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Eternal Punishment.

A SERMON

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Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek Thy name, O Lord. Let them be confounded and troubled forever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish; that men may know that Thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the Most High over all the earth.—Ps. lxxxiii: 16-18.

Some men would make sin a very light thing, and so count all teaching of everlasting punishment a monstrous error, wholly incongruous with our ideas of a just God. Others would make God the author of everything, sin included, and therefore responsible for all sin's enormity, and hence count the everlasting punishment of man an outrage on justice. God's revealed word strikes away the foundations of both these philosophic theories. It declares sin to be rebellion against the Holy Ruler of the Universe. It describes it as corrupting the whole being of man. It shows it to be abhorrent to a righteous God, putting the sinner out of all connection with the purity of heaven, and bringing necessarily upon him all the woes that separation from God implies. It further teaches that God in no sense whatever is the author of sin, that He never decreed it or encouraged it or connived at it, but that it is the offspring of man's unfettered will, and that on man alone is the responsibility. This world of mankind is not a machine made to go as it does by God's decrees. It is a world of independent wills, made independent in the likeness of God at the creation. God made man upright, but man sought out the many inventions of sin. God brought up and nourished children, but they rebelled against Him. To say that all this was pre-arranged and effected by God Himself is to say that His word is all a sham, and that His expostulations with the wicked are all gross hypocrisy. God declares that He wishes all men to come to repentance. What does this mean, if it does not mean that God both has no hand whatever in their sin, and also has offered His grace to all as far as He consistently could.

We are to take things as we find them, and not philosophize against facts and revelation. There is a war against God. The human heart is engaged in that war, and is an enemy to God.

Christ, the Restorer.

A SERMON

PREACHED BY Theodore L. Cuyler, D.D.

He restoreth my soul.—Psalms xxiii: 3.

The twenty-third is everybody's favorite among the Psalms. There are certain chapters in God's Word that seem to link themselves to almost every human heart, having an adaptation to every line of life and every description of circumstances. So it is that from childhood, on even to gray hairs, there is no one Psalm so often read, so often prayed, so often sung, as this shepherd's Psalm of David. Nay, it is a sort of nightingale among the minstrels of the Psalter; for, as it is the habit of that bird to sing amidst the silence and darkness of the night, so it seems as if this exquisite little psalm makes itself heard in the gloom of the Valley of Death, and makes its nest, as it were, in these deep gorges of life, so that those called to walk there not only have the rod and the staff, but the sweet note of Heaven's love sounding in their ears. One of the sweetest, one of the richest, of these God-given songs in the night is this twenty-third Psalm, the pastoral chant of the shepherd David. And have you not observed that it comes right after the twenty-second, which I am inclined to think is something more than a mere coincidence? The twenty-second is the Psalm of the Cross and of Redemption. In the twenty-second we have Christ crucified; then, when the way is prepared by this Messianic revelation, then it is that we are brought into this beautiful study and enjoyment of Him as the Shepherd and the Restorer of the soul. For I shall speak this morning of Jesus as the Restorer; not vaguely of the restoring love of God, but specifically of Jesus Christ as a Restorer, bearing in mind all the while that Jesus appears to us as the Shepherd, for that was His own description of Himself. "I am the Good Shepherd; I lay down my life for the sheep." All that chapter in the book of John, in which Jesus Christ describes Himself as the Good Shepherd, flows right out of this twenty-third Psalm as the natural New Testament sequel; so that to-day let us think of Jesus as the Shepherd who restores the wanderer, as the Shepherd who puts back in the fold what has gone astray, as the Shepherd who guards and feeds, as the Shepherd who will finally bring home His own flock into glory.

Then, in the first place, let us talk and think of Jesus as the home-bringer of the wandering sheep—for the original mean-

ing of the Hebrew word is to *bring back*. "He is bringing back my soul" is the Saxon translation, and the closest, probably, to the original. Bringing back implies wandering, a far astray condition of the heart, a dwelling in the "far country" of sin, so that Christ goes out to seek and to save the wandering soul. Oh! how beautifully comes in here that passage, "All we like sheep have gone astray; every one of us had turned to his own or her own ways," and then God laid on the Shepherd, the Restorer, "the iniquities of us all."

