

It was the great design of the Son of God, when He descended into a state of humiliation here, to make restitution both to God and to man, of what He never took away. There was a robbery committed upon God and man by sin and Satan; so our glorious Redeemer makes a restitution of the stolen goods, he restores both unto God what was His due, and unto man what he had lost. When God made man, He made him a rich man; He bestowed all manner of goods upon him that was necessary to make him live comfortably here, and to make him eternally happy hereafter.

Satan, by this time, having fallen, like a star from heaven to earth, presently saw man standing and acting in the capacity of God's viceroy, bearing His image, and having the whole creation in subjection to him. This filled the enemy with envy; and he resolves to commit a robbery upon man, and to strike at God's sovereignty. Satan prevailed upon our first parents, seducing them into eating the forbidden fruit.

Man entered into a rebellion against God with the devil. He justly forfeited all the spiritual and temporal goods that God bestowed upon him, and likewise lost his title to a happy eternity, and became the enemy's vassal. Thus the enemy robbed him of all the goods that God bestowed upon him.

The eternal Son of God having a delight in the sons of men, and beholding them in this miserable plight, enters upon a resolution that He will take on man's nature as a coat of mail, and that He will be avenged upon that serpent that beguiled our first parents. And accordingly, in the fullness of time, He comes, and is manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and to recover all the stolen goods. He spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them in His cross, and then divides a portion with the great, and the spoil with the strong; thus He says, "Then I restored that which I took not away."

The Robbery Committed

1. There was a robbery committed **UPON GOD**. The devil's great aim by tempting man to sin was to rob God of His glory – the glory of His *sovereignty* as Lord and Lawgiver over all His creation; the glory of His *wisdom* in laying down a law to man; the glory of His *power* in carrying out His threats upon disobedience; the glory of His *holiness* by man violating His holy law and bringing sin into His world; the glory of His *justice*, for the language of sin is that God will not require it; the glory of His *goodness*, for God had given man the whole earth, but that goodness was despised and trampled under foot by man's sin; the glory of His

faithfulness to be true to His word, "In the day that thou eatest of it, thou shalt surely die." Satan said, "Thou shalt not surely die." So you see an attempt was made to rob God of the glory of all His perfections at once.

2. There was a robbery committed **UPON MAN**. The glory of *human nature* was quite marred by sin. Man was made the top of the creation; but by sin he was brought below the very beasts that perish: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but my people know not me, saith the Lord; and they do not consider" their obligations to me (*Isaiah 1:3*).

Sin robbed man of his *sight*. Our spiritual eyes were put out and we are born blind since that time (*2 Cor 4:3, 4; Eph 4:18*). We were robbed of our very *life*, and are now among the congregation of the dead, "dead in trespasses and sins" (*Eph 2:1*). Sin robbed man of his *liberty* unto any thing that is spiritually good; and ever since we have become captives to the devil, the world, and our lusts (*Rom 3:10-12; Eph 2:2,3; 2 Tim 2:25,26*). Sin robbed us of our *wisdom*; every man by nature is playing the fool, spending his days chasing after the vanities of this life which cannot satisfy (*Isaiah 55:2*). Sin robbed us of our *righteousness*; humanity is but a lump of guilty criminals before God, condemned under the sentence of His broken law (*John 3:18*).

Sin robbed us of our *beauty*, of the beautiful image of God, consisting in holiness and conformity to His likeness. And sin robbed us of our *health*. Man was a healthy creature both in soul and body before the entry of sin, but it's quite different now (*Isaiah 1:5,6; Mark 2:17*). Sin robbed us of our *peace*, and set us at war with God, with ourselves, and with one another (*Isaiah 48:22; Rom 8:7*). Sin robbed man of that *paradise* of pleasure in which God set him at his creation. No sooner had man sinned but he was thrust out of the garden of Eden (*Gen 3:24*). Sin robbed us of *heaven*, and made us heirs of hell and wrath. In short, sin has robbed us of our *God*, so that we are "without God in the world" (*Eph 2:12*). This is a robbery that cannot be paralleled! Goods have been stolen from both God and man by man's sin.

