

# Forgiven in Christ

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**Bible Text:** John 21:15-17  
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This is a special day in our church as we celebrate both communion and baptism together, communion being the commemoration of the Lord's ultimate sacrifice on the cross for our sins, and baptism being the outward token of new life in an individual life and we'll celebrate several baptisms tonight at 5 o'clock. We invite you back to join us and also on the live stream to be with us during that very very special time. Those two ordinances help us to remember forgiveness and to celebrate new life in Christ. It brings into visible tangible focus the reality of what the Gospel tells us. The Gospel tells us that Jesus Christ came to save sinners just like you and me. Luke 19:10 says, "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." We proclaim not philosophical speculations, we proclaim historical facts that have theological significance. We proclaim a Gospel that says in time and space, Jesus Christ died on a cross, and that the Scriptures interpret the significance of that death for us by saying that he died for our sins, that the reason that he died was in order to take away our sins. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 say that, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day." Communion and baptism help us to remember those events and the Gospel tells us that all of your sins can be forgiven. Even today, even now, if you would repent and turn to Christ and receive him for your salvation, 1 John 1:9 says that, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The marvel of the Gospel, the marvel of the biblical testimony is that God while he is a holy righteous omnipotent God whom all the world must fear, is also a gracious and forgiving God who has made a means of reconciliation for sinners like you to come to him in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We remember that today. We celebrate that today as we practice the two ordinances that the Lord has given to the church and what I want to do to kind of use the pulpit to set the tone for the rest of the day that we are going to share together, I want to encourage you with a sense of the full forgiveness that you have in Christ; to give you a sense of the depth and the breadth and the height and the length of the love of Christ and how fully you have been forgiven in Christ; that there is no longer any stain on your garments before God; that there is no longer any charge against you before the court of God; that there is no debt left for you to pay to God for your sin when you are in Christ. This is the greatest security, the greatest peace, the greatest confidence that you could possibly have. This is the answer to every sorrow in your life, that whatever is happening on a horizontal

plane, to know that you are reconciled completely to a holy God is the most wonderful news that there is to have. We're going to see this by way of an illustration in the life of Peter.

I invite you to turn to the Gospel of John 18 for our start here. We're going to ultimately look at the way that the Lord restored Peter but before we get to that, I want to remind you of the rock bottom that Peter hit in his life in his denials of our Lord in John 18, and what I want you to do as we walk through this, is to see in yourself or rather I should say, to see in Peter a mirror of your own sin and failure and broken promises to Christ and to see what Christ did with Peter as a way of seeing what he has done for you in your salvation. Let me just remind you that Peter blatantly denied Christ three times on the night prior to our Lord's crucifixion.

Look at John 18:17, actually we'll start in verse 15, "Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest," where he was going to face charges, "but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in. Then the slave-girl who kept the door said to Peter, 'You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?' He said, 'I am not.'" Knowing Christ, belonging to Christ, having been on the receiving end of three years of deep personal ministry from Christ, knowing that Christ loved him, Peter said, "I don't know the man," because he was intimidated by a slave girl who questioned him. That was his first denial. If you look at verse 25, you'll see the second. "Simon Peter was standing and warming himself," warming himself at a charcoal fire, other parts of the Gospels tell us. "So they said to him, 'You are not also one of His disciples, are you?' He denied it, and said, 'I am not.'" Then verse 26, "One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, 'Did I not see you in the garden with Him?' Peter then denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed." The other Gospels telling us that he denied it with curses. He cursed the thought that he knew Christ; that he was associated with him; that he was one of Christ's disciples. This is the rock-bottom for Peter, that he would deny Christ in that way.

And you might wonder how on earth could it be possible for him to be forgiven of such a blatant lie, first of all, and then such a blatant betrayal of his relationship with Christ. Why is he not just immediately cast away? Well, we get a sense of it in the text that we're actually going to consider now this morning. This was all by way of background and preparation. You know what happened. Christ went on to the cross. He was crucified. He was raised again. A time came where he met with Peter and he restored him.