Three features appear conspicuous here under this head. The alliteration will help you remember them. These are, RUIN, REDEMPTION, RESTORATION. Every one of us was ruined through wandering; every one of us was in a state of guilt hereditarily and afterwards by actual transgression. That state of guilt in which you and I were by nature was a state of alienation from God—a state in which there is an entire loss of original righteousness—a state in which the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint by corruption—a state of exposure to the justice and wrath of God here, and to the pains of perdition hereafter and forever. That is the state of ruin—just such ruin as a voluntary transgression brings. It is a ruin from which no one ever yet recovered himself any more than the fallen pillars of Balbec could by their own power put themselves on their vacant pedestals to-morrow morning—nay, any more than you would expect a resurrection in Greenwood Cemetery this hour. Bear in mind, in the first place, that the ruin by sin is complete.

The next point is *redemption* through Christ. It is purchasing by Calvary's blood salvation for the wandering sheep—making it not only possible that the wandering soul *may* be saved, but certain that the wandering soul *will* be saved when it is once in the hands of Christ. Oh, I have no patience in preaching an atonement which barely makes salvation possible! If redemption by the blood of Calvary means anything, 't means the positive and everlasting recovery and security of all those for whom Jesus shed His blood; and all those that accept that blood and put themselves in the Shepherd's hands for restoration are forever safe. And how this doctrine gushes out with tenderness! Full of sweetness is it, like a honey-comb; how it drips with love! It is a redemption, not for angels, seraphim and cherubim, but for beggars, outlaws, and willful, disobedient, ungrateful rebels. That is what redemption means. It means that the worse a man is, the more God pities him. The very murderers that put Jesus to death had the very first offer of His love; as if Christ had said to them: "Go to Jerusalem and tell them they can get at my heart in a better way than with a spear. They need but to come with the prayer of faith and they shall be saved." This love is

lavished even upon the wanderer. I have heard the story of a father whose son, having had too much to spend at home for his own good, ran away, after the fashion of the Prodigal Son, and led a wild, reckless career in California. Report came to his father from time to time of bad things, of worse things, and of still worse; letters were sent to the erring boy, which remained unanswered, until, finally, the father, meeting a man who was going to San Francisco, gave him his son's address, and said: "Look him up, and just tell him that his father has never ceased to love him as much as ever, in spite of his sinful course." The man hunted San Francisco through, until he found the young man one evening in a gambling-house. He beckoned him out, and in the street he told him his name, when he had left his father, and why he had sought him. "Your father," said the gentleman, "said I should look you up here, and should tell you from him that *he loves you yet!*" The young man dropped his head and the tears started. "Oh, my God!" said he, "did my father say he loved me yet?" How many an one has laid his broken heart upon the mercy-seat and cried, "O God! canst Thou love me again?—me, the sinner—me, the rejecter of Thy grace—me, the trampler on the blood of Thy Son—me, who have done despite to Thy Holy Spirit—canst thou love me yet?" Yes, Christ, the Restorer, does love and redeems by love, and recovers such by the power of His love.

That is the third "R"—Ruin first; Redemption, by the blood of Christ, second; and, third, Recovery. Restoration is the word more in the line of our text; and this restoration, by Jesus Christ, restores to God's favor one who has wandered from Him. It restores what was lost in Adam's fall—righteousness; it restores what we never could regain but through Christ. It restores hope, spiritual life, and heirship of heaven.

Now, then, if such be Christ's work as a Restorer, who are these that He restores? "He restoreth *my* soul." Oh, how much turns on the word "my" in this passage! How different this would read "He restoreth souls," or "everybody's soul"! He restoreth *my* soul. When Spurgeon went down one day into his Orphan House, where he found from day to day the friends of the orphan children sending them money and giving them cake and contributing to their pleasure, one little fellow came up to him and said: "Mr. Spurgeon, suppose you were a poor boy here, and hadn't any uncles, nor aunties, nor sisters, nor friends ever to send you any spending money or candy, or even to remember you through the year? *Because that's me!*" Spurgeon says, "I handed out the silver in my pocket very soon to that lad." "That's me!" If you cannot read of redemption and say, "That's *me!* I am the needy one; I am the guilty one; the blessing is offered to

me," this gospel is practically to you a mere abstraction. It is when you can put the personal pronoun into your religion and into God's promises and into redeeming love that it becomes to you a power and a joy.