Restitution Made

The Son of God, our glorious Immanuel, makes a restitution of what was taken away both from God and from man. He restores unto God His due, and restores unto man his loss.

1. Christ makes restitution of glory **TO GOD**, and that in the highest measure and degree, as was sung at His birth, "Glory to God in the highest" (*Luke 2:14*), and as He declares to His Father at the close of His life, "I have glorified thee on the earth" (*John 17:4*).

He restores glory to the divine *sovereignty*, being made of a woman, and made under the law, that He might magnify it, and so maintain the honour of the great Lawgiver. He restores glory to the divine *wisdom*, for Christ is "the wisdom of God" (*1 Cor 1:24*). Never were the treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge so much expended as in the person and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. He restores glory to the divine *power*, for Christ is "the power of God" (*1 Cor 1:24*). When He went forth to the great work of man's redemption, He went forth armed with infinite power to manage it. How gloriously was the power of God displayed when He "came from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength," spoiling principalities and powers, who had spoiled God in His glory, and man of all that was valuable unto him (*Isaiah 63:1-5; Col 2:15*).

Christ restores glory to the *holiness* of God. There is such a brightness of divine holiness shining in the person and mediation of Christ, that when the angels look upon Him, they are dazzled, they are overwhelmed, not being able to behold it, they cover themselves, and cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory" (*Isaiah 6:3; John 12:41; Rev 4:8*). He restores glory to the divine *justice*; for in the work of man's redemption, justice gets a complete and full satisfaction when judgment is executed upon the glorious Surety: "It pleased the LORD to bruise Him" (*Isaiah 53:10*). He restores glory to the divine *goodness*. God was good to man, but man trampled it under foot. But in Christ there is a higher display of the divine goodness than ever was seen by men or angels. The love of God, O how does it shine in the giving of His only begotten Son into the world! "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His own Son to be a propitiation for our sins" (*1 John 4:10*).

And Christ restores glory to the divine *faithfulness*. The faithfulness of God engaged in the penalty was trode upon by man and the devil; but the faithfulness of God is maintained in the execution of that penalty threatened against man in the person of our glorious Immanuel. Thus you see that Christ restores "glory to God in the highest," which He never took away.

2. Christ makes restitution **TO MAN**; for man was robbed of all that was valuable to him, either for time or eternity. First, Christ restores the glory of the *human nature* which was debased by sin. The Son of God comes and takes the human nature into a personal union with Himself, and thereby exalts the human nature above the angelical nature. O Sirs, look up and see your nature exalted, taken out of the dunghill, and

set on the throne of God. The throne of God is called "the throne of the Lamb," because our nature is there in a personal union with the great God (*Heb 1:5,6; 2:16*).

Christ restores *light* to a sin-darkened world: "I am the light of the world" (*John 8:12*). "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up" (*Matt 4:16*); and further, He "shines in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (*2 Cor 4:6*); thus He restores our *sight*, "He came into the world that they which see not might see" (*John 9:39*), yea, His mission is the "recovering of sight to the blind" (*Luke 4:18*) that "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (*Eph 1:18*).

Sin robbed us of *life*; Christ makes restitution of that. "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (*John 11:25,26*). Christ restores our *liberty*; He buys it at the hand of justice, and then takes the executioner and binds him, and spoils him of his power over the poor captive, and goes forth "proclaiming liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison-doors to them that are bound" (*Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18*).

Again, Satan and sin spoiled us of our *wisdom*, so that ever since we are infatuated, and like fools, "spend our money for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not" (*Isaiah 55:2*). Well, Christ restores wisdom unto fools and babes; He is "made of God unto us wisdom" (*1 Cor 1:30*), and when we come to Him, He makes us wiser than our teachers; wise to know the mysteries of the kingdom that are "hid from the wise and prudent of this world, and revealed unto babes" (*Matt 11:25*). "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (*Luke 8:10*). Again, Did sin rob us of our *righteousness*? Christ makes restitution of that; for He is "the LORD our righteousness" (*Jer 23:6; 33:16*), and "God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (*2 Cor 5:21*).

