

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

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“The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon: and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”
Matthew 12:42

OUR Lord, on this occasion, was addressing a number of captious critics who, instead of listening to what He said and giving it the attention due to its own weight, said, “Show us a sign.” Our Lord replies to them that He will give them no sign except the two signs of Jonah and of the Queen of the South.

The first was very much to the point. Jonah, a lone man, working no miracle, went to Nineveh, a great city, where he was completely unknown. There he commenced to preach. The whole subject of his testimony was, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” Through the broad streets of that gigantic city and through its lanes and alleys, in its public squares, the voice was heard, sharp and shrill, of that lone man—“Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.”

No rod was turned into a serpent. No mountains were made to smoke. None were struck dead by the sudden hand of God. No paralytics and sick folk were healed. No signs were given to the men of Nineveh, but the declaration of that one man sent of God was sufficient to denounce and discover their sin. They felt that they had been guilty of sins that deserved to be denounced. He pronounced their punishment and they felt that the punishment also was well deserved, and therefore, from the king on the throne to the meanest of the citizens, all the inhabitants of that great city humbled themselves and Jonah's work was done, and God repented and forgave the city.

And the Lord Jesus seemed to say, “I also speak to you and tell you truths which ought to have as much power upon your consciences as Jonah's testimony had upon the men of Nineveh. But you turn away, albeit that I speak truth which you cannot answer, and tell you things which you cannot meet nor deny, yet you say, ‘Show us a sign.’ Fools that you are! There shall no sign be given you except the sign of Jonas, the prophet.”

The second sign was also quite as much to the point. It was the case of the Queen of Sheba. She had heard, by report, that Solomon was the wisest of men. She knew that men flocked to his court to be instructed from his lips. Under many disadvantages, and at much expense, she set out upon a long journey that she might listen to the wise man's teaching. She found it to her benefit and returned with joy.

“But”—Christ seems to say, “I am as wise as Solomon. I am able to instruct you as well as that monarch instructed those who came to his court, and yet you show no eager desire to know what it is I teach. You are not willing to open your ears to receive, nor your minds to give a candid judgment upon what I utter, but you cry out at once, ‘Show us a sign.’ You would open your eyes and stare in vacant wonder at a miracle, but the mightiest wisdom that I can deliver to you, you tread under foot, as swine tread under feet the choicest pearls.”

So Christ would give them no sign. He felt that they needed it not and indeed it would be wasted upon them. If they had possessed the same ingenuous mind that was found in the Queen of the South, they would have listened to Him, and if they had been of the same honest spirit with the men of

Nineveh, they would have repented upon His testimony, even as they did of old, who heard the prophetic voice of Jonah.

Ah, my dear hearers, this very night the same spirit broods over thousands. They do not, when they go to hear a sermon, think of the matter of what they hear, but they must need have it delivered with cleverness, with refined speech, with polished periods. Ah! if men were wise, they would care but little how these truths were given to them, but they would weigh the truths themselves.

We do not claim that you should believe all that we say—if we speak anything contrary to God’s Word, we charge you to reject what we say, but we do ask you to judge it, and to weigh it, and to let the important verities which we are charged by God to deliver to you, have a place in your attention. Let them exercise your judgment. Let them move your heart and will. Let them influence your lives.

Coming now, however, at once to the text, we shall notice, in the first place, *that Jesus is “greater than Solomon.”* In the second place, *that Jesus “is here.”* And in the third place, *that if we do not listen to Him and obey Him, the Queen of the South may well rise up to condemn us.*

These things, I think, are very evidently in the text. In the first place, then, in the text—

I. OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST CLAIMS TO BE “GREATER THAN SOLOMON.”

You all know the history of Solomon. Solomon was great in several particulars, and we shall point out to you that in each of these, Christ is greater than he.