The next point I would present is, that Christ is a Restorer to health. That touches all the diseases of Christians in this congregation. Let me feel your pulse this morning, brother! I am afraid it beats low. There are too many whose pulses beat low. The first inquiry of the physician when he comes in the sick-room is made at the wrist. He always explores the wrist for the pulse. He wants to know how the "regulator" beats. Christ is putting his hand often to thy wrist, brother, to see how the pulse moves—how many strokes to the minute there are. Is it so slow that He shakes His head sadly? How is thy appetite for the Bible? What was thy appetite for prayer last week? What is thy hunger for spiritual blessings? The pulse is one indicator; the appetite is another; the strength of the limbs is another. How nimble art thou, brother, in the path of obedience? How large is thy activity for the Master? All spiritual diseases come from the heart's wandering from God; for the source of the backslider's disease is from the *heart*. Christ can heal that, but He never will until you come to Him and ask Him. Haven't you observed how Christ, when He was upon earth, went hither and thither, according as He was invited or beckoned? Christ goes when He is sent for. If thou longest for the Master's coming to thee to restore thee He will do so, but there must be a prayer on thy part and a deep desire. You have got to desire this, and to lament your backsliding, or you will never be delivered from it. But as soon as you ask Christ's love to come in, and Christ's power to be extended, then you will feel the quickening at once. For another meaning of the text—(and it is the meaning that Albert Barnes gives to it)—is that Christ *re-invigorates the life*. He restores tone and vitality to the blood, imparts strength to the muscles and vigor to the footsteps—a re-invigorating process. That is a very legitimate meaning of the text spiritually—whatever may be the original meaning of it in Hebrew. But you must come back to Christ as the first thing. You must return to Him to be restored to your former condition as a Christian. Do not stop with only the restoration to a former condition. Try after something better than that. This is the mistake with many a backslider. He says, "Oh, if I could only go back where I was! If I could only put myself in the condition I was in ten years ago—or even last year!" That is not the point. It is to get closer to Christ, with a new experience of that love and a new abhorrence of sin and a new diligence in duty; not comparing yourself with a former self, but praying to be better than you ever were

before, even in your very *best* days. That prodigal son could not be restored to his father's love and the vacant seat until he set his footsteps towards home. There was no blessing for him in the "far country." Nothing could possibly be done for him while he was in the swine-yards, or holding in his filthy hands the wretched husks. He was a swinish creature while he was there. First it is "I will arise; I will go"; then restoring love meets him outside the gate and brings him in to the fatted calf, the ring and the table. That parable of the Prodigal Son has a world of sound theology in it. No restoration to the prodigal until he himself comes back, and no recovery to the backslider until he comes to pray for mercy and sets his face towards Christ, and with tears begs to be restored again to the love of Him whom he has betrayed!

I might dwell for a moment (as a third illustration) upon the office of a picture-restorer. He takes an old painting, which might have been quite a masterly production, which may have been a masterpiece of Guido or Correggio or Raphael, and which had been cast aside. The colors had lost their brightness and had grown dim, and the painting seemed to have lost all its comeliness. The restorer sets to work and removes the over-laying dust and accumulation of dirt, and he brings out the colors vividly again—a delicate process, and one by which sometimes a valuable picture starts into new life and beauty. Oh, brother! does not the canvas of thy heart and daily conduct need that kind of restoration? Are not the hues getting dim, the colors losing their brightness? Is not the resemblance to Christ overlaid, and to a great degree hidden out of view so that it is not distinguishable? Oh, if Jesus Christ would come in as a Restorer, bringing out again the lineaments of holiness, there would be a great many of you that would need to "sit to Him!"

The sin of backsliding is an awful sin. It figures so prominently in the Word that, turning to a Bible text-book recently, I was startled almost to see the large number of cases recited, and the maledictions pronounced upon it. Then, too, in studying the narratives of backsliding in the Bible, I discover this, that men often break just where they seemed strongest. For instance, Noah was a Puritan; yet Noah lies on his back drunk. Moses is the synonym of meekness and patience; Moses grows enraged, and smites the rock too often. Solomon is the synonym of wisdom; yet he plays the fool with women and the wine-cup! John is the representative of love; and John it was that asked Christ to bring down a shower of fire on the little Samaritan village! Peter is the brave, heroic disciple; but Peter turns coward at the sneer of a servant-girl. All these men broke right where they thought themselves strong. Christians sometimes do the same thing. Where they think

themselves strong the enemy breaks through. All those men I have spoken of were restored. I hope poor old Solomon was. I think he must have written the book of Ecclesiastes after he was restored. But for this restoration the Master goes out on errands of kindness, as the father sent the man to California to seek his son, almost as one would go to a morgue to see if a certain one was alive or dead! It must have been hard for Christ to go out after such lost, sinning children as He did—but he still does it! He goes straight after them and restores them; and if backsliding is a terrible thing, it is a glorious thing that there is a backsliders' Restorer in Christ Jesus.