Look at John 21:15 now. This is our text for this morning, John 21:15. We see the way that Jesus restored Simon Peter after his resurrection. Verse 15,

15 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." 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." 17 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?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep.

Now just as a preliminary matter what I want you to notice is that this is a conferral from Christ to Peter of complete forgiveness of those prior denials. He walks in three times through the question, "Do you love Me?" using a couple of different verbs that really mean the same thing in the context of the Gospel of John. He walks through these questions to Peter as a means of eliciting Peter's confession and restoring him, and you know that there is complete forgiveness for those denials, you know that there is complete forgiveness because the Lord sends Peter into ministry and entrusts the care of his flock to him saying, "Peter, feed My sheep. Tend My lambs. Peter, take care of the ones that belong to Me." What greater sense of the free and complete acquittal of those blatant denials and betrayals that Peter spoke to unbelieving men, what greater picture of the forgiveness that Jesus gave to Peter other than the fact that he receives Peter's confession of love and then sends him out to minister on behalf of Christ to the people of Christ.

What I want you to see in this as we walk through these three questions and answers between Christ and Peter, is I want you to see a picture of the way that you have been forgiven in Christ. I realize based on scriptural testimony that your sin against God is deep. I realize that you have betrayed Christ at various points in your life. I realize that you have broken his law, that you have lied, that you have sinned either with your eyes or with your flesh in ways that Christ has commanded you not to do. I realize even as a believer that you have failed in your faithfulness more times than you would care to remember. Today is not our opportunity to rehearse your past sins, rather that's simply a means of introduction to remind you of the wonderful love of Christ that he has bestowed on you to forgive you, to wash all of your sins away, and to establish you in righteousness before God that you might have a sense of love and appreciation and gratitude that is deep as we come to the communion table, as we spend this day of fellowship together that we would come together around the forgiveness that we all share in Christ, those of us that know him. This is a wonderful time for us as we see in Peter an illustration of the way that the Lord has forgiven us.

So, we'll look at it in three points here. First of all, what can we say about your forgiveness? We can say this: that Jesus Christ has forgiven you of your failed boasts. Your failed boasts, your spiritual bragging about what a great Christian you were going to be. And we should start with asking this question: what exactly is Jesus doing as he asks Peter these three questions, as he walks through this dialogue with Peter? Well, in a negative sense, he's giving Peter the opportunity to manifest his repentance but even before the other disciples, from each of his denials. Peter denied him three times, Jesus asks him the same question three times and Peter is able to, as it were, disavow and repent of his prior denials. That's in the negative sense, in a positive sense, he is also

redirecting Peter and establishing for all time and for us to see going forward, establishing Peter's future commitment to be faithful; to turn away from the denials and to commit his heart and establish it in the direction of faithfulness, of love and devotion and loyalty to Christ.

So let's look at this here. First of all, we see Jesus forgiving him of his failed boasts. The first question there in verse 15, "Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?'" Who are the "these" that are there? Well, he's referring to the disciples that are gathered around here and Peter is before the other disciples and Jesus asks him this question. Why does this matter? Why would Jesus ask him, "Peter, do you love Me more than these men that are standing around?" Well, the problem is this, is that earlier before his denials, Peter had boasted that he did love Christ more than the other disciples, he would be more faithful than these other men.

Look over at Matthew 26. I want you to see this. Matthew 26:31 as we see Matthew's parallel account. In Matthew 26:31, Jesus said to his disciples, "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.' But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." Notice what Peter says in verse 33, "Peter said to Him, 'Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.'" Here is Peter separating himself out and in pride and boasting saying, "Lord, these men may be lesser disciples of yours, these men may be less committed than I am, but I want you to know you can always count on me. I will never deny you. Even if all of these men go away, I will stand alone and be strong for you in the midst of it." And the subsequent hours showed the emptiness of that boast. It showed the emptiness of what Peter had earlier said.