In the first place, *Solomon was very great as a ruler.* His father, David, had, by dint of much perseverance, and valor, and industry, very much enlarged the boundaries of his once small dominion. He was a man of war and he left to Solomon a heritage indeed—a treasury well-filled and an army of veterans.

Solomon ruled over the whole of Israel. There seems to have been no disloyal rebellion, no revolt throughout the whole of his reign. In David’s reign there were many rivals and the people were a restless, discontented, turbulent people. No people, perhaps, were more difficult to govern than the Jewish people in the days of David. But Solomon was so judicious, noble, and just a ruler, that he left the whole nation at peace with itself.

He was a monarch whom all respected, and Solomon, too, in his time, enlarged the boundaries of his territory until it reached to the borders of Egypt and to the river Euphrates on the other side. They that dwelt in the wilderness “bowed before him and his enemies licked the dust.” Many nations paid him tribute, and all the strangers who remained in the land, whom the children of Israel did not destroy, did him service.

He had dominion from sea to sea, and to use an Oriental extravagance of expression, “from the river even unto the end of the earth.” Solomon had a kingdom from his father and with it a special divine blessing—the gift of wisdom which enabled him to rule well. His army was one of the largest of the various armies of the Oriental kings. He ruled with wonderful state. The throne which he had builded for himself is said to have had none like it in the whole of the then known world. His treasury was filled so full that, as for silver, it was nothing accounted for. He made gold to be as silver and silver as stones in Jerusalem. He was the greatest monarch that Israel had ever seen.

And yet, dear friends, what a petty, little king he was, and when we compare him for a single moment with our Lord Jesus Christ, what a contrast there is! All the power of Solomon is gone and not a wreck of it is left. He had dominion in his day over vast numbers of humankind, but he has no dominion now.

But the throne of the Man who was crucified on Calvary has power over tens of thousands of human hearts at this present moment. Lo! these 1,800 years, Christ has reigned over multitudes who have been all too glad to kiss His feet and have rejoiced in the light of His countenance. His kingdom, instead of waning, has continually increased, and the day shall come when all kings shall yield their scepters to Him, and He shall gather sheaves of them beneath His arm. When all monarchs shall doff their diadems, and He alone shall reign, King of kings and Lord of lords—the universal Head of the great monarchy—

the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which shall yet fill all the earth. The power of the Lord Jesus Christ over His church is like the power of Solomon over Israel. He keeps it at one, and together.

Apart from Christ, the church is a broken thing, divided into sects and parties, but in Christ Jesus the Savior's prayer is answered, "That they all may be one." Bring any one of us to the cross and you shall not know this from that, for there we all agree to trust Him, to worship Him, to count His authority to be paramount, and His example to be our pattern. Yes, Lord Jesus Christ, all Your children praise You! All those that are of Your household put the crown upon Your head. You rule in the household and You rule well, You "first-born among many brethren."

Moreover, our Lord's dominion extends beyond His church. He rules even to the river of Egypt. Know you not that Christ is Lord paramount over Providence? Nothing occurs without Jehovah-Jesus' purpose, decree, or permission. The very hairs of your head are all numbered.

*"He overrules all mortal things,
And manages our mean affairs."*

Nor is this all. The Lord Jesus has the government upon His shoulders, and that government extends not only to earth, but to heaven and hell.

*"Lo! In His hands, the sovereign keys
Of heaven, and death, and hell."*

The power of Christ is felt beneath perdition's profoundest wave and His glory is sung on heaven's most starry heights. He has put all things under His foot. He is exalted far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things that are under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Our Lord Jesus Christ, then, has a dominion which, for duration and for extent, is infinitely superior to anything of which Solomon ever conceived.

And as for majesty and glory—talk not of the peacock—throne of the Great Mogul, all set with many colors, and with gems and precious stones that shine resplendent like a rainbow in the glittering sun. There is no throne like unto the throne of Jesus, the Emperor of all worlds. See before Him the sea of glass mingled with fire. Around Him stand His seraphic courtiers. There stand the elders with their "vials full of odours sweet." And as you listen you can hear their "harps of sweeter sound."