Well, to what does Christ restore the backslider when he is penitent and seeks recovery? He restores him to his true place, which was vacant. He restores him to usefulness. The man is ready again for duty, and feels like living a life of some value to himself and to others. He restores to him peace of conscience. No inconsistent church member ever had any peace of conscience. I tell you, young people, you may run away from a prayer-meeting to a ball if you choose; there will be a sting and a prick the next morning when you wake up and think, "Last night I deliberately denied my Lord and Master, and did what He disapproved." When the sound of the revel has died out, another sound—that of conscience—will come in and say, "You know you did wrong, and Christ knows it." Peace of conscience never comes to a man out of the path of duty. Those fallen men that have been lately brought to the tribunal of civil justice had been tried and punished fifty times before in the court of conscience. That was only the external pronouncement from the tribunal which conscience had already brought in a hundred times. There is no peace in wickedness to the wicked-doer, whether he be a church member or not; but peace of conscience comes through pardon and a voluntary return to the place once forsaken. Oh, what joy there is in coming back to health when we have lain a long time on the sick bed, until we pitied our own poor thin fingers and pale lips! The street was strange to us, and our deserted place in the counting-room or at the fireside was like a foreign country. The first time we come out in the air what a tingle it has! and when we meet our friends again for the first time we feel as if just introduced to them. We are restored. Would that every backslider that has come to this church this morning sick, sick, would feel so sick of *himself* that he would put out his hand to Christ and go home again in the first stages of restoration! "Restore unto me the joys of Thy salvation." That is the fourth point I speak of. The restored backslider goes back to his peace of conscience and to his old place of duty, and once more has the joys of salvation. And he has no power for good while in a state of backsliding. He

is of no use while in that state. He not only has no inward peace, but no external influence. The result is that a church full of backsliders is just as inefficient as ten thousand invalids in a campaign. The general may call the muster-roll; he may send orders to "advance"; but if half his men have deserted and the other half are in the hospital, what chance has he in the field? Just so the Master may be calling His people to a life of activity, but if a part have deserted and a part are on their backs in a spiritual decline, there is no response and no outcoming. First of all, there must be restoration. The deserter must come back to his post, and the invalid must stalk out of the hospital; then the army is fit for service. How many deserters are there here this morning? How many that feel the whole head and the whole heart sick with sin? Jesus alone can restore you.

Now, then, I would address a word to those yet unconverted. I have said so much in reference to backsliding members of Christ's Church, because I feel how vital it is that they should realize their need of restoration, and how important that they should be directed to Christ as a Restorer. They should feel also a longing to be restored, which must be bred from deep disgust and dissatisfaction with themselves. If we would direct half the censure which we pass upon the frailty of others towards *our own* weaknesses and besetting sins, and our own cowardice and neglect of duty, you may depend upon it we should be the healthier and the happier. I want to turn you in upon yourselves this morning in the attitude of self-condemnation, that you may be ready to say, "Oh, blessed Jesus, come to-day and recover my soul!" The only hope for every unconverted person here for restoration from the ruin of sin and for recovery from the guilt of sin is in CHRIST. Again and again I proclaim this. If you want to try another method, you will try it to your sorrow. You will come back to it finally; and you may as well start with this idea, that Christ only can forgive your sins; that Christ only can give you power to resist sin; that Christ only can save you. And if you are ever restored, it must be *in this world*. The very word may suggest this idea to you, "May not Christ restore all or any in eternity to heaven? Does not that word have a squinting towards a restoration in eternity?" No! I do not see the faintest grounds for it. A perversion of this text in the direction of that error has, rather more than usual, thrust itself towards the front lately. I know nothing about eternity, and you can know nothing about eternity, but what is revealed in this divine Book. I find the Lord Jesus Christ presented from beginning to end as a Restorer of human souls in this world on the two conditions of repentance and faith. I find not a hint of any restoration from the realm of darkness to the realm