So what Jesus is doing here in this first question to Peter going back to John 21, in John 21:15 with the other disciples gathered around, Jesus says to Peter, "Do you love Me more than these?" Notice his response. He said to them, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He drops the reference to the other disciples and simply makes a confession of his own love. Peter drops the comparison to the others and simply affirms his own love for Christ and what does Christ do in response to that? He said to them, "Tend My lambs." Peter, I receive that. I accept that and now I'm going to send you out into service. Notice this, beloved: the fact that Jesus commissioned him to service shows that he accepted the confession. Peter's prior boasts which were made in haste, which were made in pride, and which he later violated, Christ says, "Let's wipe the slate clean of all of that." It's a sweet picture, isn't it? Isn't it sweet to know that the Lord did not hold those prior boasts that he failed in against Peter and wipes the slate clean and sends him into ministry.

Christian, let me ask you a question: have you exalted yourself against others either in your mind or with your lips? Said, "I'll be faithful in a way that other men aren't. I'll stand firm even if others fall away. You'll see in me, O God, a model of faithfulness." And yet the outworking of life proved to be something less than what you boasted in. When the pressure was on, you either held silent for Christ or you twisted the truth or you backed away and the opportunity to be faithful to Christ before men, you failed. You didn't do

what you said you would do. Your vows proved to be empty because you didn't carry through; you didn't have the power, through fear of man you walked away and you feel the weight of that on your conscience. Do you know what Scripture says? Do you know what the Gospel tells you, Christian, today as you come humbly before the cross of Christ? He says he forgives you. Sweet words of forgiveness, aren't they, where Christ says, "I don't hold that against you. I receive you as my own. I gladly own you before my Father. I gladly set that aside. It's not a barrier between us having fellowship with one another." Hebrews 10:17 says, "Your sins and your lawless deeds I will remember no more." That's the kind of salvation that God has given to you, Christian. That's how wonderful it is to belong to Christ, that your violations of God's law are taken off the books, as it were, because of what we remember at the cross, at communion I should say, that at the cross Christ took that and paid the price for it; paid the punishment for it; bore the wrath as we saw earlier with the result that those prior sins including your failed, proud boastings, Christ says, "I'm not going to hold it against you. I won't remember it any longer. It is not on your account because I took it onto my account," as it were, Christ speaking and saying, "I paid the price for that."

You see, beloved, you see that in the awful nature of Peter's denials and the treachery that was involved in that, Christ says, "Peter, go tend My lambs." In response to Peter's confession, Peter's rejection of his prior denials, Christ showers him, covers him with love, covers him with forgiveness and sends him into ministry. You see, that's what Christ does. That's what he does as our Savior. He takes our sins and pays for them on his own body, in his own body at the cross, and now he says, "I'm not going to hold that against you. Go in peace and serve me well." That's a picture of the full forgiveness that you have. Scripture says, "Your sins and lawless deeds he remembers no more. He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:7, "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." Do you see the wonderful thing that we are remembering here? That despite your guilt, despite your spiritual failures, despite your unjustified pride and boasting that came to naught, we have here a picture, a remembrance that Christ says, "My blood covers it all and I forgive you."

Now secondly, in like manner, not only has Christ forgiven your failed boasts, he also forgives your failed love. Your failed love. As Peter stood before that fire, he denied that he was Jesus' disciple. It was a low moment of sin, weakness and fear that in front of the enemies of God, rather than standing up and saying, "Yes, I am his disciple and I am glad to let you know that," Peter, as it were, stepped on the other side of the fire and said, "No guys, I'm with you. I don't know that man. I'm not one of his disciples." Can you imagine? Do you see the treachery of that? Do you see the betrayal of that? The Lord God in human flesh, the sweet Savior who has loved Peter and forgiven him and revealed great things to him and done nothing but show him the greatness of divine love and majesty, and Peter was an eyewitness to these things, because a couple of crooks around a fire questioned him closely, Peter set the love of Christ aside and said, "I don't know the man." And Christ here in John 21, comes to Peter, look at verse 16, and he drops the comparison to the others and just asks Peter a one-on-one question here in verse 16, "He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?'" And Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." And Jesus said to him, "Shepherd

My sheep." Do you see it again, Christian? Jesus accepted the confession and forgave Peter.