And mark you not the countless hosts who all cast their crowns before Him, and with one soul and voice, cry, "Thou art worthy to take the book and to loose the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood!"? Oh! cannot your ears hear this very moment the mighty boomings of that great sea of music which rolls up to the throne of Jesus? Can you not catch some stray notes from the harps of angels and archangels, as unceasingly they sing, "Thou art worthy! Thou art worthy to take the book, and to loose the seals thereof"? Beloved, we cannot think of comparing Christ with Solomon, but we must contrast them, for a "greater than Solomon is here, as a ruler."

Let us learn from this the obvious lesson of practical value and wisdom. If, from the far-off South, the Queen of Sheba came to see Solomon, how wise will it be for us to come to see Jesus. Oh! that we would do so and make Him our King! Let us enlist in His warrior bands. None ever served so great a master. Let us be members of His household, for happy are they that stand continually in His presence. Let us give over our enmity and cast down the weapons of our rebellion, and let us say by grace—

*"Oh! King of grace, my heart subdue:
I would be led in triumph, too,
A willing captive to my Lord,
To sing the triumphs of His Word."*

Solomon was great as a builder. For this, perhaps, he is best known among us. 'Twas a mighty deed to bring the towering cedars of Lebanon, all fashioned and prepared, to Jerusalem to make a house for the Lord—to hew from the quarries in the mountains great stones, and goodly ones, all squared, and each one fitted, and made ready for its place, so that there might be no sound of hammer, nor lifting up of chisel in the building of the house. Happy were the eyes that looked upon the temple of Solomon!

Even at this very day, when the explorers come upon what they suppose to be the temple, they are astounded at the masses of stone which they find there. Our Lord said that one stone should not be left upon another, but that all should be cast down, but even as they lie in the places where they were cast down, they are wonderful. Even modern engineers have marveled how they could ever have been brought and put into their places—they are of such enormous size, and yet so well squared and prepared for the building.

Besides this, Solomon built a house of the forest of Lebanon, of which we have a descriptive account in the pages of inspiration, and which seems to have been a marvelous work also. In addition to that, he was great in the erection of works for the carrying of water. He made pools in Zion—the upper and the nether pools. He seems to have carried aqueducts where they were never heard of before his time, and it is possible that many of the great discoveries of modern days were well known to Solomon, even all those years ago.

He seems to have built an ascent to the house of the Lord, which particularly struck the Queen of Sheba as being a most wonderful piece of masonry. Besides this, he was the builder of treasure cities. He also built Gezer, Bethhoron, Baalath, Tadmor in the wilderness, and so on. Solomon was a great master builder—none could excel him as a piler of huge stones, one upon another.

Ah! but my brethren, a greater than Solomon is the Lord Jesus. It is easy enough to build with stones, and granite, and bricks, and cedar. These are dead, coarse things, that you can hew and cut as you will. Get enough sawing and cutting power, and you can make what you will of these things. It is only brute mechanical force that is wanted, with judgment here and there to direct and guide it. Get strength enough and as Archimedes said, you might move the world with a lever—it is only one physical force pitted against another.

But what shall we say of Christ, who has built a house that is made of living, immortal souls, built of what Peter, taught of the Spirit, calls, “living stones”? You do not cut these, nor polish them quite so easily. Men with strong, stubborn wills, men with diseased imaginations, men with perverse affections, men altogether gone from original righteousness—our Lord Jesus Christ has taken these, and He has prepared them to make a temple, in which there shall be nothing but holiness and perfection.

I trust that some of us have been prepared to be built into “a living temple, for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” But if the Lord Jesus Christ shall ever make tens of thousands, and thousands of thousands, of once guilty men all perfect, and shall build these altogether, fitting each one into its place, and making each one willing to maintain and keep in its place—this will be such a thing as a thousand Solomons could not have attempted.