of everlasting glory. Probation is in the fore-front of God's Word for this world. I find no hint of a probationary state in the world to come. If I do not find the doctrine of future probation here, it is of no account to me that any speculative theologian may evolve it out of his own brain. If it is not in God's Word, that is enough. Now, on the other hand, I open this Book and find some very sharply distinct assertions that when death leaves us judgment finds us, and probation is ended. I discover when I look at these pages—(and I think we ought to read them tremblingly as God's loving utterances of warning)—I discover that future punishment is spoken of invariably as *without end*. I am not going to speculate this morning on what it is or what its character is, but it is spoken of in the Word as a penalty laid down upon the transgressor as a banishment from God, as the suffering due to the sinner. It is declared that "the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment"; and there are several other passages of the same solemn purport. Not one of them gives any hint that after the banishment cometh a restoration to final blessedness. Nay, more, I find a direct condemnation of that modern theory in God's Word, where our Saviour drew that most pathetic and powerful picture of the wrath of the world to come, and described Lazarus uplifted into the bosom of the Patriarch Abraham, and the man that had the good things of this world (and grew worse by means of them) crying out in torment. The poor rich man is asking that he may be restored to some small comfort. He puts the doctrine of "restoration" there to practical test; but the answer is, "A great gulf is fixed, so that they who would go from you to us cannot cross." If Jesus Christ knew everything (as He did), He must certainly have known such a tremendous truth as that that "gulf" would yet be *bridged*, and that He was to bridge it! If this Book is so full of salvation for this world, why is there not one line revealing salvation from hell in the world to come? Can it be possible that a doctrine on which thousands hang their hopes of eternity has not a single line here hinting it, when the Bible is so full of rich offers of restoration and salvation in this life?

But imagine a man restored from hell after he had been punished for centuries according to this theory. He is ushered into heaven. They are chanting the song of redemption. He hears them sing, "Worthy of the Lamb that is slain." He has no word of praise for Christ. Jesus has done nothing for him. He has "served out his time" down there, and Satan has been purifying him for hundreds of years, until he has got him in a fit state for heaven. What does that soul owe to Christ? He owes all rather to him who has been putting him through this purifying process in hell, and making him fit for the "better country, even the heavenly."

Charles G. Finney, in one of those tremendous philippics of his against error, used sometimes to describe a "jail delivery" from the world of woe, when a multitude of spirits blasted and blackened came up to the gate of heaven and clamored for admission! The archangel, looking over the gate, inquires, "Who is there? Why is this uproar?" And they reply, "We are from hell! We have *served out our time!* Let us in!" That is the doctrine of restoration! Who here expects to hang his hopes of eternity on that? Who will take the cross of Christ that is put right before him, trample on it in his folly and his madness, and then risk salvation in eternity? Oh, brethren, there is a Restorer *here!* There is a Restorer here! But I know of no restorer beyond the grave.

I sometimes take up and read in that beautiful book of my friend Kennan that description of a scene away off in Kam-schatka, where a portion of their company had been lost in the snow for weeks. He and a few others set out on a journey of two hundred miles to find them. Mr. Kennan tells us that the very feet of the dogs left blood prints on the snow. They pushed on two hundred miles toward the Anadyr River, by the light only of the aurora borealis, hoping to find them. He was seeking to save the lost. He tells us, in an Arctic midnight, when the thermometer was 40 degrees below zero, when they had endeavored to get a little warmth around the fire of a few roots gathered by the way, he heard a sharp halloo across the waste of snow. "We quitted the little fire and hastened in the direction of the sound, and we found one of our guides standing by a little iron pipe thrust out of the snow-bank. I hurried up to it, leaned over it and shouted down that pipe. Listen! Up from beneath the snow I heard, in my familiar native tongue, the words, 'Who's there!' Then," adds Kennan, "when he told us how to find our way into that temporary place in which they were hidden under the snow, and we entered the cavern and saw my companions gathered around the fire in that spot, so near to perishing (where they would have perished if I had not reached them), my nerves had got strung up to such a state of tension during the long journey that in fifteen minutes I was as powerless as a child, and sunk back unable to speak or move." The tide of joy broke him down. There is many a soul whom Jesus has rescued from death, and in his first glimpse of glory he has broken down like my friend Kennan. Why, if you would not think me irreverent, I would say there must be a time when the Lord Jesus Himself would be ready to "break down with joy"! May there be such a breaking in our hearts this morning when we beckon for our loving Lord, until we can exclaim, "Oh, the Restorer is *come!*" Then each one of us can say, "He restoreth my soul! He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake." To Him, and to Him alone, be all the glory!