Did sin spoil us of the beautiful *image of God*? Christ makes restitution of that; for the very moment that a poor sinner looks to Him with the eye of faith, he gets the print of the second Adam drawn again upon his soul, and it is by beholding His glory that we are changed into the same image (*2 Cor 3:18*). And Christ restores our *peace*; "He is our peace" (*Eph 2:14*). "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (*Rom 5:1*).

Did sin take away our *riches* and *treasures*? Christ opens up a far better treasure, even “unsearchable riches” (*Eph 3:8*); and He tells us that “riches are with Him, yea, durable riches and righteousness” (*Prov 8:18*). Did sin rob us of our *God*, and leave us without God in the world? Christ makes restitution of that; for what is Christ? He is “Immanuel: God with us!” (*Matt 1:23*). Thus you can see that Christ restores unto man that which He took not away.

The *believer in Christ* is the wisest man in the world, even though the world may look upon him as a fool. Why? because he comes to Christ, and gets restitution of all the losses he suffered. His losses are all made up in the Saviour; for he comes, and out of Christ’s fullness he receives an endless supply of grace, treasures, and bounty (*John 1:16*).

See the folly and madness of the *unbeliever*. The generality of the hearers of the gospel will not come to Christ to get restitution of what they lost: “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life” (*John 5:40*). O what folly is this! that such fools are the most part of sinners under the gospel, that though Christ counsels, calls, and beseeches them to come and get restitution of their God, of their life, and all losses, yet they will not hear, “My people would not hearken to my voice; I have called, and ye refused” (*Psalms 81:11; Prov 1:24*).

See the folly of the *legalist*, that goes about to make restitution to God, and to himself, of what was taken away. The legalist, like the proud Pharisee, comes to God with his filthy rags, and thinks to please God with this and that obedience. But, O Sirs! consider that salvation is “not by works of righteousness which we have done,” for “by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (*Titus 3:5; Gal 2:16*). You will never repair your losses, nor the dishonour you have done to God, but only by coming to Christ, who is “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (*Rom 10:4*).

Sirs, I have a *proclamation* to issue forth in the name of the Lord Immanuel. Be it known unto men, that whereas two great robbers have entered into the world, namely, sin and Satan, and have stolen away all the valuable goods which once pertained to Adam and his family, whereby they are all reduced to the utmost poverty and misery; it has pleased God the Father, from the love He bears to mankind-sinners, to send His only begotten Son into the world, to repair all their losses, and to restore what He took not away. Accordingly, the eternal Son of God hath come into the world, and having armed Himself with human nature and divine power, He hath gone forth and pursued the robbers, and taken Satan captive, and

bruised his head, and destroyed that destroyer of mankind; He hath made an end of sin, and hath brought in a robe of righteousness, and hath recovered all the goods that the robbers had taken away, all the goods and gear men lost; He hath recovered them with wonderful advantage; and the goods are all in His hand, and He hath sent out us, who are His ambassadors, to cause all mankind to see what losses they have sustained; and whoever has lost any thing, their God and their souls, heaven and happiness, He is willing to restore it unto mankind, and that without any security; for He will restore it all “without money and without price” (*Isaiah 55:1*).

Come, and get your own again; for Christ hath received gifts for men. O come, come, Sirs, and get from the glorious Restorer what you have lost, what you stand in need of, through time and eternity! O come and get your life, your God, and your souls again for a prey!

I will tell you, many a man have got their losses repaired; an innumerable company have got restitution from Him: “I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands” (*Rev 7:9*). Now, when others have come and got reparation, will you not come and get reparation, too?

O Sirs, consider what you are doing. There is no hope of reparation after death; but if you come for reparation, you must come now to the King’s Son; therefore, “Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” I cry to all mankind to come and recover your losses from the Son of God. Do not say, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing,” for I assure you, that He who is infinitely wise, and knows you better than you know yourself, declares that you are “poor, miserable, wretched, blind, and naked” through the robbery that sin hath committed (*Rev 3:17*).