This is no work of brute force, of mechanical power, my brethren. This is the power of the Holy Ghost Himself—a spiritual power, a power which comes from God, who is a Spirit, and who will have those that worship Him worship Him in spirit and in truth. Can you conceive of this temple? My soul seems to rise upon the wings of imagination at the very thought of it—a temple all alive, a living temple—each stone a priceless soul, glittering with immortality.

John tells us of a city, the foundations whereof were of precious stones, and he tells us of the “new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven,” and I know not what besides. That was but a faint picture of the living temple of Jesus, where each soul shall be more precious than the whole world, even though all the world were one pearl of the purest water—a temple built by Himself, for Himself, to His own praise.

Moreover, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the great Master Builder, has built many a pool and aqueduct. We sang about one just now, such as Solomon never knew—

*“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”*

More glorious this than the pool of Gihon, the upper and the nether pool! Moreover, Solomon brought a river into Jerusalem that the multitude might drink, but it was not like this—“The water that I shall give you, shall be in thee a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.” Beloved, we have said that Solomon built treasure cities, but our Lord has given us promises that hold richer treasures than Tadmor ever knew—a covenant—oh! the grandeur of that word covenant—a covenant stored with all the fullness of God, for in Christ “dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”.

I shall lose myself if I attempt to extol my Master as a builder! I only pray that you and I may be built upon His foundation—that we may come to the fountain which He has opened and may be cleansed therein—that we may come to His treasure city and be enriched, all our necessities being removed. And may we dwell with Him in the palace which shall never be taken down! A greater than Solomon, then, is Christ as a builder.

And now for a third view of Solomon. *Solomon was the greatest man of his age as a trader.* A careless reader may not observe this, but a careful student of the narrative will discern the reason why Solomon was so immensely rich. Possessed of great wisdom, he saw at once that the wealth of a people must largely depend upon its commercial enterprise and activity. He therefore took a city upon the banks of the Euphrates, and when the great caravans, laden with costly treasures from India and China, sought to make their way to Egypt, and Greece, and Rome, they crossed at the very ford which Solomon possessed.

He seized upon an oasis in the great desert and upon it he built a city, known to this day as Tadmor—“Baalath and Tadmor in the wilderness.” This little oasis, this spot of green earth in the midst of the desert, the caravans must pass. It was the only place where they could obtain water, and here Solomon built these cities, which became the great depot, where exchanges were continually made of the productions of Egypt, and of India, and China.

The trade which, after the days of Solomon, went farther west, and at last passed through the port of Venice, and then went farther west still, and went through Holland, and has now come to London—all that trade was in the hands of Solomon. If you read carefully the record of his life, you will see that he was a most clever trader and managed for a time to secure a complete monopoly of all the provinces of the East. For this, the Queen of Sheba marveled at him. She wondered how it was that he should have been so wise as to be able to do this.

But our Lord says that “a greater than Solomon is here.” Our Lord Jesus Christ has been a trader of no common sort, my brethren. By His most precious blood He has brought us the supplies of the skies. Solomon could only bring to himself gold, and silver, and spices, and apes, and peacocks, but our Lord Jesus Christ has, by His precious blood, opened up the skies to the commerce of souls.

So that now through Christ, there comes to us pardon for our sin, acceptance in the Beloved, sanctification by the Spirit, preservation by the indwelling of God, and all those priceless gifts of which we cannot now speak particularly, only we must say of them, “Blessed be the name of Jesus, that ever our souls learned to trade in this heavenly direction.”

Yes, Christ is, indeed, greater than Solomon. Oh! that you would seek to be enriched by Him. Oh! that you would seek to obey that text in which He says, “I counsel thee to buy of me gold, yea, fine gold, tried in the fire, and the white raiment that thou mayest be clothed.” God give us grace that we may come to this greater trader than Solomon!