Let me ask you the question again from a little different angle, as you've been out in the world maybe out in business, maybe at school, secular setting, things of Christ come up and have you held your tongue, laughed at the blasphemies in order to join in and not stand apart for Christ? Do you know something about what that is like, and as you're now here with the people of God under the word of God, you feel the weight of that? Christian, let me tell you that if you have distanced yourself from Christ to avoid conflict or ridicule from men and you're now feeling the pain, you're now humbled before Christ, humbled before the cross and you're just saying, "O God, forgive me for being like that. Forgive me for my own betrayal and treachery toward Christ." Do you know what Scripture says to you? Do you know what the word of God says as you put your faith in Christ? Scripture says he forgives you. Scripture says, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." Let's look at that verse over in Hebrews for just a minute just so you see it in the text with your own eyes, not simply on my quoting. There is a wonderful complete restoration to you in Christ that even your worst betrayals of Christ, he says, "I'm not going to hold it against you."

Look at Hebrews: 17 and 18. I'll give you a moment, I hear those pages rustling. I hear those iPads clicking down to Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10:17 and 18, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. Now, where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin. Therefore, brethren," verse 19, "since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." There it is in the language of God. There it is on the certified authority of the power of the blood of Christ. There it is on the promise of God saying, "I remember this no more. I hold it not against you. Come," as it were, "into the presence of God with boldness and with a full assurance that he gladly receives you in love, not because of your deserving, not because you haven't failed in your boasts, but because the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." And we are fully restored to a complete union with God, fully justified without any diminishment, beloved, because the blood of Christ, because the righteousness of Christ has been credited to your account in your salvation. This is a bold statement but this is what Christ has purchased for us. You have as much right in the presence of God as Jesus himself does because you go in not on your own merit but on the full righteousness and the shed blood of Christ. You are fully justified. You are fully reconciled. There is no space between you and God even in your failed boasts, even in your failed love.

You see, beloved, look at the way that Jesus dealt with Peter. Look at the awfulness of his denials in his human flesh and see Jesus forgiving him, restoring him and sending him into ministry, and recognize that that is the way that he deals with you also. There is no unique privilege that Peter had in salvation that is not given to you. Just as Jesus forgave all of Peter's sins, received him and sent him and commissioned him to serve, so in the

same way, beloved, as a Christian, Jesus receives you fully, holds nothing against you. Your sins and your lawless deeds he remembers no more, even the treachery that you've shown against his name since your salvation. Jesus says, "Peter, go tend My lambs." Scripture tells you as a Christian here today, your sins and your lawless deeds he remembers no more.

Isn't that wonderful? Isn't this like the best news that there could possibly be? Isn't that the answer? Isn't that the balm? As the passage we read in Hebrews said, sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, having your accusing conscience silenced by the blood of Christ, having the righteousness of Christ answer every failed dimension of your life, giving you everything that is necessary to be fully reconciled to God, isn't this the most wonderful thing in the world? What I want you to see is that there is no qualification to it. God hasn't given you a conditional love in Christ, he has given you a full and complete pardon of all of your sins so that you can approach him with full assurance that he receives you and holds nothing against you any longer. Beloved, this is why we celebrate communion. This is why we remember. It should echo in your mind, "Oh, but I don't deserve that." That's precisely the point. That's why we look with all humility to the cross and with all gratitude to the cross and we recognize that all of our hope is in Christ alone, and that in Christ, there are no qualifications. In Christ, there are no echoes unanswered in the back of your conscience, "But do you know what I said on that one occasion? Do you realize how blasphemous it was?" Yeah, Christ knows and he paid the price and it is settled and it is put away never to be raised against you again.

There is a final thing that I would show you from Peter's restoration here, point 3: that Christ forgives even your misplaced trust. Christ forgives your misplaced trust, and these are all kind of just different variations of saying pretty much the same thing, in some ways. You know that as you go through the Gospels, throughout the Gospels, Peter is brash and he is assertive and he is boastful. As we saw earlier, "Lord, they may all deny you, they may fall away but I won't." Peter boasting always in himself it seems so often in the Gospels, proclaiming his own insight, proclaiming his own commitments. It was obvious that he was a man who trusted in himself as you go through the Gospels. But now Peter is perhaps like some of you, face-to-face with his own failure; in undeniable ways recognizing that he was not the man that he had boasted to be. The third question brought that out. The third question nailed down the obvious parallels to his prior three denials.