You say, “I cannot get time to come because of worldly business.” Let me tell you that your worldly business is but mere trifles in comparison with this; therefore make all other business but by-business in comparison with this one thing needful. You may say, “I will get time enough afterwards.” I will tell you, delays are dangerous; you know not what a day may bring forth. Death may come, and then you are gone for ever. Another says, “I am afraid the time is gone already, and that He will not make a reparation of my losses.” No, Sirs! I will tell you, that while there is life

there is hope, and the Son of God says, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out” (*John 6:37*).

But O, you say, “I fear my losses are irreparable.” I will tell you, poor sinner, as broken a ship has come to land, as we use to say; as great sinners as you have got a reparation of their losses, and a full pardon to boot. What think you of the Dying Thief, and Mary Magdalene, and Saul of Tarsus? The same hand that repaired their losses is ready to repair yours; “His hand is not shortened, that it cannot save” (*Isaiah 59:1*).

Another says, “What if I be not among the number of the elect?” I answer, You have nothing to do with election; for “the secret things belong unto the Lord, but that which is revealed unto us and our children” (*Deut 29:29*). Election does not belong directly to the business of believing, but only things revealed: and if revealed things belong unto us, then put in your claim: for “the promise is unto you and your children; to you is the word of this salvation sent” (*Acts 2:39; 13:26*).

You say, “I am impotent, and cannot come.” I answer, That was one of the losses Christ came to restore: “He gives strength to the weak, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength” (*Isaiah 40:29*). You say, “My heart is hard; my will is stubborn.” He that restores that which He took not away offers to restore your good heart and your will, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power” (*Psalms 110:3*). “I will take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh” (*Ezek 36:26*). Come then! whoever you may be, in the name of Christ, Come! and receive all freely from His gracious hand.

And lastly, a word to believers, who have got their losses repaired by the glorious Immanuel. Whenever you meet with new losses, come back to the blessed Restorer. Satan will come round; he goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, and to take away any goods you have got; but when the enemy has robbed you, I say, come back to Christ by faith, and you will find restitution again, that you might praise Him with an endless song of “Victory in Jesus,” who restores that which He took not away.

—Adapted from the writings of Ebenezer Erskine
(Scotland, 18th century)

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A ROBBERY COMMITTED AND RESTITUTION MADE

“Then I restored that which I took not away”—Psalms 69:4

There are several passages in this psalm that are applied directly to our Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament – “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up” (*v 9, see John 2:17*); and that which immediately follows, “The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me” (*see Rom 15:3*); and “They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (*v 21, see Matt 27:48 & Mark 15:23*). But we need no other proof of this than the first phrase of our text, “They hated me without cause” (*see John 15:25*). Christ complains of the causeless hatred of His enemies, and then following He complains of their multitude, “They are more than the hairs of mine head,” and of their implacable cruelty, “They that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty.” This is how our blessed Lord was treated by the world whom He came to save.

When there is such a powerful combination of hell and earth against Him, one would think that He would have stopped, and gone no further; but He did not faint, nor was He discouraged, for all the opposition that came against Him; for you see, in the word I have read, what He was doing for lost sinners, when He was meeting with harsh entertainment from them. Then, even then, He says, “I restored that which I took not away.”

We have here a robbery disclaimed; a robbery was committed, but it is disclaimed by the Son of God: “I took not away.” We have a restitution made of that robbery: “I restored,” saith Christ, “what I took not away.” The work of man’s redemption is a restitution both to God and man of what was taken away by sin and Satan. And this work was voluntary. No man is obliged to make restitution of what is taken away by another, unless he does it of his own accord. Then we can see when it was that our glorious Immanuel made this restitution. It was when His enemies were doing their worst; when they were destroying Him; when they were robbing Him of His name, and of His very life. In the first verse, it was when the waters of God’s wrath were coming into His soul, even then, He says, “I restored that which I took not away.”