Moreover, *Solomon was exceedingly great as a sage.* I shall not amuse you, for that is no object of mine, with the various legends that are told of him. The one instance of his decision between the two women reminds us of the excellency of his judgment.

He was renowned for this. You have his Proverbs, his Ecclesiastes, one of his thousand and one songs, and you may be assured that he was a mastermind in his day.

But the wisdom of our Lord Jesus Christ far transcends this, for He can open up all the dark questions of your mind. He can teach you, O man, what you most want to know. He can teach you the way to heaven, the way to escape from the power as well as the result of your sins, the way to get peace with God. The sages could not tell you this, but Jesus can. Seek Him, for He is greater than Solomon.

I had more to say upon this point, but time will not allow, for I must have a word or two upon the second head, which is—

II. THIS JESUS IS HERE

He is not here in body. As we reminded you last Sabbath evening, He is gone. He is not here in that sense, “for he is risen.” But Christ is here by His Spirit. If you want to get to Christ, this is the way—think of Him. That is, coming towards Him. Read His life. Study His death. Meditate upon Him. Let the thought of His laying down His life for His enemies dwell upon your minds.

I wish that some of you would read the story of His crucifixion very, very often. If you have not any faith, perhaps faith will come while you are reading it. “God commended His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” He did not die for those good people who have not any sin. He had nothing to do with those good people who are so righteous that they can get to heaven their own way. Christ died for the guilty, the lost, the worthless. He comes like a physician to the sick—like one who gives sustenance to the perishing poor. Oh! read His life, for this will help you to come to Him.

The true way in which to come to Christ is to believe Him, to trust Him. If any man trusts in Christ to save him, he has come to Him. When I used to hear sermons about coming to Christ, I thought, “Well, I would do it if I only knew how! If I had to walk from here to York, or no matter how far, I would find my way.”

But you do not come to Christ with your feet—you come to Him with your mind, and heart, and will, and he that trusts in Jesus, who says, “I will lean alone upon what Christ has done. I have been trying a thousand ways of salvation, but there, they shall all go to the winds and now, sink or swim, I believe that Jesus Christ died to save sinners and I trust in Him”—that man is saved. If you trust in Him, and lean on Him and if, just as you now see me throw the whole of my weight upon this rail, you lean the whole weight of your soul on Christ, you are saved.

That is the only way of salvation, to throw yourselves completely on Jesus. God must punish sin, but Christ bore what was due to our sin, in the stead of sinners, of all who trust Him. If you trust Him, then Christ was punished instead of you and no penalty can fall on you. Your debts have all been paid by Christ and God cannot—for He is righteous—demand from you what Jesus has already endured for your sake. If you trust Jesus Christ, then, as sure as God is true, He will save you. It is His own promise, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

Now, for the purpose of trusting, *Christ is here*. If you could see Him with your eyes, you could not trust Him any more than you can tonight when you cannot see Him, though He is here and oh! wonder of wonders, He is also engaged yonder in heaven, according to this Book, in pleading for you. You do not want to see a man to trust him. I can trust a man who is in India. I can trust a brother whom I may have in Australia, I can trust a man who may be in the backwoods of America and trust him quite as well as if I saw him—perhaps my trust might be all the more like trust because I did not see him.

We say that there are some people whom we can only trust as far as we can throw them, that is to say, we cannot trust them at all. But Christ is not of that kind. For all the purposes that are wanted, then, to save you, Christ is here. By His Spirit He is here, and here now, and He will now whisper into your soul, “Peace, thy sins are forgiven thee.” If you will now trust Him, you shall have in your heart a peace which passes all understanding, which shall be the best proof to you that Jesus is here.

Oh! why do you put it off? Oh! why do you, who feel you need a Savior, continue so long away from this simple faith. I prayed for you just now—the Lord knows how sincerely I prayed—that we

might all meet in heaven. We never shall, except we all believe in Jesus, for He is the one door—if we will not enter by Him, we can enter no way—there is no stealing or climbing our way there, stealthily there.