Jesus asked Peter about his love a third and final time in John 21:17. Look at there with me. "He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?'" Now he uses a different word for "love" here but, as I said earlier, these words are used interchangeably throughout the Gospel of John. The point of this passage is not, contrary to some, to distinguish different kinds of love and to show Peter that he didn't even have the lesser love. That's not the point here because these words are used interchangeably and notice that the text says that Jesus asked him the third time. He wasn't asking him a new question that was different from the prior two, this was the same question he has been asking all along. It's the third time he asks him this question, "Simon, son of John, and do you love Me?" The point is not about a different lesser love, the point here is that, "Peter,

you denied me three times and I need to ask you a third time to complete the reversal of those prior denials that you have made against me."

This third question grieved Peter. Look at it there in verse 17, "'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time." Do you see it again? Twice in this verse it says "the third time." It's not a new question. This is the same question being asked for a third time and Peter is grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" Why is this such a grief? It's a grief because the parallel is so obvious. "O Lord, it was just a few days ago where I said, no, I don't know you. No, I don't belong to that man. No, I'm not associated with his name." And the pain of having that brought out into full light and full accountability is brought to him and the memory pierced him and he is broken, as it were, before the question. Why? Because it couldn't be denied. Because there was no cover up possible.

Here it is fully exposed the third time and look at what Peter does. Look at how he answers in his grief and see, beloved, where his trust is. This is the real point of verse 17. "He said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.'" What is he doing here? He's appealing to divine omniscience. He's no longer boasting in himself, "O Lord, I love You!" He has shifted his trust away from his own ability, from his own commitments. He has abandoned that and he says, "Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you. My trust is in what you know to be true, not what my life would seem to show about it." He is trusting in the Lord, not in himself as he makes this confession. There is no confidence in self as he makes this statement.

What has your life been like this past week, Christian? For some of you, I am sure you look back and say, "If somebody just had that window of my life to go on, they would wonder if I knew Christ at all. I had no time for Christ. I wasn't interested in the things of Christ. I pursued the things of the world. My mouth was not what it should have been. My relationships were broken. There is nothing here in the current state of my life to point to and say this shows that I'm a Christian." You're filled with the pockmarks of your failed promises and it all weighs on your conscience right now. You are humbled by your ongoing struggles with sin. The point here, I'll say it once again, is not to whip you over those things. The point today is to remind you of the whole point of the cross, the whole point of what Christ has done for you. Scripture says he forgives you. Scripture says that your sins and lawless deeds he will remember no more.

Look at the end of verse 17, Jesus says in just the firm commitment of love toward Peter, "Jesus said to him, 'Tend My sheep.'" He accepts the confession. He doesn't contradict Peter. He says, "Yeah, Peter, I know all things and what you're saying isn't true." He receives that confession of love, of faith and trust, and sends Peter into ministry. "If you love Me, tend My lambs, shepherd My sheep, tend My sheep." It's a full forgiveness and Peter, not trusting in himself, reposes his confidence entirely in Christ and says, "Lord, you know what is true. Lord, you know the truth about me. You see all of my failures. I ask you, look through all of that and see what's in my heart that, Lord, I truly do love you despite my prior denials." And the fact that Christ sends him into ministry says, shows, "I don't hold it against you, Peter."



