lord's table. That's what we are about to do.

Bow with me in prayer.

Father, we thank you that in Peter we see an illustration. We are people that have been greatly privileged, great advantage given to us, Father, we don't always live up to what you have done for us and given to us. We confess our sins and our shortcomings and our failures before you. We look at Peter as our partner in crime, not as one who receives our contempt because we see too much of ourselves in the mirror when we look at the life of Peter. So, Father, as we prepare our hearts to take communion now, I just pray that the mercy of Christ in restoring Peter would be on evident display in the hearts of your

people gathered here together tonight. I pray that as we partake of these elements, that it would remind us and refresh us of the grace that has been given to us and that our sins find their satisfaction in the shed blood of Christ and we bear them no more, they are no longer held against us; Christ has carried them away and they have been buried in the bottom of the deepest sea, as far as the east is from the west, Lord Jesus, so far have you removed our transgressions from us. Tonight we remember that with gratitude, with humility, with thankfulness that you have not cast us aside but you intend to use us still more as we go forward.

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