If we have to come and rest in Christ, why should we not do it tonight? Oh! why this night should we not be led to rest alone in Christ? If we do this, we are saved, already saved, completely saved, irrevocably saved—so saved that neither death nor hell shall ever divide the believer from his Lord. May this be done by us all, for Jesus is here.

And now I have to close by saying that if, with this Gospel before us, we do not come to this greater than Solomon—

III. THE QUEEN OF SHEBA WILL CONDEMN US.

For see! *She was a heathen who had heard but a little about Solomon* and yet she came to see if it were true. You profess to be Christians, many of you. You have heard about Jesus from the time when you left the cradle. If you come not, these many Sundays, and these many sermons, and these good books, and these Bibles of yours—what shall they be but like the big stones that were hurled at Achan to destroy him for his sin? May God grant that you may not sin against the light, but may the light lead you to Christ that you may be saved!

This woman *came to see Solomon from afar*. We know not how far it was—whether she was the queen of the southern part of Arabia, or whether her territory was upon the other side of the Red Sea in Abyssinia—she seems to have been the queen of both countries. But from whichever she might have come, it was a long journey.

Now you have no distance to go. Thought can travel all the distance in a moment. Faith can throw a bridge across every difficulty. Believe you in Christ and you are with Christ. Trust Christ and Christ is with you, and you are with Him, and in Him.

The Queen of Sheba had to meet a thousand dangers. Traveling in those days was no easy task. The Bedouins would attack her caravans. She had many trials and hardships to put up with, but there are no such hardships to you. You have simply to trust. All the way to heaven is only two steps—the first is to step out of yourselves and the second is to step into Christ. First to have done with all that you can do and secondly, to ask for all that Christ has done. You have no difficulties, then.

Now, this woman, when she came, did not come bringing her own wisdom to Solomon, but she came to learn from Solomon. You must come to Christ, not to bring your own knowledge, but to learn of Him what He would have you to do. If you are to be saved, you must be taught as well. “Unless ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

And this woman *did bring very great presents to Solomon*—spices and I know not what. Now, Christ asks you to bring nothing, and if you do not come on such terms, well may she condemn you. He wants no merits of yours. He wants no good heart. He wants nothing good from you. “Surely He wants faith and repentance,” says one. Yes, but—

***“True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings me nigh.
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”***

“But I must feel my needs,” says one. Yes, but—

***“This He gives you;
'Tis His Spirit's rising beam.”***

You are to come to Christ without anything—and Christ will give you everything.

This woman had never been invited to come. She went on a haphazard journey. Solomon never sent the Queen of Sheba an invitation to visit his court, but she came and was well rewarded. But you have

been invited hundreds of times. I must bear this witness against you. I have invited you very earnestly times without number. Oh! why, why, why—when the Gospel is so simple, why do you kick against it? If my Lord were hard I could understand your lifting up the heel against Him. If He laid down some difficult conditions, I could excuse you if you said, “Master, we cannot come up to them.”

But when the only thing He says is, “Take what I give you. Receive it as a gift of grace”—oh! not to receive it is unkindness, is madness, is wickedness. May God forgive your unbelief. I know the very difficulty in your case is that it is so easy. I do believe if salvation were more difficult, some of you would like it better. You are just like Naaman. If the prophet had bidden him do some great thing, he would have done it, but when it was nothing but “Wash and be clean,” it did not suit *his* pride.

And it does not suit yours just to come and trust in Christ. I know you say you are afraid it would not be true. Ah! then you prefer your opinion to the testimony of God, for this is God’s simple testimony, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned.”

May the Eternal Spirit bring you, empty-handed and ruined, to the all-sufficient Savior and may you be enabled to now rely upon Him, and you shall find that He is true. “Him that cometh unto me,” says He, “I will in no wise cast out.”