Christian, the whole point that I would have you see here as we look at this in anticipation of communion, is that in the midst of your failures of this past week, your sins, your rebellion, all the conflict that you now feel the weight of and now you turn away from, what I want you to see as you come to the table is that there is not a barrier between you and the Lord. The whole point of his body and blood was that there would be a full reconciliation between you and your God; that you could come with a sense of assurance that Christ receives you and receives you well. Not holding back. I know the feelings that you sometimes have as you are confessing sin and you wonder if there's going to be consequences, if it's somehow going to be held against you. What we see in the Gospels, what we see in the way that Christ dealt with Peter, what we see in the promises of God is this: their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. So as we come to Christ, we come not in confidence in ourselves, we come not boasting of our successful love, we come not boasting of anything about ourselves, we deny self-righteousness. At the same time, we're not restrained by the presence of our sins that we have committed because we realize the whole point of the Gospel, the whole point of the cross was that those things would be put away, that Christ in love has done this for you so that you would be received into the full fellowship of God without condition, without blame, without hesitation.

So Christ sends Peter out to feed the people of God God's word, to lead them and protect them. What was the consequence of that? How can we know that the forgiveness that Christ promised to Peter was real? That the reconciliation was full? That there was nothing left to the denials? That they had been put away and that Peter had been fully received and sent into service? What's the proof of that? What's the evidence of that that we could see from God's word? We read the book of Acts. We read 1 and 2 Peter. We see in Acts 2 that Peter preached a sermon and 3,000 souls were saved in response. We see in Acts 3 that he healed the lame. We see that he brought the Gospel to Gentiles in Acts 10. We see him raising the dead in Acts 9. We see the full power of God being poured out on his life. Why? Because Peter was fully reconciled to him and God had sent him out, set aside, paid for, canceled the debt of the sins and denials, fully owned Peter as his own and sent him out as an apostolic representative with a ministry unlike any other. That's how great the forgiveness was. That's how full and complete and free it was. The fruit of Peter's subsequent life showed the fullness of the reconciliation that God had given to him and – watch this – also showed the sincerity of his commitment in these three confessions of his love for Christ in response.

How could the Lord do that? How could the Lord use a failure like Peter and such a blatant betrayal three times in the hour of Christ's greatest need in human flesh? How could he do that? Beloved, don't you see the whole point, the whole point is that the Gospel that we preach, the Christ in whom we trust, this is all about grace, not your merit. Christianity is about grace. It is about God showing undeserved favor to sinners. It is about Christ receiving sinful men and women like you and forgiving them when they come in repentant faith. You see, the whole idea, contrary to every other religion in the world, the whole idea is that as you come to Christ, you would come knowing that you have eternal life, 1 John 5:13; that you would come with a sense of certainty that all of

your sins have been covered and that a friend like Christ, a brother like Christ, has provided for you completely and that there is nothing separating you from God any longer; that a holy God has received you; that a loving God will keep you; that you are fully reconciled and there is no further weight to be had on your conscience. No more fear. No more dread. No more guilt. Paid for. Covered. Satisfied in Christ. That's what we remember as we celebrate communion today.

Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

*Our Lord, we would take a moment, first of all, to thank you for the fullness of the salvation that you have purchased for us with your own blood at the cross of Calvary. Thank you that you loved us and gave yourself up for us. Greater love has no man than this, that he would lay down his life for his friends and you said we are your friends if we do what you command us and you command us to believe in Christ. And so, Lord Jesus, in you we have a friend unlike any other friend, a friend who has loved us, who has covered all of our debts, who has reconciled us to God. We thank you for that and we thank you that that's not simply a general statement but that it goes to the specifics, that it goes to the darkest crimson stain of our sin. That which most defiled us, you have cleansed us from. The greatest debt, the greatest failure, our greatest betrayal of Christ, gracious Lord, you paid even for that. We realize that in some of the past events of the past few days, that our life may not bear the marks of loving you very well but for those of us that are in Christ, O Lord, we join with the petition of Peter, we look not to ourselves, not to our own performance, but we look to you, O Christ, and say, "O Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you." And we thank you, Father, that that appealed to your omniscience by your children is one that you receive and that you truly do know the truth of us. You see through the failures to see the seed of genuine love and faith. That itself is a gift from you. And so like a disobedient child reaching out in arms of love to a father to be received once more, Lord, we come to the table, reaching out once more to that free and great forgiveness that is ours in Christ and remembering the body, remembering the blood of Christ which was the full redemption price of our sin.*

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