The Lord bless you for Christ’s sake!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 119:113-120

The proper way in which to read these verses is to peruse them in the spirit of prayer, turning every verse into a personal supplication to God. I trust that many of us may be so in the Spirit today, that these words may suit us.

Verse 113. *I hate vain thoughts: but your law do I love.*

The moralist is quite content to look after his actions, but the Christian is never happy until his thoughts are sanctified. The true believer hates vain thoughts, because they lead to vain words and to vain actions—because vain thoughts nailed his Savior to the tree, because vain thoughts spoil his devotion, mar his communion with God, and like the birds which came down upon Abraham’s sacrifice, would destroy all his offering. “I hate vain thoughts.”

The converse of this is, “But thy law do I love.” There is nothing vain there. Nothing in Your law to distract me. Nothing to give me unhallowed thoughts. Brethren, here is a cure for vain thoughts. When you have been assailed by vain thoughts, let your mind be lovingly stored with texts of Scripture, with passages of God’s Word. The Psalmist, while writing these words, is evidently under a sense of danger, so he adds—

114. *Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.*

Here is a hiding place to escape to from danger and a shield to protect whilst in danger. A hiding place is not enough, because that cannot be moved—but the shield can be carried everywhere. It is buckled on the warrior’s arm and into every conflict he can take it. So, at even-time, when I tell my troubles to my God, He is my hiding place.

But all the day long, while I myself abide in the heat of the conflict, He is my shield. See where the Christian’s hope is, dear friends. It is not in his own integrity, or faithfulness, or sincerity—but “I hope in thy word.”—

*“The Gospel bears my spirit up;
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation for my hope
In oaths, and promises, and blood.”*

115. *Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.*

By which David did not mean that he would not speak with ungodly men. Monkish seclusion would be no advantage to a Christian. We are to be in the world, though not of it, as a ship is in the sea, but the sea is not in the ship, or else soon would she go to the bottom.

We are to take care of the world—to hold such society with them as may come from necessity, but as to any nearer communion, “Depart from me, you evildoers. Your company I cannot bear. Your example pollutes the air. You do me damage, you vex my ears, you dishonor my God—depart from me, you evildoers, for I will keep the commandments of my God.”

You see, it seems as if this was not possible as long as there was an intimate association with the ungodly. I know nothing that is so likely to destroy the purity of a Christian’s life as an intimate association with ungodly people. You cannot run with the hare and hold with the hounds, too. It is impossible for you to join with world and yet be true followers of Christ.

116. *Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope.*

You see, he feels his weakness and he cries to his God.

117. *Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.*

The brightest archangel owes all his glory to God—and the perpetuity of that glory depends upon the constant gift of the gracious One. How wise, then, is it of men, conscious of their weakness, to hang constantly upon their God. As the vessel hangs upon the nail, and if the nail can move, the vessel must fall, so must we hang upon God. If He is not faithful, and true, and potent, then we must perish, but thank God, concerning this we have no doubt.

118-119. *Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood. Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies.*

You see, the Psalmist’s mind is entirely occupied with this spirit of perseverance. He seems to tremble and to be filled with awe lest he should by any means prove an apostate and be unworthy to enter into the kingdom. He looks with solemn mind upon God as casting all the wicked of the earth down under His feet, just as men cast out the refuse—as the slag of the furnace is sometimes thrown down to make the footpath. So he says, “Thou puttest away the wicked of the earth like dross; thou hast trodden them down.” Filled with a holy trembling lest this should be his lot—lest, after he had thought he had known and experienced the happiness of communion with God, he should be found to be reprobate silver and be given over to destruction.

Does such a fear as this come upon you, my brethren? If it does not, there is room for you to fear, for even our holy apostle had this as his anxiety, “Lest, after having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” It is not as to whether God will be faithful to me, but whether I am really His, whether my conversion has been genuine and my union to Christ vital. These are questions which breed a holy anxiety, which is one of the very best means of keeping a Christian in the path of right, and so of guaranteeing the perseverance which God has promised.

120. *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.*

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